The goal of this project was to provide media policy training to as large a group of journalists as possible. After assessing the media policy landscape at the start of 2017, TMC staff zeroed in on training around surveillance, particularly surveillance of communities of color. One key priority was to ensure that journalists of color were able to attend these briefings as well as participate in them.

Achieved outcomes:

The project was a significant success. Trainings happened in two locations, the Media Consortium annual conference in DC in March 2017, and at IRE in Phoenix in June 2017.

1. Half-day anti-surveillance training at the Media Consortium's annual conference

Using the media policy grant, the Media Consortium brought in Chinyere Tutashinda from CMJ to participate in an unconference session on police surveillance and hired Harlo Holmes from Freedom of the Press Foundation to provide a half-day training for journalists on threats from different types of surveillance. Free Press' Joe Torres and Georgetown's Laura Moy, and also attended and actively participated in setting up unconference sessions with a media policy and equity focus.

Thanks to the grant from MDF as well as travel grants from the IIE program via Ford and MacArthur, the Media Consortium was able to bring 25 journalists of color to the meeting, 15 of whom work at culturally specific media outlets. These journalists were in addition to TMC journalists of color who paid to attend the conference, giving us a conference attendance that was 45% PoC (approximately 59 people out of 132).

Harlo's session was so popular that we had a hard time reconvening afterwards, and journalists in attendance asked specifically for further webinars and sessions on surveillance. The Media Consortium is providing that by connecting journalists to CMJ's excellent webinar series.

2. IRE session on police surveillance

In order to go beyond the Media Consortium’s progressive population of reporters, the Media Consortium organized a session on police surveillance at the annual conference of Investigative Reporters and Editors. The speakers included Ben Conark, who investigated how police paid for surveillance tools in Jacksonville, FL; Lauren Williams, who provided an overview of the different tech tools police use to surveil the public; and George Joseph, who spoke about how police surveil protesters.

Between 90-100 reporters attended this session in a ballroom that was quite full. Reporters were especially surprised that police can subpoena DNA from 23 and Me. Several attendees asked during a robust question and answer period about how to distinguish phone drops due to stingrays from phone drops due to high volume of calls. We have not yet received evaluations from the IRE staff but engagement levels were high during the session.

Lessons Learned:

We originally arranged with IRE to provide a three session series. However, when IRE—under new leadership—saw our proposed panelists from such policy organizations as CMJ and Free Press, they rejected the panels. They insisted that every panelist be a journalist. Because we did not simply want to provide a business perspective on media policy issues—and because we wanted diverse speakers—we made a joint decision to only run one panel. It appears that under the new leadership it will be challenging to run media policy panels at future IREs.

Next Steps: We will seek other conferences for reporters that might be more suited to media policy trainings. We also learned that media based in marginalized community are hungry for trainings on surveillance and on legal rights of journalists during protests. In 2018 we plan to invite even more reporters of color, particularly those from marginalized communities—to our conference and to feature a half-day workshop on covering protests, with a dual emphasis on legal rights and on protecting against surveillance.

All activities by The Media Consortium for this project were and are consistent under the Internal Revenue Code Sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a). If any lobbying was conducted by The Media Consortium (whether or not discussed in this report), The Media Consortium complied with the applicable limits of Internal Revenue Code Sections 501(c)(3) and/or 501(h) and 4911. The Media Consortium and its parent organization the Foundation for National Progress warrants that it is in full compliance with its Grant Agreement with the New Venture Fund, dated 9/1/2016, and that, if the grant was subject to any restrictions, all such restrictions were observed.