The Future Vision
Our goal is to bring together a network of news outlets dedicated to building a racially equitable
independent media ecosystem. Network members will center the voices of culturally-specific
communities, promote local/national partnerships, and work collaboratively to grow impact.

Imagine: stories originating from Puerto Ricans living in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago;
from white tobacco farmers near Springfield, Kentucky; from the Pima people living by the Gila
River in Arizona; from Somali Muslims in Minneapolis—these stories will make their way into
news hubs and from there to regional and national news.

Decision making  will be decentralized, with every outlet choosing what
stories to send through the network and what stories to pick up from the network. The flow of
stories from grassroots to grasstops will be conducted via partnership agreements that are
equitable, respecting and rewarding the originators of the stories. Outlets will work
collaboratively, sharing resources and co-marketing content in order to ensure that stories are
told by those most impacted and reach those most impacted.

The network will consist of the following primary elements:

1. **Content-Sharing Platform.**

Technology does not create relationships, but technology can sustain and enhance already existing relationships. That is what this platform will do. The platform will provide a means for outlets to post stories they want to share, to look for editorial collaborators, and to find stories they would like to publish. But without an equity lens, technology can easily reinforce current power structures. The key to this platform will be that all stories will be accompanied by a Creative Commons-like agreement that sets terms around distribution, remuneration, and acknowledgement. National outlets will not be able to simple take or refashion content from local outlets anymore. Geographic, racial, sexual, ability equity will be baked into the platform.

2. **Gatherings**

Relationships are made between people, not organizations.The network's primary service and benefit will be to hold a wide variety of gatherings through the year--online and in -person. Editors, producers, publishers, reporters all want to how others are solving problems they face, and want allies and partners for their largest ideas. Too often, however, as networks grow powerful they end up in the hands of a few who end up designing conferences and dictating who can belong and how they can participate. This network will be organized from the start with an equity lens. First, any person or organization will be able to join. Second, membership fees will be kept affordable--at $25. Any member will be able to use network technology to start their own network meeting. And content for larger gatherings will be decided using communal decision making pioneered by Allied Media Conference.

3. **Local Hubs**

These local network nodes will identify, support and amplify hyperlocal news media in a metro or region. Community-based media rarely have the bandwidth to connect with other news organizations outside their particular locale, yet media makers know that other communities are experiencing the same issues and that they could all learn from each other. The local hub provides a means for these hyperlocal outlets to connect up both to other media makers in their community and to the national network. Importantly, hyperlocal media do not need to go through the hub to the network--the network structure is flat. Instead, the local hub is an additional layer of support for on-the ground media organizing.

4. **Collaborations**

The power of a connected network is the ability to amplify key issues through collaborative reporting. The main focus of the national gathering will be to identify 3-4 areas for national collaborative reporting each year. Importantly, all members--including those unable to attend the national gathering--will participate in the voting process for these collaborative reporting areas. These reporting areas will be imagined as media campaigns to educate the public. A new and key component will involve working with allies in the advocacy world to locate sources to help develop stories and to support distribution of content. These collaborative efforts will also be opportunities for the network to test new impact measurement tools.

5. **New Media Models**

Media in the United States has traditionally been driven by the vision of one man, creating content that is then distributed to a wider population, usually for a fee. The digital revolution at first upended this model with the rise of "bloggers" and "citizen journalists." Ten years in, while we are seeing the rise of non-profit journalism and talk about "engagement," the means of production are mostly back in the hands of a few decision-makers. This network will ensure that individual media makers have as much access to network tools as organizations. A long-term network goal will be experimenting with community-owned cooperative media ventures to ensure that everyone's voice is truly heard.