* Seizing the opportunity to be bold, creative, and risk-taking in a way that expands our notions of what is possible
* Demonstrating sharp strategic approach, with particular focus on organizing and building power that centers **feminist leadership**, especially the leadership of girls and women (cis-, trans-, and gender non-conforming) of color
* Building organizational capacity to go the distance with **alliances, coalitions, and networks, and reach across issues, sectors, and other traditional divisions in our movements**
* Holding a national and global perspective that connects movements and defies the **false nationalism** both being touted by the current U.S. administration and on the rise globally
* Adopting a proactive stance that keeps a view of the horizon and building a foundation for the future, even as we do defensive and resistance work
* Reexamining how we show up to do the work of social justice and experimenting with ways of doing/being that center our humanity, interrupting movement habits in favor of practices that will sustain leaders and movements in the long run
* Bolstering security and adaptation of groups that amplify the voices of targeted communities and/or challenge the normalization of white supremacy, xenophobia, and misogyny

**Describe your organization or collaboration’s mission, history/achievements, community/constituency you are accountable to, and overview of current work. (300 words or less)\***

Founded in 2006, the Media Consortium began as a U.S.-based network of independent progressive national news outlets with a mission to support and grow the progressive news infrastructure. We have supported the sector by:

* Organizing an annual three-day convening ;
* Providing a website, member database, regular newsletter, listserv, and other communications tools to share knowledge;
* Holding webinars and creating “labs” on business and tech topics—the largest of these labs was a three-year experiment using social media sentiment analysis to measure the impact of collaborative journalism;
* Advocating for press freedom through our partnership with Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press;
* Organizing collaborative editorial projects to educate the public around particular issues such as reproductive health, pesticide use, and immigration reform.

With these tools and a small team of 1.5 staff, we have succeeded beyond our expectations, growing our membership by 400% (including outlets from Canada and Europe); developing a sustainability model for independent news (only 3 outlets have gone under in the past 7 years); and becoming a leader in news collaborations with over 45 collaborative projects between 2014-2017.

Yet we gradually became aware that the problems our network was built to face were not the problems most challenging the media sector now.

We had been built to provide the public with an alternative to the corporate media. Our main constituency has been “alternative,” “progressive” news outlets including Democracy Now!, AlterNet, Feministing, Colorlines, Mother Jones and the Nation.

However, what the public needs most now is a vibrant collaborative network built on equitable partnerships between national and local media in a way that centers grassroots, culturally-specific communities. And we believe that no media organization can create that local-national collaborative network without being built from the ground up with a racial equity lens.

**Explain the issue(s)/problem your organization/collaboration works on, including what specific issue(s) or challenges this project seeks to address. (300 words or less)\***

Most organizations try to stay in business. Instead, the members of the Media Consortium are taking the bold risk of sunsetting the current organization in order to relaunch with a mission, vision and membership rooted in race and geographic equity.

This relaunched organization will address a number of related challenges:

1) the public’s need for a media system that centers the voices and stories of people of color

2) the public’s need for a media system that centers local stories

3) the expressed need of media-makers, particularly community news outlets, to have an equitable way to syndicate their stories (and to get syndicated content);

4) the expressed need of national news outlets to partner with media-makers based in local communities to get local stories and to distribute their content more widely;

We know the needs of media-makers because we have spent the past three years listening to them. We began in 2015, with a stirring talk by Malkia Cyril on the problem of white reporters parachuting into African American communities. In Feburary 2016, we invited Race Forward to provide a fulll-day training on racial equity at our conference, a training attended by 80% of conference attendees. In February 2017, we invited people working in community-specific media to our annual gathering--35% of attendees were from community media, and over 50% of attendees were people of color. And through this period Media Consortium staff went on a listening campaign, criss-crossing the country to listen to community media leaders in Portland, Los Angeles, Arizona, New Orleans, Denver, Minneapolis, Chicago, Atlanta, Raleigh NC, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and elsewhere.

Our current members got the message too—which is why they support a relaunch that will address the issue of creating a more racially and geographically equitable media sector.

**Describe the emerging opportunities and/or challenges that give context to the project, highlighting what has changed as a result of shifts in the political landscape. (150 words or less)**

The media system in the United States is broken. Many locales no longer have functioning daily news operations. Without trusted local news, people increasingly turn to Facebook. Yet Facebook’s business is advertising, not news. This broken system has led to “fake news” and to the spread of misinformation.

One response has been to fortify traditional sources of national news. However, national news cannot be everywhere and does not represent everyone—study after study has underscored the lack of diversity in national news organizations.

The impact of missing those stories became stunningly clear in 2015 with the Ferguson uprising and the Black Lives Matter movement. Black women founded Black Lives Matter because no one was telling their stories—and that included the “progressive” media.

This project is a result of coming to terms with that truth. We believe that only equitable local-national partnerships can bring trust back to the news ecosystem.

**Provide an overview of the project’s overarching vision and purpose. Describe how it lays a foundation for long-term, transformative change and how the project seeks to expand our notions of what is possible. (350 words or less**)

We envision building a truly transformative social justice movement organization designed to develop a sustainable, equitable media infrastructure. Its purpose will be to fundamentally change our media system so that stories created by and for local communities—and particularly by and for communities of color—are centered in national discourse.

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 regional news hubs and from there to regional and national news.

Imagine stories on immigration, health care, education, defense reported collaboratively with local outlets based in communities most impacted by those policies.

The new organization will be a network of news outlets dedicated to building a racially equitable independent media ecosystem. The network will center the voices of culturally-specific communities, promote local/national partnerships, and work collaboratively to grow impact.

Decision making in this organization 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.

This vision will be created by an infrastructure that is already partly in place. Technology platforms are already being built that will allow media-makers to share content with each other guided by equitable partnership agreements. Local hubs are being built in at least 18 metros designed to support community-based media outlets and connect them to national outlets. Existing conferences can become spaces for in-person connections required to troubleshoot and develop these networks.

The old media system is crumbling. The monopoly platforms—Facebook, Google—don’t serve the news needs of a democracy. Now is the time to use existing efforts to create the foundation for a new equitable media system.

**Outline the project’s goals and results you hope to achieve, including an overview of the timeline for results (within 1-4 years). (400 words or less)**

Year One (2018): In 2018, three proto-network convenings—at Allied Media Conference, Commonbound and Facing Race will give us an opportunity to engage with grassroots and national media makers about what they want this network to do and be.

Simultaneously, current Media Consortium staff will work to support the growth of local regional hubs, which we believe will be critical for organizing the media space. And we will work with the developers of two exciting content sharing platforms, ITEGA and Project Facet, to determine which is most easily adapted to the needs of this new network.

Year Two (2019): In January/February we will hold a convening for leaders and members of local media hubs to determine how best to network them into a larger national organization.

At a June convening, we will launch the new organization with a name, website, and content-sharing technology platform.

The main work of the organization in this formative year will be communicating with independent media outlets about the network. We aim to bring members of trade associations like INN and AAN, as well as a wide array of community-based news organizations into the network. One way to do this, along with staff travel, will be to create a large number of funded collaborative reporting projects that will serve to demonstrate the value of the content-sharing platform and the network itself.

Year Three (2020): In this critical year we will hold network meetings and events, surveys and focus groups, designed to study whether we have in fact created equity among network participants, in terms of their leadership, ease of participation, and outcomes.

Based on this feedback, we will evaluate the three major network components: content-sharing platform, in-person convenings, and local hubs. Are these the components this network needs to thrive? In addition, we will evaluate funding for the network itself and for project-based collaborations to ensure sustainability for both.

Year Four (2021). Success will be a thriving, expanding network of media makers that share content equitably. Success will be a greatly increased number of stories told from the point of view of people of color and local communities, distributed and amplified nationally and internationally. Success will be an equitable, self-sustaining, iterative infrastructure for the network, constantly studying itself to ensure the network is meeting the needs of media makers in all communities.

**Describe some of the essential elements of your strategy that will enable you to accomplish the goals (200 words or less) For the field above ("Describe some of the essential elements of your strategy that will enable you to accomplish the project’s goals"), include how your project relates to one or more of the following strategies:**

Building a network of news outlets requires bringing communities together for cross-issue, cross-sectoral organizing. Over the past ten years we have developed deep relationships with independent media trade associations, media justice organizations, and racial justice organizations, and new economy organizations that will make that organizing possible.

The network we envision could not exist without new content-sharing systems made possible by the digital revolution. So far, these have only been used for commercial purposes; we will use them for the common good.

Finally, this project is a media project. We seek to leverage the power of media to better tell the stories of all communities. In four years, we can only hope to focus this ambitious project on North America. However, if the network succeeds, we will look, in 2020, to begin to build out an international news network.

**Explain your organization or collaboration's leadership structure, including how decisions are made, and how the organization or collaboration is positioned to meet the moment. If a collaboration, include a list of collaborating organizations (if there are many organizations in the collaboration, provide a link to a webpage that shows a full list of groups, or just indicate the lead/core groups). (200 words or less)**

The impetus for building this network has come from work conducted through Media Consortium convenings. The current leaders of the project are staff at the Media Consortium. However, we aim to be temporary leaders. The reason for our many convenings in 2018/2019 will be to create a steering committee that is cooperative and communitarian, representative of the network we aim to build.

We do not have formal agreements around collaboration, in part because many of our allies are also applying for Radical Hope grants! However, we already have informal expressions of support from the following organizations and will be able to provide formal agreements if this LOI moves to the proposal stage:

Media Justice Organizations:

Race Forward, Allied Media Projects, Center for Media Justice, Free Press

Trade Associations:

NFCB, AAN, ACM

Other Organizations:

New Economy Coalition, local media hubs in 14 metro areas.

**Please tell us how you first heard about the Radical Hope Fund**

Our allies at New Economy Coalition encouraged us to apply. We support their grant application as well.