**2009 TMC Project Development**
By: Tracy Van Slyke, Project Director/The Media Consortium

Below is a short-list and first cut on suggested project ideas for 2009.  This is an attempt to synthesize the (proposed) strategic guiding principles for 09 with the best and most viable project ideas that came out of the strategic planning retreat, one-on-one conversations and my own thoughts on TMC strategic project priorities.  I am also balancing these ideas with the knowledge that while these ideas are not gamechangers (yet), they are a scalable and a concrete place to start in 09.  Gamechangers will most likely go into development mode in late '08 and '09 and will be integrated into the mix.

This is not a complete comprehensive document as of yet.  Some areas are more fleshed out project ideas with detailed questions/thoughts.  Others are suggestions with context and critique.  All projects are organized by the strategic guiding principles that were proposed on Day 2 of the strategic planning retreat, including:

* Build and diversify media leadership pipeline
* Bring Money into the Sector
* Foster Collaboration
* Audience Development

Each section contains (some variations):

* Suggested Project Descriptions and Suggestions
* Suggested Sub-committee members
* Questions/Notes
* Suggested Next Steps

**Guiding Principle: *Build and diversify the media leadership pipeline***
**Phase 1: Getting our Future Journalists started**
*Recap of notes from strategic retreat discussion:*
WHAT: TMC sponsors paid internships at member organizations to create attractive entry points and mentor ship programs that will invest in a diverse future generation of media leaders.

WHY: The conservative right has been investing time and money in their future leaders for years. If progressive media were to show the same initiative, we could attract dedicated workers and visionaries from a young age, thus helping to ensure the longevity of our respective organizations and foster the kinds of innovative thinking necessary to building a successful media sphere. We could help foster the next generation of media leaders and journalists, specifically looking to focus on diversity, including women, people of color, and varying income backgrounds.

OUTCOME: Every summer, we would be turning out a series of individuals committed to building a healthy future and strong infrastructure for progressive and independent journalism.

WHO & HOW: TMC raises money and manages stipends for year round internships with member organizations.  Each internship would be broken into four month segments. TMC would also craft strict guidelines for feedback, performance and mentorship of interns. Organizations seeking interns would have to agree to invest time and effort into making the internship a valuable experience for the intern.

*Question's:*

* What's a fair stipend to pay for 3-4 months of work? $3,000?
* What's the ultimate fundraising goal and strategy?
* Everyone will want an intern (i.e. formula 50 members x 3k=$150k).  What would the structure look like?  How would we decide where interns are housed at member orgs?
* What are the criteria for interns?
* How is this sustainable on a long-term basis fundraising wise?  Will always have to fundraise for it unless we find dif. alternatives to supporting the project?

Subcommittee action: We need to nail down a structure for how this program would work, including:

* Matching interns to MC members
* Consideration of how to be fair to members about getting an intern
* Criteria for qualified interns
* Intern stipend
* Identify goals/metrics for success of internship
* Criteria for MC member mentorship and reporting to MC about intern activities
* Fundraising goal for program
* Other?

**Phase 2: Creating the Media Darlings**
WHAT: Award Winning Journalism, Media Darlings, and Millennium Audience Expansion Project
*Recap of notes from strategic retreat discussion:*
The recruiting and hiring of 5-10 highly skilled female and people of color journalists, who would be well payed and situated in TMC member environments, whose sole purpose would be to produce and promote high-quality content in areas that are dominated by white male writers (Foreign Policy and Security Issues , Energy and Climate , Economics and Tax Issues, etc.) This content would be developed from jump as multi-platform, with emphasis on video in particular.  Additionally, we want to incubate and support fellows that look like and represent the potential audience we are trying to reach. This is an opportunity to start connecting our journalists and our media outlets with target audiences.

The aim of this content, in part, would be to new audiences – the progressive elements of the new "Obama coalition"of younger voters, women, and Blacks, Latinos, Asians, etc. Members of the TMC would be the first beneficiaries of this content, hopefully in well-timed, echo chambered release and presentation, but it would also be under Creative Commons and hopefully would spread to many media outlets.

WHY: Most content being produced and distributed in the most potent and powerful subject areas is done by white males; and even then some of the best content isn't sufficiently marketed broadly or effectively used by the progressive media infrastructure.

OUTCOME: A significant increase of quality content on key issues developed by outstanding younger and mid-career journalists (8-10 stories a year per journalist) could be a goal; along with five media appearances for every article.

WHO & HOW: Project developed and implemented by TMC members and staff; target funders (Knight, Ford, the Sandlers (Pro Publica) OSI, MacArthur), skilled editors from TMC members would also participate and help supervise, mentor, and shape the content.

Suggestions/Actions/Questions for Subcommittee:
\* Instant issue: Linda Jue and the development of her project.  Linda is currently working on a similar project for her own organization.  This area needs to be discussed with Linda and by a small-sub committee
Program notes:

* I would up the number of stories and/or make sure that there are multi-media elements integrated into some of the stories (video or audio).  Are there partnerships with video/audio focused MC orgs. that we could broker partnerships with?
* I would include blogging/regular posting in the mix
* Identify goals/metrics for "Media Darlings" success.  What will the fellowships have accomplished for each of the fellows and the sector in general?

MC Org Questions:

* How do we decide where these fellows will be housed?
* How do we rationalize benefit to a small number of individual members?  We need to propose something that feels fair for the sector and the membership as a whole.    Is there an added benefit we add for members who do not directly receive benefit from fellows?
* Are the articles/media produced going to be available to all members or only to one particular outlet?  It says creative commons--but want to nail this down.   This has different implications for members and involvement.
* What are funding models for this project?  i.e. MC raises X amount funds for each fellow and each media outlet adds in a certain portion as well?  MC and specified orgs. jointly fundraise for the entire project?
* How is this dif. than the ultimate goals/efforts of the syndicated reporting project? The framing is different, but I wouldn't be surprised if we run into similar issues.
* Does the organization managing and editing the fellow need to be compensated?
* Ulitmate fundraising goal?

Pipeline--Suggested Committee Members: Don, Linda, Andrew, Roberto
Next Steps:

* Sub-committee organize to address these programmatic, structural and strategic questions.
* Sub-committee flesh out this proposal and make more detailed proposal to entire Coordinating Committee

**Phase 3: Making the Media Darlings**
If we want to make the media darlings, we need to put in the effort to promote, publicize, and connect them to the establishment media, additional progressive media, targeted audiences, allies, and even unlikely allies.  These fellows should also help act as bridges to targeted, diverse audiences for the individual outlets and the sector as a whole.  The goal of this project is to support and make media darlings, and it's going to take additional effort, creativity and resources to make that happen. In this case, we should hire a communications/pr firm/contractor to:
1) Create strategic communications plan that will actively push out media produced by fellows
2) Push the fellows out year round for events, interviews for establishment media
2) Identify targeted audiences (i.e. millenials, people of color communities, women, etc...) and plan opportunities/spaces to promote fellows (and progressive media sector) and engage audiences.

These goals will advance/shift dependent on the ultimate goals of the project (noted above) which still needs to be established.  While this effort would be centered around this particular project, it could also be considered a beta test/model for possible expansion of additional individuals already within the MC network.

Next Steps:

* Need goals and desired outcomes for Media Darlings firmly established
* Need fundraising goal and strategy to support this work
* Bring together sub-committee to discuss further after first two phases are developed some more--but need to act quickly

 **Guiding Principle: *Bring Money Into the Sector***
The ideas below are drawn from the Future Projects doc and gamechanger strategy session.  I think this principle is going to be directly informed by the gamechanger project over the next 3 months.  We might want to wait on really building out this area until we are done with the gamechanger project development is complete. But, just in case, I wanted to acknowledge past ideas.

Develop an endowment fund over the next five years that in the end will support the progressive media sector.
REALLY interesting idea, but of course needs to be thought out and run though a reality check. How reasonable is this in terms of actual money could be raised?  Implications on MC staffing?

Revive the Revolving Loan Fund

From discussion with Kim Spencer and Linda Jue: This idea goes to the heart of concerns around sustainability and support for MC members. The Independent Press Association received $1.5 million from Ford for a revolving loan fund for independent media. Just because the IPA shut down, doesn’t mean that the loan fund was a bad idea. A loan fund can provide short-term financial support for members and can have potential long-term benefits.

*Next steps*: Would need to delve a little bit more into the workings and inside knowledge of how the loan fund operated or was supposed to operate.

Making the political/financial argument for the progressive media

This is a long-term discussion that has never come to fruition. Ideas of white papers have been thrown around. A progressive media version of the Rob Stein PowerPoint presentation—would be a great foundation to make an argument to donors, investors, funders about why the progressive media is necessary.

Venture Investment (From Jay): Would it be possible to bring in venture money Many of us are set up as non-profit, but have aspects that could dovetail with venture money that could result in profit cash flow.  A certain kind of support could be structured in biz development investment.

STEVE, KATHY: GAMECHANGING

**Guiding Principles: *Foster Collaboration/Bring Money into the Sector***

**Strategic Collaboration Progressive Media Fund:**

In the past, The MC has attempted to organize small and larger collaborations among MC members from the Wal-Mart campaign to Live From Main Street.  Some efforts have been more successful than others.  While collaboration is an exciting idea for multiple MC members and it also drives to the mission of The MC, it is clear that in general, organizing collaboration among members is not working.  Too often, even if members are interested, they don't have the resources or the time.  Other times, the individual perspectives of each organization don't mesh with the collaboration subject or product.  All in all, there is no overarching self-interest in the collaboration besides the esoteric goals of driving the political debate.   So while I think The MC needs and should support collaboration among members, it should not be organized in a top-down model.  Instead, I propose a ground-up, member-driven model that will allow members to brainstorm their own collaboration ideas and make it happen with the support of The MC.

In light of this, The MC could offer "strategic collaboration grants" for MC members that would encourage them to think creatively, outside the box, and last but not least, create critical partnerships (merging/resource sharing in specific areas).  The Media Consortium would raise a large amount of money to redistribute to MC member-driven collaboration projects proposed and organized by the members.  Proposals would be open to MC members on an equal opportunity basis.   The goal would be for MC members to brainstorm and develop collaboration ideas among themselves (as many MC members could join in as needed) and submit a proposal on the collaboration to The MC by a specific date.  The proposals would be focused on the project idea, how this advances the individual orgs and the sector as a whole, why the participating members are the ones to organize this collaboration, the structure of the collaboration, who would be accountable for the project, how this project would create an impact, what steps would be necessary to create the impact, if it is a one-time collaboration or the basis for a long-term project, etc.

The MC could assemble an outside journalistic group to help evaluate and vet the project ideas.  The MC would move money by a specified date to the collaboration partners.  The MC would require and expect reports and updates on a regular basis as well as a final report.

The MC might be in the best position to argue that it can be an intermediary between funders and media outlets to evaluate and dispense funds to the prog. media sector.  But I don't want us to be an intermediary, just because we can or because people want more money.   We need to funnel money for strategic strengthening and development of the sector, that also fulfills our organization's mission.

*Logisitical ideas include:*

* More than 2 members of the consortium
* Proposals evaluated by MC staff w/outside advisers and a group of CC members?  (Need to make sure no conflict of interest)
* Staffed by members, w/regular check-in/reports to MC staff
* Sponsored by MC
* Funds would be for start-up or taking existing project to next level of collaboration

*Focused on one of two "collaboration" areas:*

* Supporting/Creating journalism that impacts the political and social dialogue
	+ i.e. content production and plan for impact
* Infrastructure Development
	+ i.e. shared research, shared backend support or tech development

**MC Member Meetings:**

One of the best opportunities for fostering collaboration and networking among members is the bi-annual MC meeting.  It has been the top opportunity to break down barriers and develop relationships among MC members, to vet and develop MC-driven projects and overall, build trust and self-interest in The MC as a whole.  Each time, the meetings have become more successful.  They also require tremendous time and resources to organize and pull-off.  I don't want to organize people to come to a meeting, just because we're supposed to have two a year.  As The MC develops, so should thinking about the purpose, goals and outcomes of each of these meetings.   There was also a question put on the table during the strategic retreat, about having one meeting a year, but the implications were not fully discussed.

**List Serve:**

The Media Consortium list serve is a valuable tool, but one that needs to be directed and developed some more. The most dominant emails on the list are regarding MC info and activities.  Next is information sharing re: individual member activities.  Occasionally there is information or email discussions that result in very interesting conversations or even organic collaborations (i.e. reproductive health policy proposal discussion that resulted in the  RH Reality Check, PNS, MoveOn.org collaboration.)  I would like to zero in on making the list useful for more information sharing regarding shifts/opportunities/tools/news in the media system/fostering and how this info could apply to the sector, policy/information sharing, and if possible, ideas on developing collaborations w/in the consortium.  What do YOU think would help make the list serve more useful?

**Web Site:**

At the moment, the web site has a very sparse public appearance. The internal core of the site is used for very little except management of member contact info and housing list serves (which could be done for free by google).  The GoLightly system is also extremely buggy.  We are working on expanding the public side of the web site and working to figure out how to transition out of GoLightly.  We are also are debating about what is needed for the internal side of the site.  Is it useful?  Should we abandon? What else would be useful?

Suggested Subcommittee: Kim, Julie, Jay, Ann

Next Steps:

* Sub-committee discuss and if agreed on idea "strategic collaboration media fund," flesh out strategic next steps and questions for advancement of project.  Also need to identify a budget/fundraising goal.
* Sub-committee created to discuss and propose the overarching goals and desired outcomes for future MC meetings, specifically for the second meeting scheduled (no dates yet!) for 2008
* Sub-committee also tackle some questions around the ListServ and the Web site? The MC staff are working on their own proposals and immediate next steps around these two areas.

**Guiding Principle: *Audience Development***

**MediaWire:**
Build out evolution of MediaWire project (See description here: [http://docs.google.com/Doc?id=ddqr4vgw\_27ngp7zpct](Doc?id=ddqr4vgw_27ngp7zpct" \t "_blank)). Project Goal: Act as cultivator of "best of independent media" that will:

* Raise awareness and impact of MC members on political dialogue
	+ build presence in mainstream media
	+ push journalism/debate on specific issues
* Expand audience and increase web traffic
	+ introduce and engage targeted communities to prog. media
* Allow MC members to produce content and utilize the MediaWire to move the sector into future media landscape: (a combo of sharing, linking, social networking, filtering, and new means of distribution). Interesting article: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/18/business/media/18businessweek.html?\_r=1&oref=slogin

Next Steps:

* Tracy is working with CommonSense to develop specific metrics re: MediaWire.  Will be done by 09/09.
* Need to see the successes/failures of the media wires over the next 4-6 months to think about next stage of project.  But gathering info and ideas as we prepare for launch.

Additional ideas and musings for development

No new specific fleshed-out ideas emerged from strategy retreat that would be MC coordinated. Ideas include:

* *Research projec*t on identifying targeted audiences (what media they currently access, why and how), cross-reference/comparison to prog. media current audience, and detail out future media consumption patterns.  List Building beginning/structured thinking about our audiences... Political and Financial potential...
* What are
* *MC member collaborations* that we could fund? (See Strategic Collaboration Progressive Media Fund above)
* We still have not nailed anything down about *ethnic media/people of color/gender and income diversity communities.* I had put an idea together on partnership/collaboration with ethnic media in the future projects doc created for the strategic retreat meeting.  (See Future Projects Doc).
* We still have the *gamechanger process* for the development of an audience building project

I think the most important thing to recognize with audience development is that we can say that we want to expand our audience, but that have not really discussed what that means in terms of the content that is delivered by MC members.  The content has to be accessible (in terms of distribution, tone, and topic), and appeal to the direct interest of these communities on a long-term basis.  It is also a question of what an expanded audience really means for the future financial viability of the members.  (i.e. How are these audience members going to bring more economic stability into the sector?)

Last but not least--as I mentioned briefly in the strategic planning retreat--I find it very interesting that no one has really brought up the idea of citizen journalism, user-generated content or involvement in terms of the direction of media in general and implications/opportunities for the prog. media sector.  This is clearly an opportunity for audience development and long-term engagement and if developed strategically, can be a real benefit for MC members, impact public political dialogue and help bring the entire sector into the future (already current) media landscape.

**Suggested Sub-Committee Members:**
Steve, Don, Linda,

Suggested Next Steps:

* Advise Tracy on final metrics for MediaWire site and opportunity for evaluation
* Discuss strategic opportunities and opportunities for audience research and development for 09 projects.
* Continue to develop this Guiding Principle within the gamechanger scenarios and projects throughout 08

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