**Business Plan: Community Journalism Training Institute**

**I. Executive Summary**

In 2013, the Media Consortium will launch a new project, to be called the Community Journalism Training Institute (CJTI).

**II. Business Description and Vision**

**Mission:** The mission of the Community Journalism Training Institute is to increase public access to information about their own communities by training members of the public to become community journalists.

**Vision:** The Community Journalism Training Institute envisions a society in which the public has quick access to vital information about their own communities, supplied by members of that community. We envision a society in which:

* the public will become better informed;
* community members who learn journalistic skills will become more active and engaged in their communities;
* community-based organizations will have new access to highly relevant content;
* and local, regional, and national news media will have better access to the stories that used to be supplied by local beat reporters.

**Goals and Objectives:** To fulfill its mission and vision, the Community Journalism Training Institute aims to bring its training to national scale, training over 10,000 participants across the country within five years. To that end, CJTI will:

* Develop a curriculum for both online and in-person training. This curriculum will be designed expressly for the needs of community members who may have no personal experience with journalism and limited time to engage in training;
* Develop a team of highly experienced and professional trainers who can provide both in-person and online training, and a network of local journalists willing to serve as assistant trainers;
* Develop an infrastructure capable of processing thousands of community members through trainings. This infrastructure will include the personnel and software necessary not only to assign trainers and manage training sign-ups, but also to evaluate trainings and track outcomes.
* Develop relationships with regional and national organizations interested in sponsoring ongoing trainings for their volunteer corps.

**Who We Are:** The Community Journalism Training Institute is a project of the Media Consortium, which itself is currently a project of the 501c3 Foundation for National Progress.

The Media Consortium is a national network of 60 progressive independent news-based media outlets. We support smart, powerful and passionate journalism that redefines American political and cultural debate.

We believe that independent media—media that are not owned by either multinational corporations or the government--play a vital role in democracy. Independent media are driven by a mission to tell the truth to power. We tell the stories corporate media does not dare to tell.

Media Consortium members seek to inform, educate, and engage citizens in creating the world to which we all aspire. Committed to fact-based journalism, Media Consortium members believe words matter and can spur action.

From our founding in 2006, the Media Consortium has focused on supporting member outlets, amplifying their many voices, and leveraging their collective audiences. With the Community Journalism Training Institute, the Media Consortium is expanding its reach to community journalists.

**III. The Market**

Media training has become such a significant business that it has segmented into several distinct fields.

**The Media Training Market**

1. Training Individuals in Media Marketing.

An entire sector focuses on different ways to use media to market individuals. One segment focuses on training individuals to make media appearances on broadcast and radio, as well as to hone their message in interviews. Another segment focuses on enabling leaders and authors to better utilize op-eds, social media, and diy videos. These trainings are not about creating media, but about getting your message out via media.

2. Training Companies and Organizations in Media Marketing

Along with traditional PR and communications firms that provide marketing services, a new market has sprung up around social media training. The aim of this training is to enable companies, organizations, and individuals to better reach their market on their own via these new tools. Again, this market is less focused on media creation and more focused on messaging.

3. Training Professional Media Makers

A market has always existed for training current and aspiring media makers. This market expanded with digital media. [Mediabistro](http://www.mediabistro.com/courses/?nav=mmc) has grabbed a significant share of this market, offering online webinars to bloggers. Smaller companies have also populated this marketplace. One example is [Editcetera](http://www.editcetera.com/).

University journalism programs and journalism association, often in partnership, offer continuing education training for journalists. The Media Consortium, Investigative News Network, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, Association for Community Broadcasting, etc. all offer training to their members as a member benefit. The same kind of training can be found on a fee-basis via journalism centers. Examples include

[Society of Professional Journalists Training](http://www.spj.org/training.asp) ,

[UC Berkeley Multimedia Training](http://www.journalism.berkeley.edu/multimedia)

[Poynter Institute’s News University](http://www.newsu.org)

[Knight Digital Media Center](http://www.knightnewmediacenter.org)

[Renaissance Journalism Learning Lab](http://renjournalism.org/our-work/learninglab/)

Recently, the term “community journalism” has begun to be used in connection with these kinds of trainings. For example, the Knight Digital Media Center partnered with INN to offer a “Community Journalism Executive Training Program.” That program, however, was geared to hyperlocal media seeking to become sustainable news businesses rather than to individuals who do not seek to be full-time journalists.

4. Training Citizen or Community Journalists

There is a growing market for training members of a community in journalism techniques—the market segment that CJTI plans to enter.

Highly motivated individuals may participate in training geared to professional journalists. Poynter’s News University training, for example, is open to any user. In addition, the following organizations have established significant community journalism training programs:

[Covering Communities](http://www.coveringcommunities.org). “A site for journalists, educators, student journalists and citizen journalists,” this website offers a number of PDF documents with tips on how to interview, how to prevent bias, and how to connect to local communities.

[J-learning.org](http://www.j-learning.org). J-learning is designed to help individuals create their own hyperlocal media site. It assumes an individual is committed to spending a significant amount of time creating journalistic content—and perhaps becoming a full-time journalist.

[The Tiziano Project.](http://tizianoproject.org/) This program “provides community members in conflict, post-conflict and underreported regions with the equipment, training and affiiliations necessary to report their stories and improve their lives. They offer 2-4 week tutorials and also provide PDF documents for self-training.

[One in Four](https://sites.google.com/site/oneinfourcitizenjournalism/). A citizen journalism training project similar to CJTI, but based in the UK.

[Daily Cloudt.](http://dailycloudt.com/)  This is just the newest of several websites that encourage “ordinary citizens” to post their own stories. It is powered by Naomi Wolf and David Fenton.

[The Franklin Center.](http://franklincenterhq.org/events/) This right-wing organization offers what it calls “citizen watchdog” training, in which it educates citizens about issues and gives them tools to report on those issues.

Finally, a significant amount of citizen or community journalism training happens at the local level, often via community foundations or through publicly funded community broadcasters, which are mandated to provide training on their broadcast equipment. An example is [Akron Digital Media Center](http://www.akronist.com/training/) .

**The Need for Community Journalism**

The Arab spring demonstrated the power of everyday individuals to report on their society. As a result community journalism has become associated with protests against autocratic regimes.

It’s true that in the United States, the Occupy movement likewise brought new energy to community journalism. A phenomenon that had started with bloggers (and subsequently became professionalized as individuals like Josh Marshall and Nate Silver found full-time work as pundits), returned to its roots when Occupy protesters turned on their cellphones to record what was happening around them.

The livestreamed video work of [Tim Pool](https://twitter.com/Timcast), in particular, helped turn Zucotti park protests into a national Occupy movement and those efforts continue today. From [protester arrests in Chicago](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XArqTZzYn7I) to [home foreclosure protests](http://www.leftinalabama.com/diary/9724/occupy-birmingham-helps-stop-bank-of-america-foreclosure) in Birmingham, AL, community journalists have told the Occupy story.

Yet, the need for community journalism in the United States extends far beyond the Occupy movement. Too many areas of this country are underserved by corporate media.

* Feet in Two Worlds was founded in 2005 to train immigrants to tell their own stories.
* The Tiziano Project--established to provide local reporting for communities in conflict such as Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan--has increasingly focused its resources on impoverished conflict-ridden urban communities within the United States, including Philadelphia, the San Carlos Apache Reservation, and the Leimert Park area of central Los Angeles.
* In July 2012 the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication of Washington State University issued an urgent call for community journalists for rural areas. The report calls the state of Washington “a digital state with a rural information ghetto.” It recommends that the College, along with advocating for rural broadband, facilitate “training/content partnerships between ‘mainstream media’ and citizens who can provide reporting from rural areas beyond the news footprint of existing news organizations.”

As community print newspapers die out and are not replaced and as regional news outlets cut their beat reporters, low-income, ethnic and rural communities have become information ghettos. Only community journalists can fill the gap professional journalists have left behind.

**The Need for Community Journalism Training**

New tools make it possible for anyone to become a reporter. Equipped with a camera phone and an internet connection, anyone can take photos and upload them to flickr, take audio and upload it to soundcloud, or take video and upload it to youtube or stream it on Ustream.

However, individuals who have taken the initiative to become reporters of their own stories have discovered that they lack some very basic tools and techniques to ensure that their stories get the widest distribution. When community journalists catch a news-making moment, like a police arrest, the quality doesn’t matter too much. However, when community journalists want to bring attention to infrastructure or community issues like home foreclosures, then they need to create higher quality content.

The need for quality is underscored by the two major platforms for citizen journalism, Ustream and YouTube. Ustream has published a tipsheet for wannabe community journalists [on its website](https://ustream.zendesk.com/entries/21642612-become-a-citizen-journalist-with-ustream-mobile-broadcasting-apps), including such basics as “hold the camera steady.” YouTube just launched a “[YouTube Reporters’ Center](http://www.youtube.com/reporterscenter)” featuring brief videos by professional newscasters with tips for community journalists. That community journalists recognize the need is clear from calls by people like Wendy Kenin, of Occupy Oakland Media Group, who [encourages](http://hellaoccupyoakland.org/political-action-create-your-own-media-citizenjournalism-advocacyjournalism/) community journalists to try to take “archival quality video”.

The need, in short, is for clear, simple lessons in the 101s of journalistic reporting, news photography, and audio/video recording, such as these points:

* Audio that is clear and distinct
* Video that captures an event and puts the focus on the action
* Photos that highlight the central story using classic compositional techniques like the rule of thirds
* How to interview a friendly figure to ensure you get interesting answers
* How to interview an antagonist to foreground what matters without making the story be about you
* How to capture the who, what, where, when, how and why
* How to upload your content
* How to link your uploaded content to social media

These are basic journalistic and technical how-tos that can be easily taught.

**The Target Client and the Target Market**

Target Client. A number of services are already offered to professional journalists and those who aspire to become professional journalists. The Community Journalism Training Institute will target individuals who are active in their communities and have already demonstrated a strong interest in political change, but who do not currently aspire to become “journalists.”

Examples of such individuals include:

* Volunteers for political campaigns who are willing to canvass, make phone calls, and otherwise contribute their time to a cause
* Volunteers for activist organizations like Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club or PICO who reliably turn out for protests and attend court and legislative hearings as witnesses for their cause
* Union members

These individuals are already highly motivated to attend community events and to act as witnesses. By giving them community journalism skills, they will be able to amplify their activism in a way that is meaningful to themselves and their cause.

Target Market. Because these individuals are focused on activism rather than on journalism, they are unlikely to sign up for community journalism training on their own. For that reason, the target market is actually not the clients themselves, but the campaigns and organizations for which they volunteer.

4. These organizations, all 501c3s or 501c4s, already offer training to their volunteers, primarily around activist activities. For example, they train volunteers to speak to their state legislators and congressional representatives; how to participate in a nonviolent protest; how to conduct a door-knocking campaign, and so forth.

CJTI can be offered to this target market as an easy add-on to the trainings they already offer their members.

5. what market share we anticipate

No idea.

**IV. Products and Services Offered**

1. specifically describe services offered

2. explain why services are competitive

**V. Organization and Management**

1. how company is organized

2. legal structure of business

3. what licenses or permits we will need

4. bios of key managers

**VI. Marketing and Sales Strategy**

1. identify and describe market—who customers are and demand

2. describe distribution channels

3. explain sales strategy including pricing, promotion, products and place (i.e. placement)

VI. Financial Management

1. start-up costs

2. projected balance sheet (1 year)

3. projected income (1 year)

4. project cash flow (1 year)