Interim Report: Media Democracy Fund Grant to the Media Consortium

Re: Grant No: NVF-MDF-TMC GA#0716

Submitted by:

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**Executive Summary**

Goals and Objectives

Our goal is to educate journalists in media policy with an emphasis on the way media policy impacts low-income communities, rural communities and communities of color (with the understanding that there is often overlap among these communities).

Based on feedback from journalists, our objective is to set up workshops at conferences journalists already attend. Specifically, during the period of this grant we proposed holding media policy workshops at IRE 2016 and IRE 2017.

Results to Date

We held three workshops on media policy at IRE 2016 :

* Who Can Read your Story? The Digital Divide with Christopher Mitchell, Matthew Rantanen, and Michael Scurato
* What Costs Nothing but isn’t Free? The Battle over Zero-Rating with Malavika Jayaram, Sarah Morris, Nicol Turner-Lee, Mike Ludwig
* Brave New World: Monitoring Activists, Monitoring Reporters with Mike Rispoli, Brandi Collins, Steven Renderos, Dave Maass

Interestingly, the best attended of these events as the session on the digital divide. We also funded nine reporters to travel to IRE to attend these workshops—four of these were reporters of color; two worked for community media; and two worked on news outlets with a primary focus on communities of color. Their reports are attached.

We are currently in the planning stages for IRE 2017, which will take place June 22-25, 2017.

Challenges Encountered

One of our most significant challenges was finding reporters of color and community media reporters who were interested in attending IRE. Especially for community media reporters, IRE can seem far removed from their daily work.

A second challenge we had was competing with the large number of sessions at IRE—it was hard to market the zero-rating session. Our Sunday session was also not well attended in part because it was one of the last sessions of the conference.

A very unexpected challenge has dawned with the year 2017 and the new administration and FCC. We expect many more reporters will be interested in FCC policy—if we can break through the noise.

Lessons Learned

Begin outreach to IRE earlier to make sure we have prime spots on the schedule;

Begin outreach to journalists earlier; make a special effort to reach out to ACM and NFCB to find community journalists who would be excited about attending IRE.

Don’t just focus on IRE; also work to create media policy sessions at other conferences.

Project Workplan with Adjustments

1. We will continue to plan to hold 3-5 workshops at IRE and to bring in up to 10 reporters to attend IRE. We will aim for at least 6 reporters of color and at least 5 reporters from community media.
2. We will also run a media policy track at the Media Consortium’s conference, [TMC2017](http://tmcmedia.org). We are working with Amina Fazlullah at Benton to deliver two different kinds of content, one focused on threats to journalists, the other focused on threats to the public (i.e. lifeline, erate, net neutrality)
3. We will work with our allies and partners at ACM, NFCB and AAN to bring media policy sessions to their conferences.