Argh, I can’t track changes without paying Microsoft money. So I’m just going to rewrite. Sorry!

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At least 14 associations support independent journalism outlets (see appendix xx). Many of these associations are small, serving 100 members or less. Several are underresourced. Others, especially those with large memberships, have healthy budgets but may not be meeting all of their members’ needs. One working group at Pocantico spent some time exploring whether these organizations could benefit the sector by working together, and if so, in what way.

All agreed that, in whatever configuration, independent and community journalism outlets need the infrastructure support associations provide. Associations offer peer-to-peer networking, training, and resource sharing, from legal services to discounted products to technical assistance. Associations are also useful in helping foundations by distributing “block grants” to media outlets and individuals among their membership, a bureaucratic process that some foundations would not undertake individually for small allocations.

**Benefits of working together**. Several suggestions were made for how smaller organizations could work together, including merging, federating, or some other close contractual partnership.. Benefits of such a partnership would include:

* Shared Services and Products: Members of all organizations would benefit from services and products offered by each organization.
* Discounted Services: A larger user pool might make possible services now impossible to acquire, such as quality 401k plans, health insurance plans, and a credit line for business loans.
* Discounted Products: A larger user pool creates more incentive for companies to offer bigger discounts on their products.
* Ad Networks: Especially for digital and mobile ads, an increase in participants will equal an increase in sales and cpms.
* Shared Back-End Services: Associations could share, and thus realize a discount on, services including accounting, bookkeeping, grant record-keeping, website maintenance, etc.
* Shared Conferences: Associations would realize a benefit of scale in increased sponsorships and exhibitors; attendees would benefit from increased networking and a wider variety of workshops.

This kind of shared services model could also be adopted by independent media outlets which, although editorially independent, could also cut costs or gain resources not otherwise available to a publication or website their size.

**Current and future challenges to working together**. Participants recognized that the greatest barrier to such partnerships come from differences in culture and values. On the one hand, associations like the Institute for Nonprofit News, The Media Consortium, the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies and the Local Independent Online News Publishers have much in common: a commitment to investigative journalism and a culture of standing apart and questioning power.

On the other hand, there are clear cultural differences. Taking the above examples, AAN and LION’s outlets are focused on local news, while INN and the Media Consortium outlets tend to report on regional and national news. The Media Consortium espouses values and solution journalism while INN espouses nonpartisan journalism. AAN outlets are for-profit, INN outlets are non-profit, while LION and the Media Consortium represent both types of outlets. And these comparisons pale in comparison to differences in culture between any of these associations and associations like NNPA—The Black Press of America.

**Counsel on how to proceed**. Some suggested there was a need to start convening these associations to discuss if and how to move forward. Others suggested that some associations may have to lead the way. For example, the Media Consortium and the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies are now in talks to explore merging, having a joint conference, and breaking down those silos.

Others cautioned that starting the process slowly by successfully pooling resources one by one, which pushes the membership to ask for more collaborations, might be the way to go. No matter what the strategy, there was agreement that the news industry needs to be on more solid, sustainable footing before the next recession hits. So there was some urgency to making progress on this front, in whatever model or form is settled on, sooner rather than later.