

**Submitted by: The Media Consortium, a project of the Foundation for National Progress**

**Submitted to: Quixote Foundation**

**Date: April 17, 2014**

**Submitted by: Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, Executive Director**

**Final Report: Where is Your Plan B**

In the summer of 2013, the Media Consortium together with the Association of Alternative Newsmedia launched the Reproductive Justice Reporting Pilot Project with the support of the Quixote Foundation. This project had three objectives:

1. To raise public awareness of an issue around women’s reproductive health.

2. To test the assumption that national and local outlets working together can report on a given issue better than any outlet could do by working separately and alone.

3. To test the assumption that by working collaboratively to publish one multi-part, multimedia story along a joint timeline, outlets can have greater reach and more impact than any outlet working separately and alone.

This report provides a brief summary of the project design and the content and pr rollout, and then analyzes how successfully we fulfilled each objective. Accompanying the report are a series of appendices which provide data to support the analysis.

**Part One: Creating the Project**

**I. Project Design**

The project was designed to meet all three objectives. Project managers from TMC and AAN selected outlets that had a track record around reproductive reporting; a proven record of working collaboratively; and an expressed interest in this particular project.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TMC Outlets | AAN Outlets |
|  |  |
| Ms magazine | Santa Fe Reporter |
| Bitch magazine | Austin Chronicle |
| In These Times | Leo Weekly |
| Making Contact | Portland Mercury |
| Public News Service |  |

The Jackson Free Press (AAN) was originally a participant but had to drop out of the project due to staff illness.

In an attempt to make collaboration easier, TMC and AAN outlets were first paired together on a news brief. The theory was that working on a short piece would help project managers and participating editors to better understand the requirements of the different outlets and how they might work best together. Those pairings produced the following stories:

Santa Fe Reporter/ Making Contact

[http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/article-7626-america%E2%80%99s-auschwitz.html](http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/article-7626-america%E2%80%99s-auschwitz.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Austin Chronicle/ Public News Service

[http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/33675-1](http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/33675-1" \t "_blank)

Leo Weekly/ In These Times

[Access denied](http://www.leoweekly.com/news/access-denied%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Once a working relationship was created, the partners met in video conference to choose a joint topic. They choose to focus on the new FDA ruling which made Plan B emergency contraceptive available over the counter. Outlets wanted to inform the public about this ruling; to discover if pharmacies would follow this new FDA ruling; and to discover whether the ruling truly made Plan B easily available.

Outlets jointly planned their separate stories; chose partners; and agreed to publish all the stories in the same week and to market them via a joint website. This plan was then implemented with the assistance of the project managers.

**II. Content Launch**

Whereisyourplanb.com launched on October 7, 2013. The launch was accompanied by a vigorous social media campaign using the hashtag #whereismyplanb. In all nine stories were published:

* Top 5 Roadblocks to Plan B Access, Ms. Magazine
* Native American Activists Fight for Plan B Access, Bitch and Making Contact
* When the B Stands for Barriers, Leo Weekly
* From Abstinence Only to Plan Z, Austin Chronicle
* Who is Controlling Birth Control, Public News Service
* Abortion Access Under Fire in New Mexico, Santa Fe Reporter
* Plan B Isn’t Truly Over the Counter in Portland, Portland Mercury
* Immigrant Detainees have no Plan B, In These Times
* Roundtable: Our Experiences Buying Plan B, Ms. Magazine

In addition to these stories, the Media Consortium with the assistance of Ms. Magazine and People.Power.Media created a video to portray the difficulty women face getting Plan B over the counter. This video was embedded on the plan B site.

The project also created an interactive map that was fed by a form, also on the website. The map was designed to encourage activists to go to pharmacies to see for themselves if Plan B was available over the counter.

**III. Promotion**

Recognizing that women’s health issues can be miscommunicated, project managers arranged for Media Matters to provide “dos and don’ts” to editors as they edited pieces and began to promote the content. Media Matters also agreed to push the website when it launched.

Starting on October 8, 2013, TMC and AAN joined to hire a freelancer to promote the site via social media under the twitter hashtag #WhereisMyPlanB. TMC and AAN also sent our emails asking organizations and individuals to promote the site and the hashtag. Emails were sent to:

* The Media Consortium list
* The Assocation of Alternative Newsmedia list
* A list of 400 women’s health reporters (generated using Vocus)
* A list of 40 media reporters
* Individuals and organizations that had been touched by this project.

Each of the nine news organizations plus the Quixote Foundation promoted the site via social media using #whereismyplanb and via targeted email blasts. TMC member feministing.com, which was not part of the project, very generously sent out a large number of tweets/facebooks to their followers, as did several other TMC members, including Reproductive Health Reality Check. In addition, a number of reproductive health and emergency contraceptive organizations promoted the site via twitter and facebook, including the Reproductive Health Technologies Project and the Association for Emergency Contraceptives.

The Austin Chronicle hosted a “Fight For Your Reproductive Rights” happy hour at a UT campus-area bar. Local health care provider and advocates – including Planned Parenthood, Whole Woman’s Health, and NARAL Pro-Choice Texas – set up information stations and volunteer signup sheets, we handed out free condoms, and readers were able to speak with our reporter directly; a couple of the women she interviewed for the story also were in attendance.

Finally, AAN put out a blog post on the collaboration on October 8, 2013:

<http://blogs.sacurrent.com/thedaily/alt-weeklies-team-up-to-investigate-plan-b-access/>

**Part Two: Assessing Success**

**I. Did the project promote public awareness of the availability of Plan B One-Step—and of the hurdles many still found in accessing this medication?** **Yes.**

After an initial flurry of stories about the FDA decision in the summer of 2013, the media fell silent on the implementation of over the counter Plan B One-Step. While activist organizations were working hard to implement and assess the outcome of the Plan B rollout, there were few to no stories on the availability of Plan B in the media until our pieces came out.

**The Plan B collaboration produced 9 stories that were read/heard/viewed by over 250,000 people.** [For Details see Appendices A and B]

In addition to the audience reported by participating outlets, we had a decent PR pickup around the Plan B collaboration:

October 7, 2013, Mother Jones

 <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2013/10/how-easy-it-get-plan-b>

October 18, CounterSpin

This nationally syndicated radio show devoted a 10 minute segment to the project with an interview with TMC ED Jo Ellen Kaiser about the Plan B Collaboration

<http://fair.org/counterspin-radio/simone-campbell-on-shutdown-jo-ellen-green-kaiser-on-where-is-your-plan-b/>

December 16, 2013, Bluestocking.com

Ginger Hintz interviewed Jo Ellen Kaiser about the collaboration <http://bluestockingsmag.com/2013/12/16/draft_over-the-counter-is-not-a-sexual-position-where-to-find-your-plan-b/>

**Assessing Success**

**II. Did the project provide evidence for the assumption that national and local outlets working together can report on a given issue better than any outlet could do by working separately and alone?** **Yes.**

First, the only outlet that had planned to report on Plan B was Ms. Magazine. The simple act of putting these outlets together in a collaboration made the joint reporting on Plan B possible, and created a set of stories that would not otherwise have happened.

That national reporting would not have been possible without the contributions of Leo Weekly, Portland Mercury and the Austin Chronicle, which provided evidence of “regular folks” who were unable to obtain Plan B over the counter in their pharmacies. Those local stories would not have been incorporated into a national story without this collaboration.

Second, the national-local collaboration gave several of these outlets their first experience with data visualization and crowdsourcing. The crowd-sourced map was one of the most exciting aspects to the collaboration for many of the participating outlets, who learned that such visualizations can be done cost-effectively and can really motivate a base.

Third, the national-local collaboration gave several of these outlets the opportunity to use video to accompany a story. The future of journalism may be on the video platform, but most outlets—including Ms—have not even started to think seriously about how to incorporate video into their websites on a daily or at least weekly basis. The experience of putting together a video—and the good reception the video received—demonstrated to the sites that video is not just a platform for someone else.

Finally, the collaboration taught the outlets how to collaborate. Since the Plan B collaboration, Making Contact and Bitch have teamed up on a second reproductive justice collaboration due out this summer; Public News Service has established a regular working relationship with the Austin Chronicle; and In These Times has reached out to the Progressive for a collaboration around education.

In short, the very fact of the collaboration was a huge educational experience for the outlets involved that resulted in better reporting but also in a newfound expertise with data and video tools, and with the process of collaboration itself.

**Assessing Success**

**III. Did the project provide evidence for the assumption that by working collaboratively to publish one multi-part, multimedia story along a joint timeline, outlets can have greater reach and more impact than any outlet working separately and alone? Unclear.**

This project defined “impact” as the extent to which news stories moved people to talk about the fact that Plan B One-Step is now available over the counter and, if necessary, to take some action to inform others about this fact.

Via that definition, the project definitely had an impact. However, the measurable impact—the quantifiable impact—was small.

For example, though we did see good traffic on social media around our stories, particularly when Feministing with its 100,000 Facebook fans promoted them, the metrics impact researchers currently working with the Media Consortium did not see a significant increase in the number of twitter conversations that were pro-emergency contraceptive. Intriguingly, they did see a slight downturn (2%) during the week after our collaboration launched in the number of twitter conversations that were opposed to emergency contraception (See Appendix C). One theory is that right-wingers thought it best not to discuss contraception when we had stories debunking their usual false statements about Plan B and its health effects.

What excited us much more than the social media conversations was the interest we saw in the crowdsourced map. The form asked inviduals to go to a pharmacy, check out if Plan B was available over the counter, and then report back.

So far, 92 people have filled in the form! While this number is small in toto, it is large considering that we asked people to physically go somewhere, do research, and then input this research. To put this in context, the American Society for Emergency Contraception based in Princeton conducted a similar study at the same time as our report, and only managed to encourage 80 activists to gather this kind of information.

In fact, our site proved so useful to emergency contraceptive activists that we have donated it to the ASEC. Here’s what their director has to say:

 “As activists and advocates who work to improve access to emergency contraception, we were thrilled to learn about The Media Consortium’s “Where Is Your Plan B?” project. The American Society for Emergency Contraception (ASEC) was also collecting data on how Plan B One-Step was being sold after the OTC approval, and we connected with Jo Ellen to figure out how we could join forces and get the most out of our collective efforts. We were able to harmonize our data collection instruments so that we can  report our results as a whole. The Media Consortium will transfer the “Where Is Your Plan B?” site to ASEC, and we will use this resource to keep pressure on retailers to stock Plan B One-Step on the shelf and keep this issue at the forefront. Thank you for your excellent work and collaboration!” – Kelly Cleland, Executive Director, American Society for Emergency Contraception/Princeton University

**Conclusion**

The Plan B collaboration accomplished all of its goals. We informed the public about the new availability of Plan B One-Step over the counter. We proved that national and local outlets not only could work together, but that by working together they could produce better reporting than any outlet would have done on its own. We also created some direct impact, exciting activists and encouraging some individuals to become more active in standing up for their reproductive rights.

The Media Consortium has been working on the question of how to make impact for over five years now, punctuated by former director Tracy Van Slyke’s excellent book, Beyond the Echo Chamber. Our research to date continues to indicate that editorial collaborations have more impact than can be measured by adding up the reach of their respective audiences. However, we also increasingly realize that collaboration alone cannot create viral messaging or the kind of policy-changing impact we often would like to see.

Fundamentally, journalism is not activism. They each serve different functions. Journalists can investigate wrong-doing; we can organize and analyze data; and we can synthesize what other are saying. This information can then feed activism and reinforce it.

That’s exactly what the Plan B collaboration has done. By investigating the circumstances of native women, prisoners and students who were denied Plan B by their pharmacies; by organizing and analyzing data on Plan B availabilty from a number of locations, and by synthesizing the lived experience of women via our video, we provoked some individuals to activism and provided materials for activists to use.

**Appendix A**

Quantitative Metrics: Probable Audience Size for Plan B Stories (Reach)

Here is a summary of our quantitative metrics around audience:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outlets/Audience | Stated Digital Audience | Unique Views | Radio | Print Circulation |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Plan B special website | 0 | 916 |  | -- |
| Austin Chronicle | n/a | 2,857 |  | 80,000 |
| Bitch magazine | 25,000 | n/a | \*800 | Not applicable  |
| In These Times | n/a | 656 |  | 25,000 |
| Leo Weekly | n/a | n/a |  | 25,150 |
| Making Contact | n/a | n/a | 62,000 | -- |
| Ms magazine | 31,000 | n/a |  | 100,000 |
| Portland Mercury | n/a | n/a |  | 42,500 |
| Public News Service | n/a | n/a | 24 million | -- |
| Santa Fe Reporter | 43,000 | 3,698 |  | 20,000 |

NOTES:

1) n/a = not available. The AAN outlets in particular are not used to delivering analytics to funders.

2) Radio and print outlets have no mechanism to determine who in their audience actually listened to a broadcast.

\*Bitch analytics did not record # of clicks to the podcast, or partial listens, only # that listened to entire podcast.

**Appendix B**

**Quantitative Metrics:** **WhereisYourPlanB.com**

The “WhereisYourPlanB” website recorded the following analytics within the first two weeks:

2140 page views

1,198 visitors

916 unique visitors

average time of visit: 2:16

23% of visitors returned to the site

As expected, the highest number of visitors was on 10/7; the lowest was on the weekend of 10/12-10/13:

The sources of the visits demonstrated that the promotion campaign managed to touch individuals in multiple ways, as visitors came from a well-distributed number of sources:

Appendix C

See PDF Attachment.