

The Media Consortium

History

In 2005, two dozen leaders from the worlds of independent print, radio, television, and Internet journalism answered a call from *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, and *The American Prospect* to discuss “Independent Media and the Future of Democracy.” It was the first time in at least a decade that independent media content producers and distributors had come together to discuss how to strengthen our effectiveness.

We continued the conversation through 2005, expanding the participants to include many more media organizations. Our goal: to figure out how a network of independent media organizations could address two challenges we all face:

- How to increase independent journalism's voice in broader public debates over the crucial political and social issues of our day.
- How to navigate the current wave of profound technological change -- change that is not only reshaping the media business, but also redefining the very practice of journalism.

Today, we have two full-time and four part-time, project-based contractors, plus 50 organizational members. We have also built strong alliances with a number of like-minded non-member organizations, including MoveOn.org, Free Press, The New Progressive Coalition, and the Open Society Institute.

Each of our strategic projects is tied to at least one of The Media Consortium's three strategic work areas: **Building Connections**, **Infrastructure**, and **Voice**.

Our Projects

We are currently pursuing several projects that help our members reach their audiences, increase their revenue, and navigate the ever-evolving media landscape, including:

- **Member Meetings.** We typically convene every six months in locations chosen for their strategic value. Our meetings are spaces for networking, strategic planning, and crafting a vision for the future of the independent **media landscape**.
- **The MC listserv** solicits ideas and conveys updates on Media Consortium activities, projects, and events. In the latter part of 2008, the listserv has served as a key resource to facilitate action, dialogue, and collaboration around Media Consortium projects.
- Our **online advertising network** pools the collective inventories of Consortium members to make an easy-to-sell, profitable package. The project is currently undergoing a feasibility study. When launched, revenue will be distributed among participating members.
- Through our **Progressive Media “Game Changers” Program**, Media

Consortium members are engaged in long-term creative and strategic planning for the independent media sector. “Game Changers” are defined as developments (projects, initiatives, strategies, new models, innovations) that “change the game” for independent media by increasing its impact and influence in the next five years. By nature, these “game changers” aren’t incremental strategies, but rather bold moves that The Media Consortium could adopt and advance in order to positively influence independent media’s future.

- The **Independent Media Internships** is a paid internship program geared towards hands-on learning and mentorship in a variety of media fields (audio, video, print, online). Interns are recruited by MC staff and placed with TMC members. The Media Consortium pays a \$2,000 stipend over 3 months to participating interns. Our goal is to foster the development of tomorrow’s media leaders.
- We’ve harnessed new technologies, social networking applications, and distribution opportunities for our **Media Wire project**. The Media Consortium has partnered with Common Sense New Media Solutions to use their NewsLadder platform to create portals to the best independent reporting on the economy, healthcare, and immigration. Think of these as one-stop shops for all the best in independent reporting from Media Consortium members. Learn more about this project at <http://www.themediaconsortium.org/projects/>

Membership

Annual membership fees to The Consortium are tiered according to member organizations’ annual budgets. They range from \$250 for organizations with budgets under \$500,000 to and \$1,000 for organizations with over \$1,000,000. Some members are more active than others, but all members can participate in all Consortium projects. We ask that all member organizations send a delegate from senior management to at least one of two meetings per year.

The Media Consortium works with a wide variety of progressive media organizations, including blogs, foundations, and audio/visual production groups. We provide a diversity of projects and initiatives that enrich their coverage, strengthen their business infrastructures, and leverage the collective clout of The Media Consortium.

In order to be considered for membership, organizations must complete a questionnaire detailing audience and organizational infrastructure. Potential members must also have:

- A journalism-driven mission that promotes progressive ideals
- Staff and organizational capacity to participate in projects that benefit the organization and the Consortium
- The commitment of senior leadership to personally participate in Media Consortium activities, projects, and meetings

We expect all members to be active participants in The Media Consortium--not just logos on our website. We see membership as win-win: members actively contribute to our projects and initiatives and also benefit from them.

If you are interested in applying for membership in The Media Consortium, please contact Erin Polgreen (erin@themediaconsortium.com) for a copy of our questionnaire.

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