**Digital Innovation Studio Criteria**

The independent media sector faces broad challenges and opportunities in 2010. Business models have been broken by both the migration of audiences and ad dollars to the digital space and a complicated online ecosystem that includes new competitors. The digital revolution has also given birth to many new independent media organizations and created unprecedented opportunities to reach new audiences and latch on to innovative new revenue streams.

But many journalism outlets are having trouble bridging the gap between yesterday and tomorrow’s media. Consortium members can take advantage of the tremendous opportunity the digital revolution provides—but only if they understand the tone, pace, technology, and unique editorial products that thrive on the web and through new platforms. The Media Consortium is offering a dynamic and strategic space to help members understand, navigate and experiment with new ways to overcome crisis and take advantage of new opportunities through our **Digital Innovation Studio**, a part of the Innovation and Incubation Labs program.

**The Studio includes three small group labs that will focus on one of the following topics:**

1. Experimenting with new revenue-generating opportunities
2. Moving into mobile: Cell phones, e-readers, and iPads, oh my!
3. Integrating journalism with community engagement and building models

TMC members will [apply to participate](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WRP5GPL) in up to two small group labs (out of the above three) that will start in summer 2010. Up to five organization can participate in each lab. Organized by Media Consortium staff, these small group labs will include regular conference calls with participating members and outside experts, one in-person meeting for lab participants, online information sharing/communication spaces and more. This structure will provide lab members with the opportunity and space for self-education, peer knowledge sharing, connection to outside experts/tools, and collaborations that can scale up to improve the long-term sustainability of their outlets.

With these small-group labs, The Media Consortium will support deep learning and incremental shifts for its members to develop new models of revenue generation, audience expansion and new editorial opportunities. Cumulatively, these labs will catalyze a broad shift in how independent media outlets operate, survive and thrive in the emerging media landscape. **This program embodies the concept of “you get what you put in.”** Do you want to be challenged, creative and collaborative? Do you want to work with your peers? Are you willing to put in the time, effort and brain power to learn and work together? We’re not looking for organizations or individuals that are half-hearted in their commitment to experiment and evolve. This is a critical moment for the journalism landscape, and we want you all to be at the cutting edge. Come join us.

**Experiment Criteria**
Each small group lab will result in at least one experiment that all participants will execute. Whatever the focus of the small-group lab (mobile, journalism/community building, revenue), experiments must:

* Have top line goal(s) that can be shared by all participants in that small group lab.
* Address one or more of following opportunities:
	+ Bring in revenue from new sources or deepening current revenue-generating opportunities;
	+ Raise impact/influence of journalism (i.e. collaborations, new journalism production models, community engagement);
	+ Expand reach of content to targeted audiences.
* Be scalable/replicable.
* An emphasis on experiments that are collaborative or customizable per organization is highly encouraged.

**TMC members must commit:**

* 1-2 relevant lead staff from your organization to participate in small-group lab as a liaison for each group [(i.e. can be a different staff member if your organization is involved in one or more groups).] **It is strongly recommended that one editorial staff member and one business staff member participate.**
* To brainstorming, developing and participating in experiment(s) generated out of small group lab.
* The organizational capacity to execute experiment(s).
* To sharing and communicating relevant news and information with TMC staff and small-group lab partners throughout exploration/development phase.
* Participating in weekly or bi-weekly conference calls (depending on phase of project) and one in-person meeting to discuss and develop experiment(s).
* Analyzing and participating in a public end-of-experiment report.
* Paying small fee of $350 to cover base costs.

**TMC staff commits to:**

* Provide $5,000-$12,000 in seed money for experiment developed out of small group lab.
* Organize spaces (online, phone, and in person) for members to connect, share information and develop experiments.
* Routinely provide relevant information (articles, reports, resources) on small group lab topic areas.
* Connect members to relevant allies and partners (i.e. technologists, researchers, etc..).
* Work with members to develop and roll out experiment.
* Partner with members to develop and produce a public end-of-experiment report.

**Make-up of small group labs:**

* Up to 5 organizations per small-group.
* Organizations can participate in two of the three small group-labs. They can specify their top two choices on the application.
* TMC staff will work to organize the make-up of the small group labs based on both diversity and common ability to execute experiment that will result in comprehensive results
* Each small-group lab will run for 3-6 months depending on the goals, experiment implementation and time for results/report period

**Lab structure and schedule**

**Step 1: Resource-Gathering and Research.** TMC staff has already begun gathering resources, experts, tools and more for each small-group to review on their particular topic. Small-group participants will be encouraged to share their own resources (articles, reports, allies) that could help inform the conversation. Over the 3-4 weeks leading up to the first meeting, small-group members will review the information through online spaces and conference calls to discuss the highlights, implications and address ongoing questions. In addition, TMC staff will work with members to identify and bring in outside experts to help flesh out experiment ideas and identify possible tools as resources to use in the experiment process.

**Step 2: Generating Experiment Ideas and Making a Decision.** TMC staff will work with members to develop overarching goals for experiments, brainstorm experiment opportunities, and identify needs to support experiment ideas. TMC will organize a one-day, in-person meeting of lab participants to brainstorm and iterate out goals and experiment ideas. As needed, TMC staff will continue to bring in outside experts to help with the brainstorming process.

**Step 3: Design and Implement Experiment.** Small-group lab participants will work together to narrow down to specific experiment idea(s) to execute. Small-group members will finalize goals, budget, staffing, and time period for experiment. Please refer to the Experiment Criteria (above) for additional requirements. TMC staff will work with members to finalize the seed money it will provide for experiment(s). Over the next few months, TMC staff will also work with members to provide consulting support, regular check-in of members on experiment execution and how/if experiment is matching with goals and needs of participants.

**Step 4: Assess and Move Forward.** As the experiment nears completion, members will work with each other and TMC staff to identify successes/lessons learned from experiment(s), note specific results and outline next steps needed (including funding) to make the experiment an ongoing part of your organization’s work. This report will be used to inform other TMC members and allies. TMC staff will work with small-group members to use that report for fundraising/marketing opportunities to help members to take that experiment to the next level on a more permanent basis.