A Presentation to GFEM:

How Are We Talking About Media Policy?

March 26, 2009

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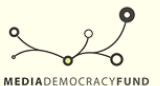
Ongoing Challenges for the Media Policy Field

➚ Challenges in Summer 2008

   ➚ Engage more funders

   ➚ Broaden the types of funders

   ➚ Determine the messages, channels, and formats that resonate

➚ Challenges in Spring 2009

   ➚ Maintain current funding

   ➚ Reinforce rationale with internal leadership

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Background

↗ **The project:**
Understanding the barriers to communicating and generate ideas and strategies for how to overcome them.

↗ **Today's goal:**
Sharing findings to check them with those in the field and solicit input on what would be helpful for next phase.

↗ A special thanks to the Quixote Foundation for instigating this project and their initial support.

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How Are We Communicating About Media Policy?

↗ What are the common frames being used?

↗ What are people hearing when we use them?

↗ What are the common perceptions held by funders?

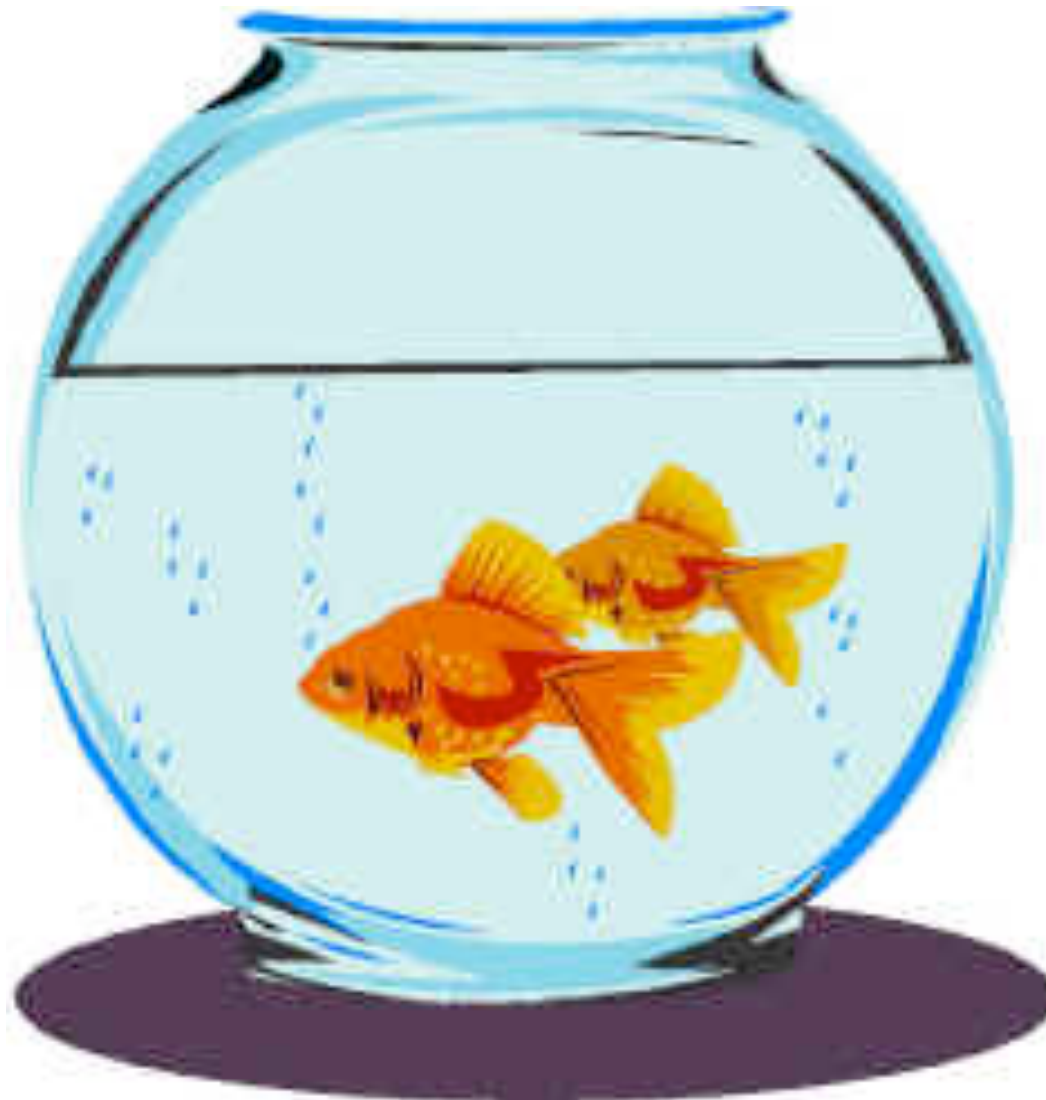↗ How do we simplify the message?

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Communications Landscape Analysis

Communications Landscape Analysis

↗ Target audience: funders

↗ A snapshot of the communications environment
  ↗ Who is talking about media policy issues
  ↗ How they are discussed and positioned

↗ Quantitative and qualitative analysis
  ↗ Document and materials review and framing analysis
  ↗ Mini-media content analysis (July-August 2008)
  ↗ Field conversations

Little National Media; No Philanthropic Dialogue

↗ Little discussion was happening nationally; silence in the philanthropy sector

↗ Although limited in quantity, content of coverage was neutral to positive.

↗ Quotes primarily positive sources.

(Reminder: Analysis of coverage in July-August 2008)

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Materials Review

↗ Conversations from field

↗ Review of 50+ websites

↗ Past research

↗ Currently used communications and marketing materials

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5 Common Frames

↗ **"Traditional Media" Frame** – Traditional media (e.g., television and radio) should serve the public good; electronic media and the internet should be no different

↗ **"Discrimination/Civil Rights" Frame** – Inequities in Internet access, speed of delivery, and information provided based on geography or one's ability to pay is discrimination; the Internet should be a level playing field for all people

↗ **"First Amendment" Frame** – The First Amendments guarantees Americans' right to free speech; similar rights must be extended to Internet usage and communication in the digital age

↗ **"Information Highway" Frame** – The Internet and the infrastructure for the delivery of electronic media are the public works project equivalent of the federal highway program of the 20th Century

↗ **"Free Market" Frame** – The free market system preserves consumer choice and that extends to the Internet; companies that attempt to control Internet access, speed, or prioritize information will be subject to the market forces of competition and, therefore, responsive to consumer needs

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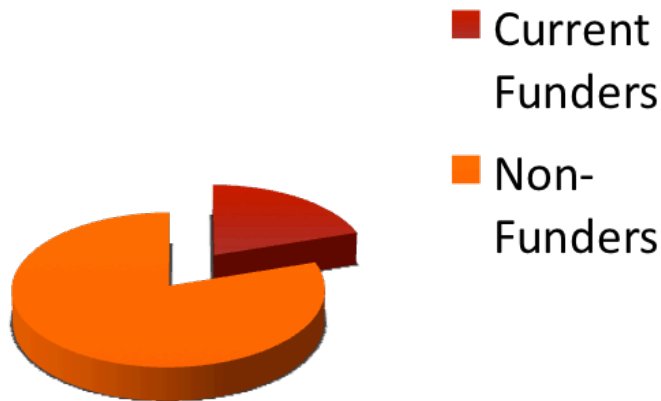MEDIADEMOCRACYFUND

Funder Interviews

Funder Perception Audit Objectives

↗ Current perceptions of how media policy fits with current funding priorities

↗ Challenges and opportunities of integrating media policy funding into current program areas

↗ Obtain reactions to current frames/messages

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Skewed to Non-Funders

- Current Funders
- Non-Funders

Program Areas

- Civic Engagement
- Community Development
- Media Arts & Culture
- Technology
- Human Rights
- Multiple

✓Large, medium and small foundations
✓Foundations, individual donors, consultants to both
✓Rural vs. urban funding interests
✓Senior leadership

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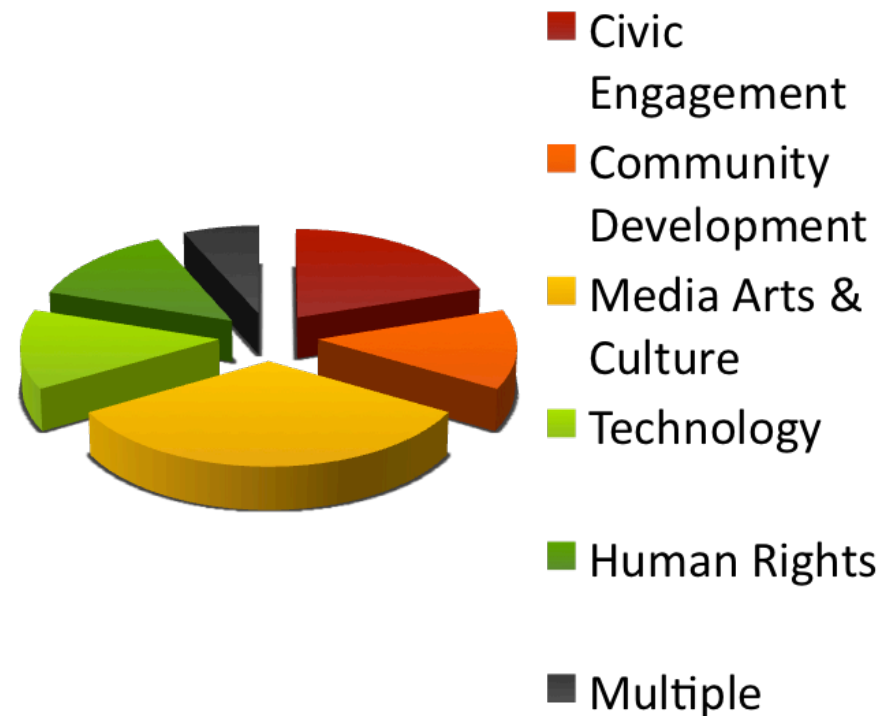
Interviewees

- Arca Foundation

- Carnegie Corporation

- Creative Capital Foundation

- Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media

- Individual Donors (anonymous)

- John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur Foundation

- Knight Foundation

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

- Marguerite Casey Foundation

- Nathan Cummings Foundation

- Overbrook Foundation

- Personal Democracy Forum

- Rockefeller Foundation

- Wellspring Advisors

- Women Donors Network

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Funder Perception Audit Findings

No Framework For Media Policy In Other Silos

↗ Current/past funders understand "media policy" & roots

↗ Non funders can't articulate a link between "media policy" and their programmatic work

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Two Strikes: Media + Policy

1   Very few funders fund "media"

2   Funders are shy of funding "policy" due to restrictions

Concepts Help, But Examples Open Doors

↗ Concepts of access and affordability are more easily aligned with their work than content-driven issues

↗ Real-world examples are key for engaging non-funders; they benefit the informed as well

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Concepts Help, But Examples Open Doors

Examples used:

↗ Civil rights/civic engagement: Twitter GoVOTE

↗ Arts, Culture: Tiered Access Photographer

↗ Econ. Dev.: businesses enter small communities with broadband

↗ Health: HIV protocol reminders via cell phone

↗ Human rights violation videos

Awareness ≠ Comprehension

↗ Awareness of the term "net neutrality" appears to be on the rise, but comprehension of the concept lags

  ↗ Majority of interviewees were aware of the term

  ↗ Only 4 interviewees *tried* to define it; most didn't try

  ↗ One past funder couldn't articulate a definition

↗ When read a definition, most favor net neutrality but cannot connect it to programmatic work

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Language: People Not the Pipes

↗ "Digital inclusion" = positive term for digital divide

   ↗ Affordability and skills component are not automatically associated with the term by all

      ↗ *"Digital inclusion is a more positive way to say it… it is oriented around people having access and I can see that."*

↗ "Open access" = access to computers and the Internet for everyone – regardless of income or locale

   ↗ For some, does not imply open content, only access

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Current Frames Have Limitations

↗ All are "media frames"

↗ Traditional Media Frame most accessible & most siloed

↗ Each frame carries unique baggage

- ↗ Traditional Media Frame– implies downstream transmission only not interactivity or user publishing
- ↗ Civil Rights/Discrimination Frame– polarizing hyperbole
- ↗ Infrastructure Frame– mixed to negative
- ↗ First Amendment Frame– redflags re: pornography
- ↗ Free Market Frame– divisive

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Challenges to Engaging New Funders Outside Media

↗ Foundation culture is siloed, lacks speed, and operating on reduced budgets

↗ Generational and technology gap of funders and NGOs

↗ Lack of quantifiable results/impacts

↗ Funders re-examining all budgets/priorities

↗ Even past funders who comprehend, may not be able to justify media policy funding in new economic climate

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Opportunities for Engaging New Funders

↗ Focus on funder objectives and issues fundamentally changes the conversation

↗ The messenger matters– more credible from NGOs

↗ Transformative moment in time: Obama committed to technology

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Summary: People Not Pipes or Policy

↗ **Messages**

- ↗ End-user examples are key to funder engagement and comprehension

- ↗ Effective messages focus on constituencies of targeted program areas and align with desired program impacts

- ↗ Current frames reinforce a media dialogue; they are true but not compelling for funders

- ↗ "Digital inclusion" resonates; "net neutrality" confuses

↗ **Messengers**

- ↗ NGO involvement in each programmatic sector will increase awareness, comprehension, and conviction among funders

- ↗ Peer-to-peer outreach adds credibility

- ↗ Media policy advocates

- ↗ The more messengers, the more success

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Recommendations

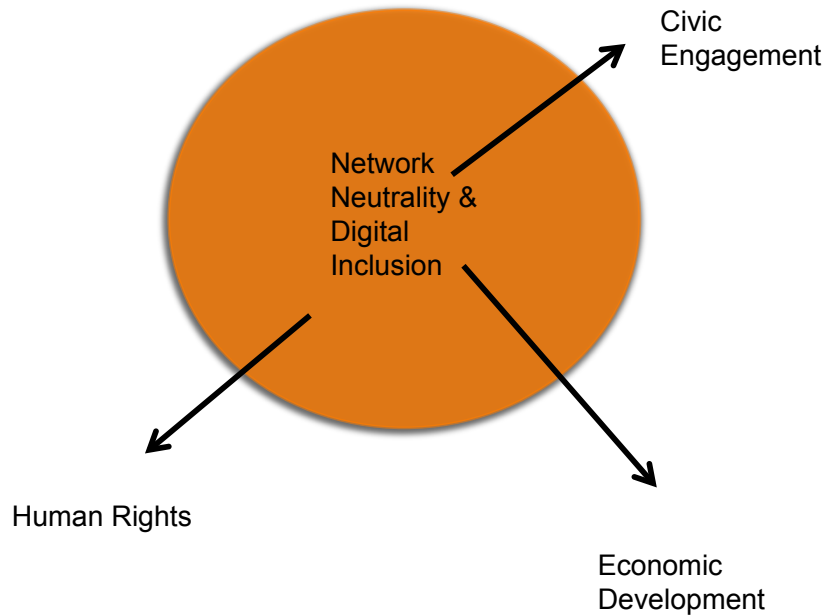# Focus on Impacts

Rather than issues

Focus on Impact

↗ Audience goals focus, not issue focus (ends, not means)

↗ Customized message/products

↗ Position real-world examples as *problems* in a specific program area; digital inclusion/net neutrality are *solutions*
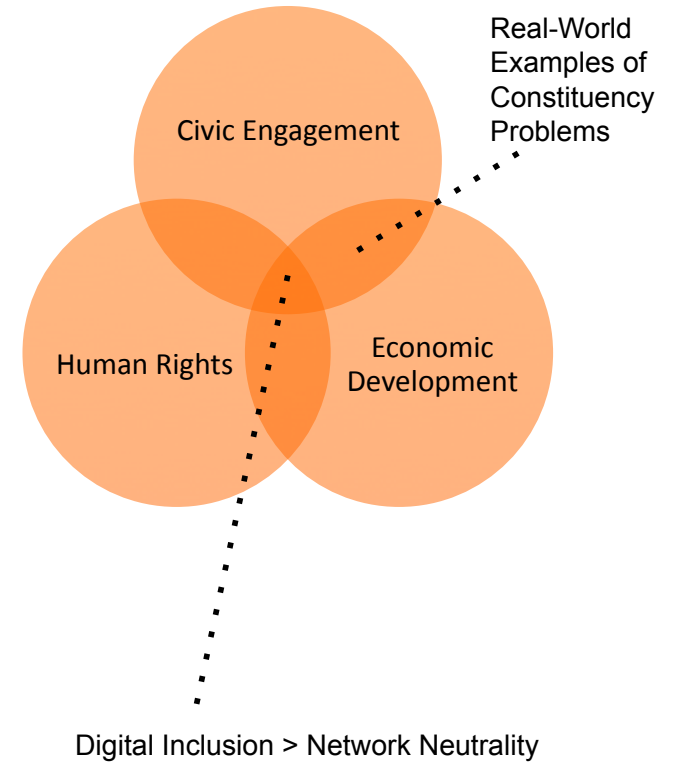
Strategy: Audience focus, over Issues

Media Funders

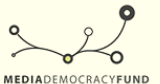Network Neutrality & Digital Inclusion

Civic Engagement

Human Rights

Economic Development

Non-Media Funders

Civic Engagement

Human Rights

Economic Development

Real-World Examples of Constituency Problems

Digital Inclusion > Network Neutrality

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Strategy: Translate

Rather than Define

Strategy: Translate vs. Define

↗ Use digital inclusion as an introductory issue

↗ Define success then provide quantitative evidence of impact and scale

↗ Engage new messengers = NGOs + media policy sector

↗ Humanize and customize through digital storytelling and/or individual stories of impact

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Obama: Translating Technology

↗ Universal broadband access for all Americans

  ↗ Obama policy agenda reinforces strategy, provides newspegs and starts dialogue

↗ Reframing technology and universal broadband as

  ↗ An infrastructure project for job creation

  ↗ A vehicle for a transparent and engaged democracy

  ↗ An educational tool for our children

  ↗ A training tool for unemployed adults

  ↗ A means of keeping America competitive in the world economy

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Maintain Current Funding/Prospect for Partners

↗ Economic downturn has evolved priorities

↗ Existing media policy funders

   ↗ Board members at funding foundations

   ↗ Program officers/peers at other foundations

↗ New funding prospects

   ↗ Program officers/peers at other foundations

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Discussion

↗ How are these findings reflected in what you have experienced in your work ?

↗ What materials would be helpful to you?

↗ What powerful examples have you heard or used that speak to the impact of media policy in daily lives?

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