

Reparations Media

CASE STUDY | JANUARY TO MAY 2025



Background

Reparations Media is a media production and education organization with a mission to provide quality multimedia content that highlights issues affecting marginalized and communities of color across the United States. Their work includes a journalism training lab and educational workshops; audio and video documentaries; educational “impact” videos; and their flagship offering, “Change Agents The Podcast.” The team places a strong emphasis on inclusion and providing solutions in their stories.

The team began the Medill School of Journalism’s Local News Accelerator (LNA) seeking deeper connection with its audience, primarily individuals who have experienced injustice through various systems, from criminal justice to education. To do so, they decided to focus on growing their listening base of “Change Agents The Podcast.”



The “From/To/To” statement guiding the team’s work was:

From	To	To (future)
An organization that has multiple brand identities and does not know or understand its audience, with minimal downloads on the podcast.	Utilized its YouTube channel as the organization’s main listening platform to attract current and new listeners, thus increasing their downloads to 287 in 90 days by regularly posting on socials and directing all their social traffic to YouTube.	Continuing to implement social strategy as they roll out each new podcast season.

Highlights

Over the course of the LNA, the team saw the most growth in gaining new audience and marketing insight as well as establishing/refining internal processes. By the end of May, they began experimenting with a new promotion schedule for the upcoming season of “Change Agents,” implementing a consistent social media content calendar and seeking out additional opportunities to better track analytics. These processes will set them up for continued growth throughout the rest of the year.

So far, a stronger social media presence has led to promising results when it comes to podcast downloads. For example, the team saw greater downloads when they launched their Facebook page, began posting regularly, placed greater emphasis on video content and promoted other Reparations Media projects.

In terms of how the LNA helped the team progress toward its goals, executive producer and program director Maurice Bisailon shared the following thoughts:

“As we grow as a company, some of the most valuable lessons we have learned is the importance of consistent and strong messaging; the need to establish clear and achievable goals that allow us to stay focused on success; a better understanding of our brand; a better grasp of work flow; and the open channels of communication we need to keep it flowing,” he said. “I think our better sense of self and our mission as an organization will be of tremendous asset as we move forward.”

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Maurice Bisailon
Executive producer and
program director



The trajectory of Reparation Media's YouTube downloads over the course of the LNA.

Testimonials

kxng_moosa 2w
Thank you all for your platform 🙏
Reply

thegeorgiestory_ 2w
Loved this so much woah
Reply Hide

corli_jay 2w · ❤️ by
Excited for this!!!
Reply Reply with

s.aaberg114 2w
Such a talented group project!!
Reply Hide

kxng_moosa Appreciate @reparationsmedia @chicagovotes for allowing me to be apart of something so impactful! Amplifying the voices that matter is much appreciated, Artivism at it finest #Democracy #rap #hiphop #votingrights #mission #kingmoosa
May 13

How do Change Agents journalists reach people their stories?

What resonated with you about Change Agents The Podcast?
5 responses

Community

It was stories about Chicago!

Working with a journalist collaboratively on storyline, content capture, and editing felt empowering and authentic.

Its depth

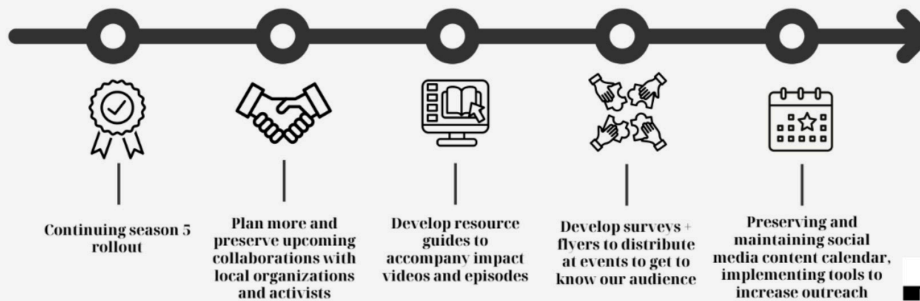
Stories from marginalized people challenging...and winning to make changes for all.

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Reparations Media

Roadmap for 2025



The process

At the onset of the LNA, the Reparations Media team planned to achieve deeper connection with its audience through social media and e-newsletter efforts. They aimed to grow their following on all social media platforms and create a separate, targeted newsletter for their systems-impacted subscribers, moving away from a general, mass e-newsletter for all subscribers.

However, these goals changed at the halfway point of the LNA. During the cohort's second gathering, Reparations Media founder and executive director, Judith McCray, had an epiphany after multiple presentations encouraged teams to think about the following question: "Why does it matter?" For what purpose are we setting these goals and strategies to achieve them?

McCray felt downloads of "Change Agents The Podcast" was a better indicator of how their audience responds to their content. At that point, the focus of the project shifted from social media/newsletter efforts to podcast downloads. Although social media would remain a strategy to increase podcast downloads, it was no longer the main goal of the project.

Research insights

The research conducted by Medill was completed before the project shift. Therefore, findings on podcasts and downloads were not as comprehensive as they would have otherwise been. However, the team still gathered plenty of helpful takeaways.

The most eye-opening finding was the percentage of users who use YouTube as a podcast listening platform. While the Reparations team already had a small YouTube presence, they were not maximizing their potential on the platform. This led to internal conversations about ways to start posting more podcast trailers/full episodes on YouTube in the absence of video.

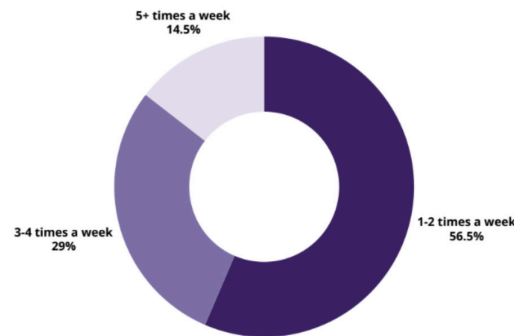
Additionally, the research indicated that video posts were the most popular format for social media content. This finding sparked conversations about transitioning to vertical videos and how the team could create more multimedia posts. In terms of audience needs/pain points, survey respondents indicated they wanted greater access to community resource guides. This also prompted team discussions about sharing local event information for followers on social media and incorporating such guides into future newsletters.

Target audience: 25-44

Out of 95 responses:

- 66% listen to podcasts, 34% do not
- Popular listening platforms: YouTube (68%), Spotify (52%)
- Respondents tend to multitask while listening:
 - while cleaning (61%)
 - while commuting (55%)
- However, 53% of respondents do listen to podcasts while resting.

How often do 25- to 45- year-old podcast listeners listen to podcasts?



Target audience (25-44)

Proportion of 25- to 44-year-olds who said the following elements would make them stop and look at a post:



Out of 95 responses:

- Primary reasons for using social media: Stay connected with family and friends (68%), stay up to date with news (61%)
- Elements this audience interacts with the most: Video (80%), stories (65%), photos (64%)
- Top reasons for reposting: highly informative (53%), entertaining/humorous (52%)
- What they like about the media organizations they follow: engaging storytelling (65%), diversity of perspectives (49%)

A snapshot of data from the LNA research conducted for Reparations Media.

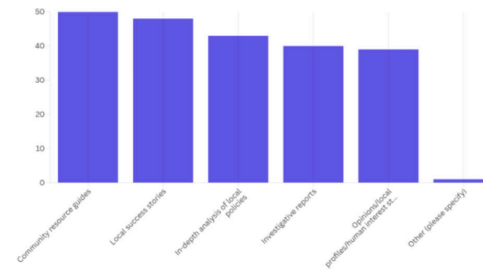
Target audience (25-44)

Out of 95 responses:

- Main reasons for consuming news: 46% to stay informed to be better citizens, 46% to decide where to stand on issues, and 40% to connect with the community.
- Most important community issues: 58% crime/policing/public safety, 49% affordable housing, and 47% said jobs.
- Issues underrepresented in the news: 49% affordable housing and real estate, 46% job growth and economic opportunities, and 42% education and school issues.
- Nearly 60% of respondents feel only sometimes or rarely represented by the news.
- Reasons: Lack of diversity in perspectives (34%), inaccurate portrayal of community issues (32%), and limited coverage of relevant topics (29%).

What stories would you like to see more of in the news?

Majority of 25-44 year olds want to see more community resource guides and local success stories in their news.

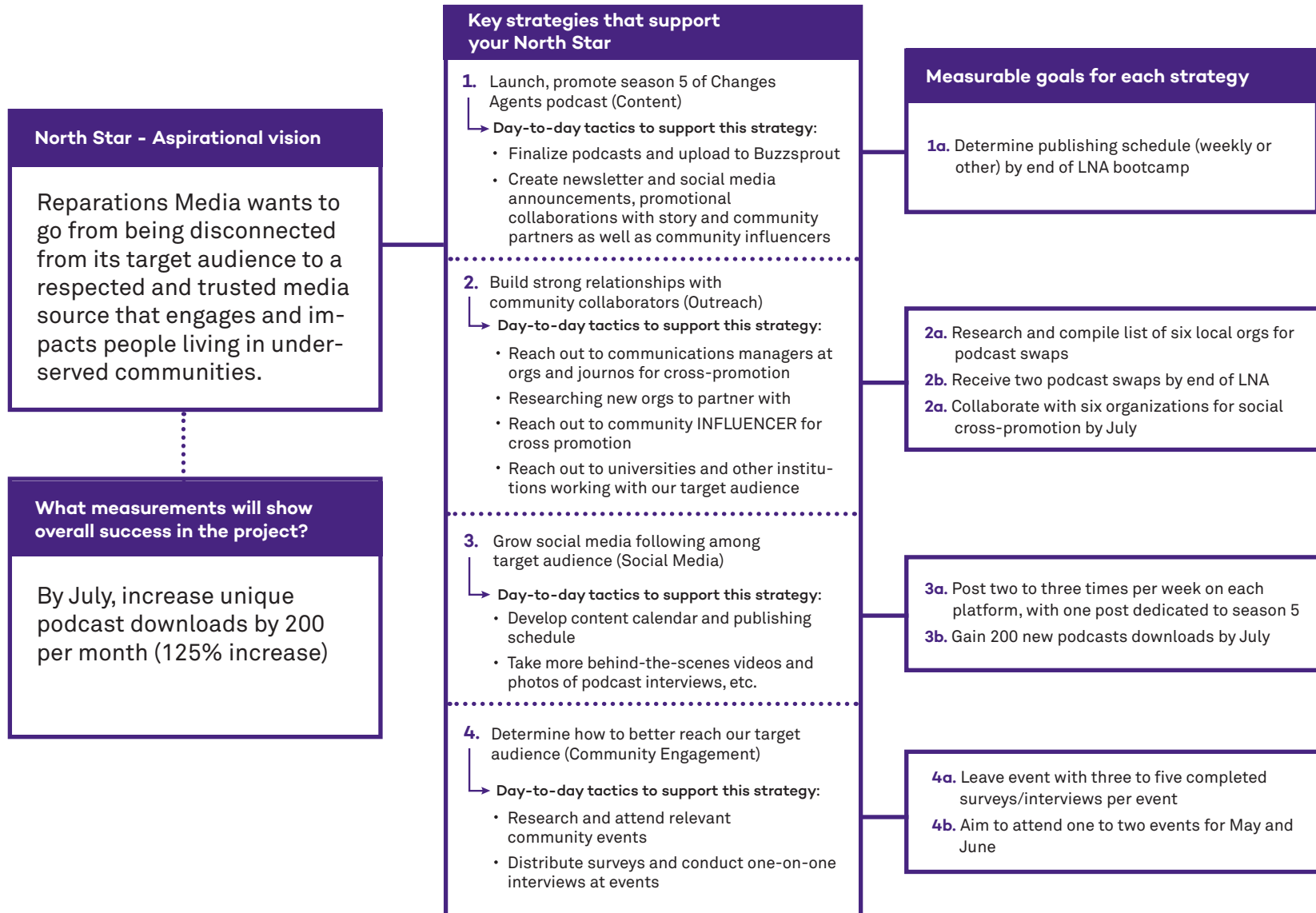


A snapshot of data from the LNA research conducted for Reparations Media.

Business strategies and tools

Since Reparations Media produces multiple types of content and hosts a journalism training lab as well as educational workshops, the team is often pulled in many directions on a weekly basis. Therefore, they found the following LNA tools most helpful: Three-Part Project Statement, SMARTIE (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive and Equitable) Goals and From/To Chart. These worksheets allowed the team to visualize their goals and stay on track when other matters required their attention.

Three-part project statement



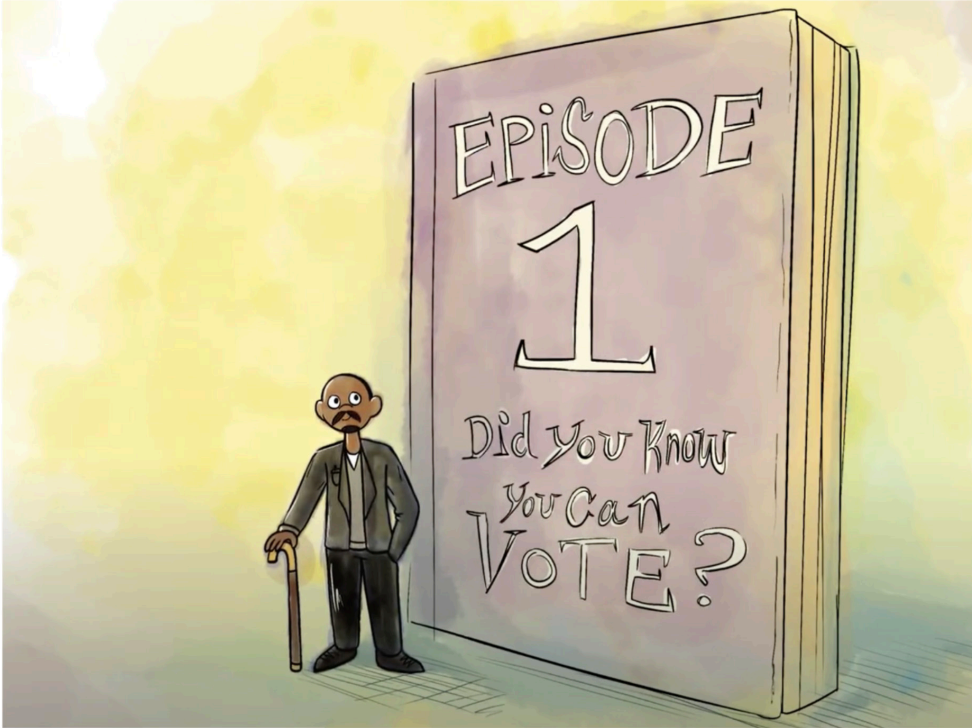
The results

Due to the late shift in project focus and other business deadlines, the team did not make as much progress in achieving their goals as they initially hoped. As illustrated in the Three-Part Project Statement, they hoped to achieve 200 unique podcast downloads per month. However, by the end of the four months, they just started implementing the strategies that they established as a group.

Some additional factors that affected the team's bandwidth: A key team member accepted a full-time job out of state, which delayed some operational tasks. The group launched an animated video series, and they completed a documentary that would be used for building awareness and raising production funds.

Even though they didn't achieve their initial desired outcomes, there were some promising early results.

In the 90-day span from mid-February to mid-May, the team saw nearly 290 downloads of "Change Agents The Podcast." What's particularly notable are the spikes that occurred after the team began implementing their research findings and strategies. On an average day, past episodes of the podcast



A screenshot from one of Reparation Media's animated videos that share little known facts as part of a new series called, "Our Underground Library."

were downloaded anywhere from five to 25 times. But once the team launched Reparations Media’s Facebook page, podcast episodes were downloaded nearly 40 times that day. And when they released other Reparations Media projects and switched from horizontal to vertical social media videos, podcast downloads jumped to 60 in one day.

This confirms that an appetite exists for the content they’re creating. They just need to direct more efforts toward marketing their products and monitoring podcast metrics. These analytics will help them further determine which episodes are resonating most with listeners, so they can tailor their content down the road. With the Medill research, continued rollout of season 5 of “Change Agents” and a consistent social media content calendar, the group is poised for more growth later in the year.

A snapshot of Reparation Media’s wins

Process	Insight	Capability	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a social media content calendar for more consistent posting. Began experimenting with a new podcast promotion schedule – that better highlights each episode – in efforts to increase downloads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovered that YouTube is a popular listening platform for podcasts and that the team could better leverage this for new listeners. Learned that their target audience primarily interacts with video posts on social media and that the team could be sharing more video content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched an animated video series and completed a documentary (though not directly related to project goals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated nearly 300 unique podcast downloads in 90 days following increased social media presence and shift in video strategy.

A Q&A



Stephanie Choporis, coach:

What was most helpful for Reparations Media in helping you achieve the goals you set at the start of the program?



Maurice Bisaillon, executive producer and program director:

The guidance of our coach and staying focused on our North Star were tremendously helpful to us. We have not had the bandwidth or time to focus on many of the goals set out by the LNA, so the organization, worksheets and thought exercises were tremendously helpful.



Choporis:

What did you find the most surprising and/or challenging throughout the process?



Bisaillon:

Two completely opposed discoveries surprised me. First: how much of what we were learning felt intuitive and was already a part of our practice. Second: how many blind spots we had and how many valuable actions we were overlooking that could significantly improve the success of Reparations Media.



Choporis:

How would other news organizations like yours benefit from participating in the LNA?



Bisaillon:

I believe the research is a valuable asset for smaller newsrooms that lack the resources to conduct this kind of work. What proved especially useful was the combination of asset framing, an honest and impartial assessment of our operations and a clear accounting of both our available and missing resources. Setting out a clear agenda, actionable goals and a schedule was very helpful.



Choporis:

Where is Reparations Media headed from here? What are the biggest lessons you learned through the LNA that you will apply to future projects?



Bisailon:

We have season 6 of our podcast Change Agents approaching, we are entering post production on our feature length documentary Civil Death, and have a new project, an animated series called Our Underground Library, which we are seeking funding for and offering to new clients.