



OutCasting

Investment Prospectus

Media for the Public Good, Inc.,
producer of OutCasting® and OutCasting Overtime,
public radio's LGBTQ youth programs
outcastingmedia.org

MEDIA
for the
PUBLIC
GOOD®

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Media for the Public Good (MFPG) is a nonprofit organization that produces public radio's LGBTQ youth programs, OutCasting and OutCasting Overtime.

OutCasting covers LGBTQ issues from the fresh perspectives of LGBTQ youth and straight allies. Growing numbers of Americans have open minds about LGBTQ issues, but the general lack of coverage in the mainstream media leaves a gap in public understanding — yet public understanding is precisely what's essential for the formation of public policy that promotes greater equality.

In-depth explorations of these issues from the rarely-heard young voices that OutCasting presents, in combination with noted expert guests, can affect people differently — and perhaps more effectively — than mainstream media.



OutCasting started in 2011 as a local public radio program. In 2013, it became nationally distributed, in 2017 it increased to monthly production, and it now reaches listeners on more than 50 public radio stations. In addition, MFPG has instituted two new monthly programs, expanding the reach to listeners online and on more than 200 stations.



"While I'm not at OutCasting seven days a week, it's influenced my mindset completely. Not just being an activist, standing up for rights for everyone, but also thinking that you can make a difference, that I can make a difference with my voice, that I have an impact, that I have a responsibility to make the world better." — Lucas

MFPG now seeks investment to build on this significant growth. Expansion will require MFPG to convert from volunteer to paid staffing, which will enable the programs to increase to weekly production and enable OutCasting to expand from 29 to 59 minutes, making the programs more attractive to a larger number of public radio stations. With this growth, MFPG will be able to develop and expand its social media presence and reach larger audiences via podcasts and on new platforms such as smart speakers, including Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant. Finally, the expansion will enable MFPG to budget for items that are currently being donated. Together, these steps will put a solid financial foundation under MFPG and enable it to become a vibrant, sustainable public media organization that enlightens listeners on issues rarely covered through voices rarely heard.



BEING LGBTQ IN THE U.S. TODAY

The LGBTQ experience in the United States presents stark, polarizing contrasts: growing public acceptance of LGBTQ people, yet a continuing epidemic of bullying and youth suicide; nationwide marriage equality, yet anti-LGBTQ “religious liberty” bills that would allow businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ people in ways that would be impermissible for any other minority. LGBTQ people are at increased risk of being violently attacked, and a rising backlash against marriage equality threatens them even further. These conflicting realities create a confusing and often dangerous world for LGBTQ people, and LGBTQ youth in particular, for whom the statistics are particularly alarming. The Human Rights Campaign reports:

- **67%** of LGBTQ youth hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people.
- LGBTQ youth of color report hearing family members express negativity about LGBTQ people **more frequently** than their white peers.
- Only **13%** of LGBTQ youth report hearing positive messages about being LGBTQ.
- **73%** have experienced verbal threats because of their actual or perceived LGBTQ identity.
- **70%** have been bullied at school because of their sexual orientation.
- Transgender youth are **more than twice** as likely as cisgender youth to be taunted or mocked by their families for their trans identity.

According to the Trevor Project:

- LGBTQ youth represent as much as **40%** of the homeless youth population as a result of family rejection, discrimination, criminalization, and a host of other factors.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are almost **five times** as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. Those who come from highly rejecting families are **8.4 times** as likely to have attempted suicide as peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- **40%** of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt, with **92%** of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25.

You’ve probably seen the way the media cover LGBTQ youth suicides: The newscasters adopt somber voices and announce that a community is reeling. There are the obligatory interviews with the stunned parents... The sobbing friends are seen holding a candlelight vigil... No one saw this coming... The school is bringing in grief counselors... And then the newscasters put their happy faces back on and proceed with the weather and sports reports. There’s no exploration of the issues behind the event.

“At a time when my son was bullied and believed himself to be an outsider, OutCasting encouraged him to see the world as a welcoming and kind place.” — Josefa



It gets worse. Responsible journalists don't seek "balance" in stories about race by inviting opposing viewpoints from the KKK, because it's not controversial to believe that racial discrimination is bad. LGBTQ people don't choose to be LGBTQ any more than people choose to be a member of one racial category or another, and so there should be a parallel lack of controversy about anti-LGBTQ discrimination. But this isn't the case: when the mainstream media cover LGBTQ issues, they frequently invite opposing viewpoints from anti-LGBTQ organizations like the Family Research Council or the Alliance Defending Freedom, which have been classified as hate groups. This

demonstrates just how differently LGBTQ people are seen – and just how much work must be done to change attitudes even in the media.

As a whole, American society has evolved since the days when being gay was among the worst things someone could be. More people today have more open minds, and advocacy groups who seek to influence policymakers have helped advance equality for LGBTQ people. However, judges and elected officials are generally reluctant to get too far ahead of public opinion in their rulings and legislation.

Therefore, a different type of advocacy is necessary – making accurate, in-depth, high quality information easily accessible to educate and influence the public, so that these passive supporters can become knowledgeable allies.





OUTCASTING'S RESPONSE

OutCasting is doing this critical work of public education while also helping young people make sense of the unsettled environment that juxtaposes progress with ignorance, intolerance, and bigotry. It does so by bringing LGBTQ youth and straight allies together to produce radio programming that covers LGBTQ issues in depth.

Each week, students from area high schools meet at the OutCasting studio to find support from each other, explore LGBTQ issues, and benefit the public in the process. At OutCasting, the young participants talk about issues that are important in their lives – issues like how to have healthy LGBTQ teen relationships and what it means when LGBTQ history is erased from public school curricula – as well as more general LGBTQ issues, including activism, gay parenting, and how parents' expectations can change when their children are LGBTQ. From these discussions, they identify topics for the radio programs, conduct research, and interview guests.

The name OutCasting, created by the young participants, is a triple play on words: first, it's about the freedom that comes from being out, not closeted; second, it ties into broadcasting and podcasting; and third, because LGBTQ youth can be perceived as social misfits, it turns the meaning of the word "outcast" on its head because these "outcasts" and their allies are the people doing this neat thing on the radio.

At OutCasting, LGBTQ youth and straight allies – "OutCasters" – are the lifeblood of the programs, not interns in an otherwise adult-run environment. Under professional guidance and training, they participate in nearly all aspects of production. They receive extensive training in important skills, and it is their voices that are heard on the air.



MFPG's public radio programs include:



OutCasting, the main program, 29 minutes long, covering issues mainly through long-form interviews that often feature highly authoritative guests. On occasion, OutCasting has featured first-person accounts and documentaries. Topics have included media portrayals of LGBTQ people, medical transition for transgender teenagers, marriage equality, asexuality, LGBTQ issues in religion, and youth bullying and suicide prevention.



OutCasting Overtime, a less formal program, shorter in length, in which youth participants offer commentaries and other personal experiences and observations. On OutCasting Overtime, students have talked about gender norms, dating while queer in high school, coming out — and in one case, having a parent force them back into the closet. Initially available as an online-only feature, it has become MFPG's second broadcast program and is now heard both under its own name and as a regular feature on the program This Way Out.



MFPG also produces **OutCasting Off The Clock**, an online-only program that features discussions about current issues in a humorous “Ga[y]me Show” format.

The programs collectively reach listeners on over 200 public radio stations, via podcast, and on demand at MFPG's website. To MFPG's knowledge, OutCasting and OutCasting Overtime are the only nationally-distributed LGBTQ youth programs in public radio in the United States.

“It is important for folks regardless of their age to be involved in the movement. Youth aren't always given a say, and people assume young folks are too young to know anything and really be able to speak for themselves. So to dedicate a space for young LGBTQ folks to produce content on issues that affect them and their community — that is powerful, and I think that goes a long way.” — David

The programs are intended for all audiences, not just LGBTQ listeners. As we strive as a society for a more just world, it's important that everyone — not just LGBTQ people — have an understanding of LGBTQ issues, as they do for other minority groups whose history may be less hidden. As OutCaster Andrew L. put it:

An awareness of history counteracts the common misperception that LGBTQ identity and presence is a new phenomenon. History gives context to current struggles, stereotypes, and oppressive institutions.

Understanding LGBTQ history leads to understanding of LGBTQ people, leading to more allies who are better at supporting the LGBTQ community.



OUTCASTING'S IMPACT IN ACTION

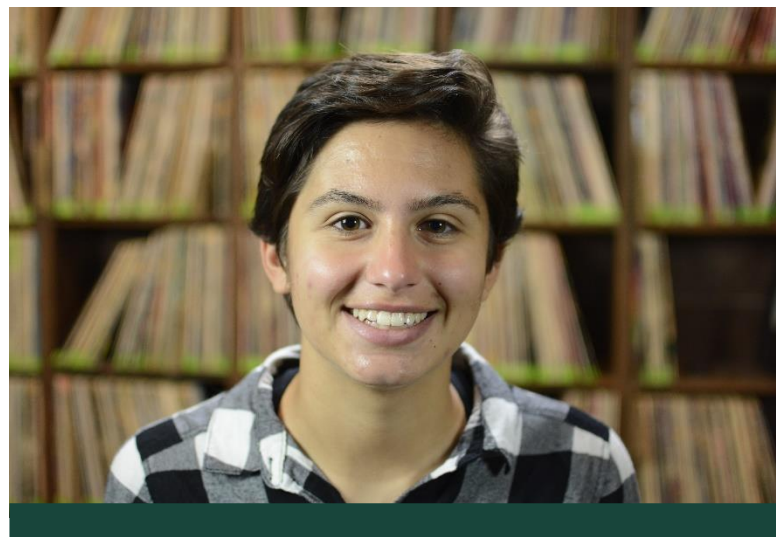
At OutCasting, participants learn to advocate for a cause they believe in. They learn what it means to put their full effort into a project much larger than themselves. They learn professional communication skills, interviewing and journalism, writing and speaking for broadcast, relevant areas of law, and digital editing and production. They gain substantive knowledge about the issues OutCasting covers, giving them a cultural and historical context for their own lives and enabling them to see themselves as advocates for LGBTQ equality. And they put all of this into action, producing radio and podcast programming that helps to educate the public on these important topics.

An OutCasting series from early 2019 demonstrates how an internal group discussion of personal interest to the program's young participants can boomerang out into the world as informative public radio programming. Andrew L., a transgender high school senior, was concerned about what his rights would be if he experiences anti-trans discrimination when he gets to college – on his own, without immediate family support, for the first time. He brought up his concern at an OutCasting production session and the group started talking about it. Andrew conducted further research and discovered that Title IX, the U.S. law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, has in some cases been effective in protecting transgender students from discrimination.

This discovery led to additional group discussion and development, and Andrew went back to work, researching further and drafting questions for a series of interviews. Ultimately, he interviewed two attorneys with extensive Title IX experience as well as a transgender student who successfully sued his Florida high school over bathroom access.

LGBTQ youth are still marginalized, often victimized, and rarely heard. But the experience of being an OutCaster is one of empowering, meaningful expression in a safe environment.

As a school project, this might have been an independent study project based on published research and culminating in a term paper. At OutCasting, it was a group project, led by Andrew, in which the whole group discussed anti-trans discrimination and remedies for it. Andrew conducted in-depth research and then interviewed people who are on the cutting edge of this issue. The project culminated in a three-part OutCasting series, a living, breathing, in-depth report that included the expert perspectives given by the attorneys and, importantly, the personal story of the Florida student himself. Unlike the coverage of this issue in the mainstream media, which is generally limited to “The pro-trans people say this, the anti-trans people say that” without ever delving into the real issues presented, OutCasting's coverage enlightened its listeners in a very personal and relatable way.





OutCasters also make new friends and build their skills at working collaboratively. For some, it's the only environment where they can talk about issues in their lives

without fear of judgment or rejection and where they can connect with others who feel similarly. In some cases, they come into OutCasting with a sense of guilt or shame over their identity; their work at OutCasting can help them shed these negative attitudes and enable them to become self-actualizing, confident young advocates.

The ability to talk about these issues extends outside the group as well, as OutCasting gives its youth participants the opportunity to connect with LGBTQ adults. This is important for several reasons: first, LGBTQ history, culture, and issues are rarely passed down from generation to generation within families. They're generally not taught or discussed in schools the way the history, culture, and issues of other minority groups are. And there's an unwarranted sense that communication between LGBTQ adults and youth is somehow unseemly. All of these combine to isolate LGBTQ youth from their own people.

It is rare for youth to have a national voice in the media, even rarer for LGBTQ youth. But MFPG strongly believes that empowering them to tell their stories and explore their culture is both beneficial for them and important for a national audience to hear. Public radio is one of the most trusted sources of

"Working on OutCasting has definitely affected the way that I've been able to see myself and accept myself. It took me a couple of years to figure out who I was and what I preferred, what pronouns I like, how I want to represent myself. And anytime I wanted to test something out, I needed to have somewhere that was accepting. OutCasting was the place." — Jamie

information in the United States, and it can reach people wherever they are — at home, in their cars, wherever. MFPG believes that the authenticity of the young voices people hear on OutCasting causes them to listen differently, perhaps less cynically and more open-mindedly, than they do while watching the evening network news. Hearing young people talk on the air about these issues — and particularly about discrimination and oppression they experience in their daily lives — can be extremely powerful in changing public attitudes. OutCasting can thus reach people in unexpected ways and help them learn about these important issues.



DAVID'S STORY

When he came to OutCasting, David was out only to his mother and the faculty advisor of the Gay-Straight Alliance in his high school. He was terrified of his identity and couldn't participate even in internal group discussions.

By the time he graduated and left for college, he was completely out — on the air! — and had gained the confidence to reach out to and interview a global activist — Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, whose ordination precipitated the worldwide split in the church over homosexuality.



VISION AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

When OutCasting began in 2011, it was a local public radio program. There were typically six to eight new programs per year, released on an unscheduled basis as they were completed. In 2013, MFPG arranged with the Pacifica Radio Network for OutCasting to be nationally distributed. This increased OutCasting's reach, and programs are now released on a scheduled basis every month and are available online and by podcast as well as on the air.

Since OutCasting's inception, some 60 young people have participated, interviewing guests who are often among the most authoritative in their fields, including:

- Evan Wolfson, a civil rights lawyer and key architect of the marriage equality movement
- Dan Savage, an activist and co-founder of the It Gets Better Project
- Michelangelo Signorile, an activist, journalist, and author
- Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal bishop
- Gilbert Baker, the legendary activist who created the Rainbow Flag

Now nine years in, OutCasting has produced high quality public radio programming attractive to a growing number of public radio stations while meaningfully affecting the lives of young LGBTQ people and their allies. Its significant successes to date have been accomplished with minimal financial resources. To grow fully into the important public resource it can be, the organization will need significant growth capital investment.

"I think my friendships at OutCasting often felt deeper than a lot of my other friendships. The work we were doing was so deep and important that it really brought us together, and we shared a lot of personal stories during that time. It's a very loving and trusting environment, and it really fosters a sense of connection between us all." — Sydney

"In-depth, well researched, and punchy in the right ways... NPR-level production values.... What makes all this remarkable is that most of the people working on the show... are barely old enough to drive." – The Advocate

"... some of the most honest and accurate representations of LGBT and allied youth in the media" – GLAAD

OutCasting "injects an LGBT narrative into the conversation surrounding mainstream radio that historically lacks this kind of perspective." – Huffington Post



The organization's goals are to:

1 Increase the number of youth participants at the main studio outside of New York City and increase from one weekly production session to several.

2 Establish outside production units located throughout the country, enabling OutCasting to represent the voices of LGBTQ youth and allies from different regions, particularly where it may be more difficult to be LGBTQ than it is in the relatively accepting Northeast.

3 Change the formatting of the program to make it more attractive and easier for public radio stations to carry, by:

Increasing from monthly to weekly production to better fit typical public radio programming schedules.

Increasing the length of OutCasting from 29 to 59 minutes and segmenting it in a way that allows stations to break away at specific times for local content, as they can with typical NPR programs.

4 Increase online listenership by expanding OutCasting's social media presence, establish its online presence at a greater number of podcast sites, and make it available on emerging listening platforms including smart speakers, thus enabling it to reach even more listeners.



To accomplish these goals, MFPG must hire paid staff to work on fundraising, production and editing, outreach, marketing, and management. To date, OutCasting has been run by unpaid staff and volunteers. For long term sustainability, the organization must raise funds to cover salaries and be able to budget for items currently being donated, including equipment and studio space rent. As it expands to other locations, it will also need to pay expenses at the outside production units, including compensation for adult producers and payment for studio time and other infrastructure.

Therefore, the first investment will be hiring a development specialist to focus on fundraising.

This is an immediate priority, as the funding raised will enable subsequent positions to be filled. These positions include:

- **One or more producers** who are skilled in youth leadership, audio production, journalism, and related fields, and knowledgeable about LGBTQ issues.
- **An outreach specialist** to recruit new students and work to establish outside production units.
- **A marketing specialist** to publicize OutCasting to public radio stations, develop and execute MFPG's social media strategy, and otherwise increase the visibility and availability of the programs.



Taking these steps will increase OutCasting's impact. It will also help OutCasting achieve long-term sustainability and enable it to develop into a thriving, vibrant public media entity, active in both traditional and new media. By adding youth voices into the media mix and giving them a platform to talk about issues that are important to them and to the LGBTQ community at large, more people – particularly non-LGBTQ people – will learn more about the many challenges faced by LGBTQ people, and perhaps more hearts will open. A more knowledgeable and accepting public will pave the way to more inclusive policies, helping to break down the barriers to equality for all people.

"My daughter thrived in high school as a result of her experience as an OutCaster. Prior to joining OutCasting, there were few opportunities for her to "fit in" in her traditional high school environment. Through OutCasting, she was able to interact and develop friendships with students from area school districts who accepted her for who she was. OutCasting is a unique journalistic experience that exposed her to a world beyond her own and built her confidence to live her authentic life. As a parent, I'm grateful for the support and compassion my daughter experienced through her participation in OutCasting and the role that LGBTQ programming provides for students and listeners around the country." — Kim

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

The following projections represent a phased growth plan for OutCasting. While projections are based on annual cost increases, the pace of growth will be dependent on investment and therefore may require more than five years.

	Year/Phase 1	Year/Phase 2	Year/Phase 3	Year/Phase 4	Year/Phase 5
Personnel					
Development Director	75,000	78,750	82,688	86,822	91,163
Producer(s)		78,750	82,688	173,644	182,326
Executive Director/Producer*		52,500	78,751	105,000	110,250
Marketing Specialist			82,688	86,822	91,163
Employee Benefits & Taxes	22,750	63,380	115,597	141,913	163,185
Outside Production Unit Producer Stipends			30,000	126,000	330,750
Personnel Totals	97,750	273,380	472,412	720,201	968,837
Other					
Studio Air Conditioning – purchase & maintenance		25,000	500	525	551
Other expenses	78,186	99,277	197,591	217,754	333,517
Other Totals	78,186	124,277	198,091	218,279	334,068
GRAND TOTALS	175,936	397,657	670,503	938,480	1,302,905

*Note: Executive Director/Producer will be compensated with a half-time salary in Year 2, a three-quarter time salary in Year 3, and full salary in Year 4. Eventually, this position will be split into two fulltime positions: Executive Director and Executive Producer.

