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## Exploring the Path for County-level Converged Media Centers to Guide and Serve the Public in the Era of Media Convergence: A Case Study of the Linzi District Converged Media Center in Zibo City (Postprint)

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### Abstract

At the 2018 National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to “solidly advance the construction of county-level integrated media centers to better guide and serve the masses.” This has set the direction for the construction of county-level integrated media centers. How to break through the crucial “last mile” in propaganda and ideological work has become an important topic for grassroots media practitioners. In the race of a hundred boats, those who row hard take the lead. Based on its actual circumstances, the Linzi District Integrated Media Center has created a new integrated development pattern of “five centers,” actively exploring new paths to better guide and serve the masses, which offers considerable reference value for promoting the development of other county-level integrated media centers.

### Full Text

### Title and Author Information

**Exploring the Path for County-Level Media Convergence Centers to Guide and Serve the Public in the Era of Media Convergence: A Case Study of the Linzi District Media Convergence Center in Zibo City**

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## Abstract

At the 2018 National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to “solidly grasp the construction of county-level media convergence centers to better guide and serve the masses,” setting the direction for their development. How to break through the critical “last mile” in propaganda and ideological work has become a key challenge for grassroots media practitioners. In this competitive race, those who row hardest go farthest. Based on its actual conditions, the Linzi District Media Convergence Center has created a new integrated development model of “five centers,” actively exploring innovative paths to better guide and serve the public, offering valuable lessons for other county-level media convergence centers.

**Keywords:** county-level media convergence; guiding and serving the public; path; platform construction

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As a national pilot area for the New Era Civilization Practice Center and a provincial pilot area for county-level media convergence center construction in Shandong Province, Zibo’ s Linzi District has fully integrated resources and leveraged the hub platform function of its media convergence center. By coordinating the planning, construction, and operation of the New Era Civilization Practice Center, Livelihood Hotline Service Center, Volunteer Service Promotion Center, and “Study Strong Nation” Guidance Center, it has created a new integrated development pattern of “five centers.” This has formed a comprehensive platform that consolidates various forces, channels resources to the grassroots, and responds to public demands, becoming a primary channel and important vehicle for mobilizing and organizing the masses, conducting propaganda and education, promoting rural revitalization, and advancing county-level governance [1].

## 1. Implementation Path

### 1.1 Building an Integrated Platform

The center integrated various media resources and developed the “Linzi Cloud” App based on the technical platform of Shandong Television Station, incorporating radio, television, newspapers, client applications, WeChat, Weibo, and other media resources. As the birthplace of Qi culture, the App highlights this cultural heritage through functional sections such as “Qi · Party Building,” “Qi · Practice,” “Qi · Volunteer,” “Qi · Livelihood,” and “Qi · Services,” integrating urban governance, livelihood security, and comprehensive social management into the Linzi Cloud platform. The App combines external propaganda, information

consultation, live broadcasting, data inquiry, service processing, and supervision evaluation, making it the district's most popular comprehensive service and information platform. Currently, Linzi Cloud has been downloaded 250,000 times, accounting for 42% of Linzi's total population of 610,000 (including 100,000 employees of Qilu Petrochemical Company, which has its own internal media convergence center).

## 1.2 Connecting the Five Centers

**Media + New Era Civilization Practice Center.** The center established media sub-centers at town and street-level civilization practice stations and media workstations at village and community civilization practice sites, upgrading various convenience service venues and integrating personnel management. All civilization practice activities in the district can be viewed live through the dedicated live-streaming column on "Linzi Cloud," with on-demand replay available after events for learning and reference, enabling "cloud-based" viewing of practice information, "cloud-based" ordering of services, "cloud-based" access to learning resources, and "cloud-based" processing of demands [2].

**Media + Volunteer Service Promotion Center.** Through Linzi Cloud, the center established a service model of "public ordering (selection) -center dispatching -volunteer receiving -public evaluating." Volunteer teams or individuals can complete the entire process of "initiating, participating, reviewing, checking in, checking out, and duration statistics" via mobile phones. Linzi has focused on building the "Qifeng" volunteer service brand, establishing systems such as the "Party Member Volunteer Service 20+ Hour System," "Fixed Volunteer Service Day for Party Cadres," "Joint Construction Between Civilization Units and Civilization Practice Stations," and "Volunteer Star Recognition and Reward." Currently, the district has registered more than 100,000 volunteers and 865 volunteer teams, accumulating over 1.38 million hours of volunteer service, creating a vibrant atmosphere where everyone strives to be a volunteer and participates in civilization practice.

**Media + "Study Strong Nation" Guidance Center.** The center established offline contribution and activity stations as the primary front for studying and promoting Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, sharing talent, venues, and channels with the media convergence center. It innovatively carries out theoretical popularization activities that are distinctive, meaningful, and well-received, using ordinary people's stories and language to make theory practical, fresh, and accessible. Twelve caring enterprises, including banks, bookstores, and telecommunications companies, formed the "Study Strong Nation" Love Alliance, offering irregular incentive and feedback measures to new and existing registered users. In 2020, Linzi launched the "Rongmei Strong Nation" account and established a reward and punishment system for all-staff contributions, currently publishing over 250 articles monthly on "Study Strong Nation."

**Media + 81890 Livelihood Hotline.** The number 81890 is a homophone for “dial once and it works.” Operating for six years, it has become an indispensable hotline platform for residents. Through the integration of the “five centers,” the hotline’s functions have become more comprehensive, providing 24-hour services to the public. Resources related to water supply, electricity, medical care, employment, social security, finance, culture, and sports have been organized into menus for public access. Citizens can query various government services, volunteer services, and convenience information with one click, and can place orders 24/7 through offline hotlines and online mobile platforms, forming closed-loop management to supervise the quality of ordered services. Currently, the Livelihood Hotline Service Center handles an average of 25,000 public demands daily, with a 99% response rate and 93% comprehensive satisfaction rate, building a new channel for smooth communication and serving the people.

### 1.3 Improving the Three Mechanisms

The first is an **organizational leadership mechanism** characterized by “Party committee leadership, secretary responsibility, departmental coordination, and three-level accountability.” The district Party secretary bears overall responsibility, incorporating the five centers’ construction into important Party committee work for deployment, support, and supervision. A three-level “top leader” direct responsibility mechanism at district, town, and village levels has been established, along with a joint meeting system, creating a work pattern where “the center blows the whistle, departments mobilize, and all parties participate” [3].

The second is a **volunteer service mechanism** of “public ordering, center dispatching, unit receiving, and public evaluating.” The center uniformly accepts and coordinates various public orders, dispatching them to departments, units, and volunteer teams according to their functions. A “Hotline Sisters” service organization has been formed, comprising two psychological counselors, three lawyers, four professional social workers, and over 80 backbone volunteers, using methods such as home visits, tripartite mediation, agreement signing, and telephone follow-ups to resolve personalized volunteer service needs like “neighborhood disputes, family conflicts, and hardship assistance.” The center evaluates units and teams to urge better fulfillment and resolution of issues [4].

The third is a **social mobilization mechanism** of “center whistle-blowing, team organization, multi-party participation, and shared governance.” The center fully leverages its strong mobilization capacity to stimulate the enthusiasm and vitality of Party members, village representatives, youth league members, women’s federation members, grid workers, public welfare advocates, and senior volunteers. By utilizing social organizations such as red and white councils, moral evaluation committees, village affairs discussion committees, and anti-drug and anti-gambling associations, the center carries out rich and colorful civilization practice activities to enhance social cohesion and appeal, using culture to cultivate people and improve customs, mobilizing the entire society to

participate in key tasks such as epidemic prevention and control, poverty alleviation, and rural revitalization, building a new pattern of shared grassroots governance.

## 2. Achievements and Impact

### 2.1 Strengthening the Mainstream Public Opinion Position

As the most important platform for local residents to obtain news and information, the media under the Media Convergence Center—including newspapers, television, radio, and new media—clearly speak politics, firmly grasp the correct orientation, and convey the Party’s voice to thousands of households. The center shoulders the important mission of being the “starting gun” and “bugle call” in the district Party committee and government’s key work, using the “pen” to drive the “hammer” and the “camera” to drive the “bulldozer,” mobilizing the enthusiasm of Party members, cadres, and the masses, and promoting the implementation of the Party committee and government’s central tasks.

First, the center fully leverages the role of special columns in key district work. It has opened more than 20 special columns such as the “Four Major Activities Command and Dispatch Platform,” “Digital City Construction,” and “City Creation in Action,” using the platform to aggregate resources from various departments and enabling relevant functional departments to form synergy and firmly grasp the work center.

Second, the center fully leverages the authority of official media during emergencies. Taking the 2019 “Lekima” typhoon in Shandong as an example, Linzi Media Convergence provided continuous live coverage, broadcasting over 6,000 pieces of information including typhoon updates, disaster conditions, rescue operations, and work information, with peak updates reaching 300 per hour. This became the most timely, concentrated, and authoritative platform for typhoon information and the primary channel for residents to access real-time information. Simultaneously, the live broadcast created a platform for public interaction, with timely responses to inquiries about rainfall, road conditions, and rescue requests in the comment section, and numerous expressions of respect for cadres and masses working on the front lines. In past disasters, many people adopted a “wait and rely” mentality and complained, waiting for others to help them. However, this live broadcast showcased the efforts of Party members and cadres battling the rain, reducing the number of passive waiters and complainers while increasing those actively participating in rescue and self-help efforts. The district’s positive energy was tightly woven into a single rope, forming a united force against the typhoon.

Third, the center fully leverages its bridge and bond role in promoting the city’s external image. By mobilizing media resources at all levels, especially mainstream media at the central, provincial, and municipal levels, it has enhanced Linzi District’s external influence.

## 2.2 Significantly Improved Modernization of Grassroots Governance

The “five centers” help solve whatever difficulties the public wants to resolve. On the one hand, they have collected a large number of opinions and suggestions, promoting the resolution of hot and difficult issues of public concern. On the other hand, they have played a supervisory role in public opinion while appropriately guiding hotspots, resolving difficulties, and providing well-founded explanations and emotional guidance, effectively directing the course of public opinion.

Collecting public opinions and suggestions is an important function of media convergence. During Linzi District’s “Four Major Activities” campaign—“Great Ideological Emancipation, Great Style Transformation, Great Capacity Enhancement, and Great Work Implementation”—the center collected opinions and suggestions for the district Party committee, government, and various departments. Leveraging its functional role, Linzi Cloud vigorously publicized the campaign across its media matrix including television, radio, WeChat, and Douyin, setting up dedicated windows. The campaign collected over 15,000 opinions and suggestions, with more than 40,000 collected through all channels in the district, of which over 30,000 were resolved or answered. In the 2020 public satisfaction survey, Linzi’s ranking in the province improved by more than 20 places, with the largest increase in the city and the highest ranking in history. During the 2021 Two Sessions live broadcast, Linzi District opened a special column “District Chief, I Want to Tell You,” where ten department heads 集中 responded to netizen messages on-site, collecting 12 categories and over 400 opinions. The next day, the district chief chaired a handover meeting with all deputy district chiefs participating, where departments claimed tasks on-site and resolved public issues immediately. The center invited provincial and municipal media to witness the process. “When the people call, the government responds.” Replies to public calls and demands and departments’ completion status are immediately publicized on Linzi Cloud, using online-offline integration to understand public opinion more extensively and deeply, promptly solving urgent and difficult problems and easing public emotions, achieving good results. Responsive livelihood demands and a “pressure relief valve” for social conflicts have been established.

Since exploring the integration of the “five centers,” the center has received 165,000 public demands through the civilization practice public service platform interactive system, with a completion rate of 98% and comprehensive satisfaction rate of 93.7%.

## 2.3 Enhanced Convenience in Daily Life Through the Online Platform

With the capacity to plan and organize large-scale cultural and sports activities, media convergence integrates information and services, bringing together effective resources from government and business to truly facilitate local residents’ lives. One-click access to services provides a “direct express” for convenience

services, enabling online processing for over 500 commonly used service items across more than 50 departments, covering all frequently used government affairs for residents and enterprises. Using mobile phones, computers, or televisions, people can handle related business without leaving home, with over 70% of processes fully electronic and approval completed within two hours. The platform integrates functions closely related to daily life, including water and electricity bill payment, medical appointment booking, social security queries, consumer rights protection, transparent kitchens, and road condition information. Over 100 franchised enterprises provide 22 categories and more than 570 convenience service items such as housekeeping and moving services, becoming a trusted “fingertip” service platform for the public.

Taking the “Transparent Kitchen” module on Linzi Cloud as an example, the center incorporated the “Transparent Kitchen” program developed by the market supervision system, allowing netizens to view real-time monitoring of all primary and secondary school cafeterias and over 50 restaurant kitchens through the App, transforming transparent kitchens into reassuring kitchens. The “Qinongtong” module on Linzi Cloud bridges information channels between the discipline inspection commission and agriculture and rural affairs departments, transparently disclosing grassroots financial information according to law. Every financial transaction in the district’s over 400 villages can be clearly viewed with invoices or receipts. Many conflicts in grassroots society stem from inadequate financial transparency. This approach dismantles the “wall of mutual suspicion” between village cadres and villagers, giving cadres a clean reputation and giving common people clarity. It provides insurance for village cadres to work wholeheartedly and escorts the smooth implementation of various livelihood projects.

## 2.4 Facilitating Universal Participation and Shared Governance

With a simple tap on their phones, residents can participate in political consultation, providing ample channels for opinions, suggestions, and interest demands regarding urban management, rural environment, and food safety, greatly extending the “tentacles” of grassroots social governance.

In February 2020, Linzi Media Convergence launched a special column on COVID-19 prevention and control, opening ten sections including authoritative releases, on-site coverage, science popularization, material supply, love donations, and battle messages. Coordinated by the district Party secretary and specifically managed by the Standing Committee member and head of the Propaganda Department, various government resources were 集中 launched on Linzi Cloud. Each department fulfilled its responsibilities: authoritative releases were handled by the Propaganda Department and Public Security Bureau, science popularization by the Health Bureau, and material supply by the Industry and Information Technology Bureau and Commerce Bureau. Each unit designated specific personnel to update various information of greatest public concern at any time. These massive resources became a resource library for media conver-

gence reporting, enabling the television program “Zhanfang Shuo on Fighting the Epidemic” to achieve strong public response and be selected as a case study by the Central Propaganda Department. Works such as “Fighting the Epidemic, Standing Firm in Wind and Snow,” “Fangcang Hospital Sings ‘Yimeng Mountain Folk Song,’ ” and “This Small City Once Named ‘Qi’ Fights the Epidemic” became viral hits, with over 1 million views on Xinhua Net’ s client. Multiple works including “Commanding from the Front, Holding High the Banner, Resolutely Winning the Epidemic Prevention and Control Battle,” “Eight Sisters of the Imperial City Passing on the Red Sister Spirit in the Epidemic Fight,” “Most Beautiful Enterprises Writing Linzi’ s Responsibility,” and “Battle at Tianchen Qixiang” each exceeded 100,000 views on CCTV’ s mobile news network. Key reports such as “Linzi: 30,000 Party Members Handle Ten Tasks to Guard a City” and “Linzi: Centralized Quarantine, Personalized Services, Hardcore Measures to Cut the Infection Chain” were subsequently published in mainstream media at central, provincial, and municipal levels.

### **3. Challenges and Future Directions**

#### **3.1 Talent Constraints**

Talent issues are the foremost challenge for media convergence development. Grassroots media convergence centers have weak capacity to attract talent. The existing journalists suffer from serious aging, and their knowledge structure does not match current media development trends. The serious brain drain of backbone journalists has also led to weak innovation capacity in the editorial group, resulting in few influential and high-quality news products, and insufficient communication power and influence.

#### **3.2 Funding Constraints**

Media convergence centers require substantial investment in equipment updates and even more funding for operation. Although there has been continuous government financial support, it cannot fully meet the large expenses of media convergence, and the revenue-generating function of media convergence is weak with insufficient self-sustaining capacity.

#### **3.3 Weak Aggregation Effect**

Media convergence should fully leverage the aggregation effect of the platform to bring together government resources from various departments and business service resources from society. Some channels have not yet been opened, and the aggregation effect of “1+1>2” has not been fully realized.

#### **3.4 Future Development Plans**

The overall development 思路 for Linzi Media Convergence is to build an all-media communication project, planning to transform “Linzi Cloud” into Linzi’ s

“city brain.” Specific measures involve “three strengthenings.” First, strengthen digital empowerment by actively integrating into digital city construction, gradually building a regional intelligent comprehensive service platform that includes smart transportation, healthcare, and education, enabling online parking space queries, medical appointment booking, and online remote education to provide more convenient and intelligent information services for all residents. Second, strengthen content quality improvement by adhering to content as king, strengthening product awareness, user awareness, and fan awareness, producing and incubating more excellent programs that align with Linzi residents’ aesthetics, and increasing the number of mobile release terminals to use “small screens” to lead “big screens,” continuously increasing viewership and active users. Third, strengthen media convergence team building by actively recruiting high-level media convergence talents, organizing capacity enhancement training programs, and continuously improving the “footwork, vision, mental capacity, and writing ability” of the media convergence workforce. Further explore the “media+” service function, expanding from pure news propaganda to public service fields, comprehensively safeguarding livelihoods, fully integrating resources, and promoting central work throughout the entire process, using the “five centers” to aggregate more resources.

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## Author Biography

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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