6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

The purpose of this section is to give you an opportunity to tell us and your community about the activities you have engaged in to address community needs by outlining key services provided, and the local value and impact of those services. Please report on activities that occurred in Fiscal Year 2020. Responses may be shared with Congress or the public. Grantees are required to post a copy of this report (Section 6 only) to their website no later than ten (10) days after the submission of the report to CPB. CPB recommends placing the report in an "About" or similar section on your website. This section had previously been optional. Response to this section of the SAS is now mandatory.

Joint licensee Grantees that have filed a 2020 Local Content and Services Report as part of meeting the requirement for TV CSG funding may state they have done so in the corresponding questions below, so long as all of the questions below were addressed as they relate to radio operations in such report. You must include the date the report was submitted to CPB along with the TV Grantee ID under which it was submitted.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

1. Describe your overall goals and approach to address identified community issues, needs, and interests through your station's vital local services, such as multiplatform long and short-form content, digital and in-person engagement, education services, community information, partnership support, and other activities, and audiences you reached or new audiences you engaged.

Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting's two broadcast platforms (90.5 WESA and 91.3 WYEP) provide discrete content services, "NPR News & Information" and "Musical Discovery and Culture," respectively. Each station streams its broadcast signal online, through a website and through a mobile app. WESA operates two additional HD channels; one featuring locally programmed jazz and one featuring the BBC World Service. WESA's mission is to "work for the public to inform people in ways that engage and inspire them to create dialog about community issues and stories." WYEP's mission is to "enrich the community through musical discovery, expression and education." WESA's national and international news from NPR is complimented by our own reporting on local and regional issues, with an emphasis on stories that help listeners be more informed and engaged citizens. We continue to grow our newsroom and expand the scope of our work. In FY 20, WESA launched a new, local weekly news feature Pittsburgh Explain. It is a weekly summary of the key local news stories of the week, put in useful context for the listener. It airs on the radio service and is distributed as a podcast as a complement to WESA's daily newsmagazine, The Confluence. The station also ran a series of education specials pre-and post-pandemic. WESA responded to Covid-19 by realigning resources to cover the many angles of the pandemic. In addition to news gathering and conversations on The Confluence, WESA created a daily Coronavirus blog that attracted tens of thousands of readers. The contact restrictions of the pandemic did result in a temporary reduction in produced hours of The Confluence in the last few months of the fiscal year, when the program was produced at a length of 30-minutes, four days per week. We also partner with other stations and non-profit organizations to create, distribute and present content, including WITF, WHYY, WPSU, Keystone Crossroads, State Impact, PublicSource, and Point Park University's Center for Media Innovation. This expands the breadth and reach of our work and the journalism of our partners. Weekly radio audience in FY 20 ranged from a high of 143,300 before the pandemic to a low of 88,300 at the during the pandemic. The average weekly radio audience after the pandemic began was 104,000. Many
listeners moved to online listening once the pandemic began, the average streaming audience increased from 68,000 monthly listeners to 93,600 (+38%). By the end of the fiscal year (6/2020) the WESA website had more than 300,000 unique visitors, nearly double the pre-pandemic levels. WESA had more than 29,000 social media followers. Meanwhile, on 91.3 WYEP we continued our over 45 years-long tradition of bringing musical enjoyment, discovery and education to the region through broadcast...and we have continued to make significant investments in growing a digital adjunct to that over-the-air service. WYEP has made a significant investment in both time and resources to support the local music ecosystem. In July, we celebrated “Love Pittsburgh Music Month,” so designated by a coalition of local media, music, and community entities in partnership with WYEP. We encouraged music fans to support regional artists, hosted multiple live performances from area musicians in our on-air music schedule and “Stay at Home”; and we increased the visibility of local artists in our on-air music schedule by having played music from and/or interviewed at least 320 local musicians in FY20, strengthening knowledge of and interest in music being created locally—especially important after the pandemic forced the cancellation of most live music events. We also gave a platform to some area DJs to share music with the community after live events were largely canceled. Educational programs are a part of our overall community service. We select some area high school-age to participate in our Reimagination recording project. This diverse group of teens are led through a series of workshops on topics including marketing and business management, songwriting and publishing, and touring and venue relations...ultimately resulting in the public release of the kids’ songs on an album. These workshops have been very well received by students and parents alike, and graduates of the program include a number of successful musicians (including one who received a Grammy® Award and another whose music earned her an Emmy® Award). Audiences on-air and online continue to engage with WYEP. Our over-the-air broadcasts reached an average of about 96,000 listeners per week prior to the pandemic, but after listening habits radically changed due to COVID-19, our average weekly listeners were about 73,800. Our website had an average of 17,750 unique visitors each month. WYEP had 44,880 social media followers.

6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

2. Describe key initiatives and the variety of partners with whom you collaborated, including other public media outlets, community nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, the business community, teachers and parents, etc. This will illustrate the many ways you're connected across the community and engaged with other important organizations in the area.

Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting engages in a variety of partnerships throughout the year, with an eye toward leveraging our assets to mutual advantage and the betterment of the community. In addition to the aforementioned partnerships with public media outlets across Pennsylvania (WITF, WHYY, WPSU, Keystone Crossroads, State Impact PA), with other nonprofit journalism centers (like Public Source), we partnered with numerous local community organizations. Pre-pandemic, educational programming and community events were staged at our facilities on Pittsburgh’s historic South Side, including “Local 913 Live” and “Live and Direct” music events. WESA produced and broadcast four education specials with cooperation from several agencies and schools. In partnership with the Allegheny Conference, WESA presented a business community event on the future of the tech industry in Pittsburgh featuring Molly Wood from Marketplace. Approximately 100 people attended the four events. WYEP sought out a variety of community partners to curate musical playlists in honor of Black History Month. These playlists were aired on WYEP, then made available for on-demand streaming via the WYEP website, and finally, converted to Spotify playlists for ongoing listening. Guest curators included Pittsburgh Post-Gazette columnist Tony Norman, August Wilson African American Cultural Center President and CEO Janis Burley Wilson, local musician Clara Kent, and poet and MacArthur Fellow Terrance Hayes. Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting hosted a food drive in February to support HEARTH, a housing program for families escaping domestic violence. PCBC has been partnering with HEARTH for over 20 years in events to support their important efforts. The food drive collected enough goods to restock their food pantry for over three months. WYEP worked with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for the virtual presentation of their annual Three Rivers Arts Festival. We curated one night of livestreamed performances, presenting two local musical artists, and shared the music created by teen musicians in WYEP’s Reimagination project.

6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

3. What impact did your key initiatives and partnerships have in your community? Describe any known measurable impact, such as increased awareness, learning or understanding about particular issues. Describe indicators of success, such as connecting people to needed resources or strengthening conversational ties across diverse neighborhoods. Did a partner see an increase in requests for related resources? Please include direct feedback from a partner(s) or from a person(s) served.

The work performed by Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting – in broadcast, online and at live events – has enriched and strengthened the communities we serve. Listenership to WESA’s local journalism and NPR news programming remained strong during the pandemic with at-home listening increasing and significantly increased use of the WESA website, particularly for timely and practical information about the pandemic. This growth in consumption is the best possible endorsement for the work that we do and of the value that local listeners and citizens place in it. And our media sponsorship program, WYEP and WESA donate broadcast airtime and expertise to drive the visibility and mission-related work of other non-profit organizations. As FY 20 progressed, we shifted that emphasis to be more responsive to community needs rising from the pandemic. This service provided airtime to non-profits valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars – all at no cost to them. We gave particular emphasis to Pittsburgh Community Food Bank with support ranging from a fundraising partnership that helped the Food Bank provide tens of thousands of meals to sharing timely and accurate information about food distribution dates, times, and sites.
6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

4. Please describe any efforts (e.g. programming, production, engagement activities) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences (including, but not limited to, new immigrants, people for whom English is a second language and illiterate adults) during Fiscal Year 2020, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Attention to the underserved and under-represented communities of Southwestern Pennsylvania is a critical element of Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting’s community service – and it starts with listening. WESA gives particular attention to these audiences in the local news reporting and newsmagazines. For example, education coverage includes regular, and frequent, reporting from the city and suburbs on the challenges faced by educators and families around issues related to multi-lingual families. Both stations partner with other non-profits to service citizens who are not traditionally part of the public radio audience. Examples of such partnerships include the food bank and other services that help families and individuals meet basic human needs.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

5. Please assess the impact that your CPB funding had on your ability to serve your community. What were you able to do with your grant that you wouldn't be able to do if you didn't receive it?

CPB funding is critical to the work of Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting. It serves as the seed capital that allows us to envision and design new initiatives, which then inspires the support (financial and otherwise) of others. As a media entity constantly looking to its future, CPB support is critical in allowing us the flexibility to serve existing audiences and serve new, underserved audiences in new and inspiring ways.

Comments

No Comments for this section