

Alabama Public Radio CPB Station Activities Survey for 2020

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.*

Alabama Public Radio provides regular ongoing coverage of community issues through local news headlines and feature stories scheduled within our most-listened parts of the daily schedules. Our goal is to be an indispensable source of high quality, reliable information for our community of listeners. Our transmission system covers approximately two thirds of the state of Alabama and in many parts of the state APR is the only source of noncommercial news and information. We also provide a full schedule of locally hosted classical, bluegrass and big band music which attracts an enthusiastic and loyal audience.

The station identifies concerns and needs through regular contact with a broad range of educational, political, religious and community leaders. In addition to the listener events held in Northport and Fairhope, APR has invested in enhancing our online profile to engage with our listening audience. Web traffic has increased by 63% during the year as the result of these investments. Our investment in online activity also increased digital engagement through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

With three HD channels and a robust online presence, the station strives to reach a diverse audience through multiple platforms including an active website, online streaming, and multiple social media sites. Our online streaming includes our main broadcast channel as well as two sub-channels featuring BBC News and contemporary music.

Alabama Public Radio produced its first podcast, **Lights, Bama, Action!** focused on movies shot in or about Alabama. Three Alabama based writers, Pulitzer-Prize winning columnist John Archibald, Carla Jean Whitley author of *Muscle Shoals Sound Studio*, *Balancing Act: Yoga Essays*, and *Birmingham Beer*, Edwards Bowser Senior Storyteller for Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin's office. As part of the launch of the eight-part podcast we held a virtual launch event on Zoom moderated by National Public Radio's Debbie Elliot, a former news director for Alabama Public Radio. Other projects are on the docket for upcoming release.

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.

Alabama Public Radio seeks to address the diversity of its listening audience through its local news coverage, diverse program schedule, and non-broadcast activities.

Most arts organizations in the area have curtailed or suspended completely their activities during the pandemic. Despite that, Alabama Public Radio has maintained collaborative relationships with the Tuscaloosa and Mobile symphonies which have been operating in a reduced capacity. Part of that collaboration includes four nights of broadcasts of the Mobile Symphony concerts.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic APR widened its coverage to include public service news to inform its listeners of the hazards and challenges of the coronavirus. That includes not only obvious issues like masking and social distancing, but also greater impacts to low-income communities, mental health challenges due to isolation, increases in poverty and homelessness, and developing habits like healthier eating. To this end, APR worked extensively with local TV station WVUA 23 and groups like UAB Hospital, the University of Alabama's College of Community Health Sciences, The Mobile County Department of Health, Baldwin County Emergency Management, and charitable support groups like Prodissee Pantry.

In 2020, the Alabama Public Radio news team completed a four-month long investigation into the tenth anniversary of the BP Gulf oil spill. This effort involved the aforementioned team of print journalists along the Alabama coast now working for Alabama Public Radio to produce stories for our statewide audience. This joint project reported on issues including the long-term mental health impact from the BP spill, ongoing health problems associated with exposure to chemical dispersants used to remove the oil, and the threat to Alabama fishermen posed by the importation of foreign seafood which widened due to the spill. Finally, we interviewed local businessmen coping with COVID-19 shutdowns and how that mirrored what happened following the BP oil spill. On an unrelated subject, APR aired the hour-long documentary "Selling Kids: Human Trafficking in Alabama," which was the culmination of a fourteen-month long effort in 2019.

Throughout FY 2020, APR also continued to expand its coverage of issues along the Gulf coast through an innovative effort to recruit and train former print reporters to help address the "news desert" left by the demise of the Mobile Press Register newspaper. This enabled APR to produce newscast coverage and long-form features on issues ranging from plans to build a toll road to replace the Interstate-10 Bridge across Mobile Bay, the possible resumption of AMTRAK passenger rail service along the Gulf coast, and the local impact of the closing of a small-town pharmacy that's been open since 1927.

APR engages with the community through membership organizations including, but not limited to, The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Public Relations Council of Alabama, Baldwin Business Council, Women's Business Alliance, Mobile Senior Coalition, Mobile Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Partners for Environmental Progress, The Sierra Club, Coastal Conservation Association, and Coastal Alabama Business Chamber. These organizations enable APR to engage with the community through multi-media venues.

In addition, organizations including Alabama League of Women Voters, Alabama Audubon, Alabama Rivers Alliance, Valley Arts and Entertainment, Opera Birmingham, Birmingham Ballet, The Literacy Council of Alabama, Theatre Tuscaloosa, Kennedy Douglass Trust, Fairhope Film Festival, Weeks Bay Foundation, Mobile Earth Day, Frank Brown Songwriters Festival, Bellingrath Gardens, Jewish Film Festival, Pensacola Opera, Mobile Ballet, Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, University of South Alabama, Tuscaloosa Symphony, Mobile Chamber Music Society, and Alabama Port Authority use APR to inform listeners across the state about services and performance opportunities.

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.***

APR's documentary on Human Trafficking, "Selling Kids: Human Trafficking in Alabama," was honored with twelve international, national, and local awards for excellence in journalism. We worked in conjunction with the Alabama State Task Force on Human Trafficking in producing our coverage and addressed the group's quarterly meeting in October of 2019 on our findings. Our program focused on issues ranging from the threat of "familial" trafficking in Alabama, where parents are the traffickers and children are the merchandise, to a new software system that combines efforts of law enforcement, victim support groups, and trafficking victims to maximize positive outcomes for those harmed by this crime.

APR listeners provide ongoing feedback about our programming and its impact on the community. Comments like these are typical:

LOVE host's Classical music in the morning - and All things Acoustic on Friday nights and some weekend programing. Thanks for all the great work!

This is my lifeline to accurate reporting, classical music, jazz, folk/bluegrass and thought-provoking interviews, books and discussions. Also, I am grateful for poignant stories and

moments of laughter with "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me." This station causes me to stay in the carport/driveway until a song or story has reached its conclusion.

Well, I get up in the morning and listen to the news while I get ready for work and then when I get to work I listen to the classical music at work until all things considered comes on and then on the weekends I listen to the cooking shows. It's a part of my everyday routine. It's a really great place to get the news, accurate news.

APR is my most listened to news source. I find it consistently fair and while slightly left of center, it always investigates both sides of politics. With the president continuously vilifying the news media, it is important to support trustworthy news sources.

We rely on APR to provide us with unbiased news stories as well as uplifting feature articles. Since pursuing a degree in broadcast journalism in college, I have been a fan of Morning Edition and All Things Considered. Today my APR listening has expanded to include podcasts such as The Moth Radio Hour. You keep providing excellent programming and we'll keep tuning in

I have enjoyed listening to Alabama Public Radio for years. APR is uniquely a source of deeper information and entertainment, as it is the only radio station I am aware of that plays classical, jazz, bluegrass, folk, big band, and pop standards of the past. Other radio stations are too closely bound by rigid guidelines and less variable programming playlists. I am an avid music collector, and APR has given me many points of reference in expanding my musical horizons, as I purchase CDs across various genres. . . . Thank you and keep up the good work.

These days most news outlets make me feel anxious and even angry. Most news is all about shock value, click bait, and sensationalism. I know I can listen to NPR every morning when I'm getting ready and, on my way to work and I won't come away feeling scared or upset. I always trust that I'm getting the whole story from NPR and that's a comfort I don't get from any other news source.

- 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.**

APR provides regular on-going coverage of stories of special interest to minority and other diverse audiences. In addition to the documentary on Human Trafficking and our series on the tenth anniversary of the Gulf oil Spill, APR produced stories in 2020 including:

- A report on a presentation by Cyntoia Brown during January's Human Trafficking

Awareness month. Brown is a trafficking survivor who was convicted of killing her attacker. Her case, and later release was championed by celebrities. Brown now makes it his mission to speak publicly on the issue of those victimized by the \$150 billion dollar a year trafficking industry.

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color in Alabama. Black Americans are statistically at greater risk from the virus, due to issues like lower income which precludes regular health care, access of fresh food, and transportation.
- APR collaborated with the commercial TV newsroom of WVUA23 on a three-part series on the issue of unfair bond for Black Americans accused of crimes. One segment focused on the efforts of a State Senator to keep violent offenders locked up. and the unintended impact that was having on local jails. Another story looked at how minority defendants could be particularly harmed by the legislation. Part three was on the overall economic result of the bill.
- APR reported on the “Street of Many Colors” project in Mobile, which was inspired by the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. Local school children of color worked with minority artists to create a chalk mural on a Mobile street. Their effort built on marches held to protest police brutality against Black Americans.

APR believes that diversity of staff and students leads to diverse, relevant programming. Each semester, APR recruits University of Alabama students to work as interns in the newsroom. Over the FY 20 academic year, APR worked with 8 students—two thirds of whom were female and two-thirds of whom were ethnic minorities. These budding journalists are trained in newscast copy writing, which results in 60% of the material used during the 107 minutes of news updates APR airs each week. During their next semester, our interns work with our News Director on long form radio features. This training prepares our graduates for jobs in the industry, including Allison Mollenkamp. This UA grad recently won her first national Edward R. Murrow award for covering Midwest flooding for Nebraska Public Radio. Another intern, Tina Turner, was just named an inaugural “Jim Lehrer Journalism Fellow” with PBS News Hour in Washington, D.C. Other APR grads have moved onto positions in Utah, Wisconsin, Washington, D.C., and Birmingham.

Over the last year, APR students have continued to add to the diversity of voices heard on APR. This initiative to produce more local content has not only added variety to our program schedule, but has also promoted diversity by putting more interns, women and people of color on the air and on our website. Commentaries include:

- Keepin’ It Real (hosted by Cam Marston who works remotely in Mobile, Alabama) First Place for the Alabama Associated Press Media Editor’s Best Commentator or Editorialist Award; also recognized with a Communicator Award of Distinction Honoring Excellence in Marketing and Communication; Communicator Award of Distinction for “Unhinged” commentary.
- Crunk Culture (hosted by University of Alabama Associate Professor Robin

Boylorn) First Place in the Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA) Division C category for “Black Maternal Mortality” commentary; Communicator Award of Distinction for “The State of the WNBA’ commentary.

- Living with Less Plastic (hosted by Mary Liz Ingram who works remotely from Birmingham, Alabama) commentary about reducing plastic waste and saving the planet.

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 Alabama Public Radio's local mission: The APR News staff is the largest public radio news team in the state, covering political, economic and cultural issues of critical importance to the people of Alabama. CPB funding allows us to support staff who are engaged with our diverse citizenry. Alabama continues to grapple with significant social and economic issues; many of its counties rank among the poorest in the country and our broadcast signal reaches more than 80 percent of the state. CPB funding helps us leverage the support of listeners and local companies extending our ability to produce high quality unique local programming.

Without the support of CPB Alabama Public Radio would be unable to provide the current level of community programming and outreach.