

2020 Local Content Services Report

Submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on January 22, 2021

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.

In late 2019 and early 2020, KOSU went through a strategic planning process and identified goals to improve the quality and quantity of local content and the ways we reach audiences. KOSU seeks to be an externally focused organization, flipping the model on traditional journalism practices with community engagement. In 2020, in spite of the pandemic, staff spent time listening to and engaging specifically with audiences in Indigenous communities, Black communities and rural communities. We learned that many people simply want answers to questions, so we leaned in heavily to a help desk style of journalism with information often personally delivered through the Groundsource texting club about COVID-19, voting, vaccinations and more. KOSU hired two additional journalists to cover agriculture and rural issues and Indigenous affairs, and we launched a new partnerships with Tri-City Collective to produce the show Focus: Black Oklahoma and This Land Press to produce the podcast Imaginary Oklahoma. KOSU journalists worked with journalists on the Focus: Black Oklahoma team and from KGOU and StateImpact Oklahoma to cover the Juneteeth celebrations and the Donald Trump rally in Tulsa. We also worked together to cover the elections in Oklahoma often working hard to think from the perspective of a first-time voter. We had some voters we engaged with during our listening sessions tell us that they were nervous to go vote in an unfamiliar place, so our reporters filmed a short video to try to demystify the process. We also worked with a group of elementary school teachers who volunteered to translate KOSU's COVID-19 coverage into Spanish during the early days of the pandemic. We couldn't sustain this service with volunteers, but it helped us to better understand what the Spanish-language community needs from public radio, and we are pursuing an opportunity to offer this information on a more permanent basis. The post translating stories into Spanish was one of the top stories on kosu.org for 2020. The engagement efforts are still young, and it is difficult to understand how audiences will behave in the new normal that follows the pandemic, but we believe the work we did in 2020 is the groundwork for building a trusting relationship with communities we have never actively served or integrated into our work.

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.

In 2020, KOSU collaborated with a variety of community organizations in an effort to be more inclusive and to deliver information related to the pandemic, racial reckoning and the elections. Some of these efforts included the following.

- Hosted a meetup with the Association of Independents in Radio on January 9 to develop a relationship with existing and potential independent producers. Attendees: 47
- Hosted a listening session in Miami, Oklahoma on January 18 and 19 in collaboration with the Quapaw Tribe, Wyandotte Tribe, Miami Chamber of Commerce and others.
- Participated in America Amplified Collaboration with other public radio stations around the country to increase voter awareness and participation and accurate information around the pandemic.
- Continued long-term collaboration with KGOU, KWGS and KCCU for StateImpact Oklahoma, a local news collaborative to report on health, criminal justice and education.
- Joined the Oklahoma Media Center, an inaugural group of more than 20 Oklahoma media outlets working together to produce journalism on targeted topics and discuss creative ways to be financially sustainable.
- Started discussion with the Native American Journalism Association about ways to work with Tribal newspaper reporters to convert their reporting to audio journalism and collaborate on larger projects.
- Convened a group of elementary school Spanish teachers to translate early COVID-19 information into Spanish. (Effort was not sustainable because the teachers were volunteering their time. We hope to restart this effort when we can get funding.)
- Joined Report for America collaboration to hire an agricultural and rural affairs reporter. This led to ongoing relationships with new organizations for KOSU including Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, Oklahoma Black Farmers, American Farmers and Ranchers, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association.
- Hosted a virtual listening sessions with the Local Voices Network to better understand the issues rural Oklahomans are facing.
- Hosted a listening session in Watonga, Oklahoma in October 2020 with the Watonga Republican Newspaper, Watonga Chamber of Commerce, Watonga Public Library, Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe and Wheeler Brothers Grains.
- Spoke to a number of virtual journalism classes at Oklahoma State University and the University of Arkansas.

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.

KOSU saw significant growth specifically in its digital audience in 2020 with additional investment. In 2019, KOSU reporters posted 332 stories compared to 1,687 in 2020. This additional work resulted in 1,596,573 pageviews in 2020 compared to 694,250 pageviews in

2019. This represents a 130% increase. We also launched a daily newsletter and a daily news podcast to help people who were seeking information for the first time in the pandemic develop a habit of turning to KOSU as a primary news source. This resulted in more than 79,000 podcast downloads in 2020 and more than 1,000 newsletter subscribers. While we do not yet have demographic information for these new audience members, we are receiving anecdotal feedback on impact including the following comments.

- One man called the station in June 2020. He said he had exclusively listened to sports talk radio his entire adult life until the pandemic. He said he started listening to KOSU in April 2020 and that for the first time in his life he felt informed enough to vote. He called to let us know he was registering to vote because of our work. He said he was 45.
- “I love the interviews and the music. I use stories I hear in my classroom because I’m always learning from KOSU. I love the interviews and the statistics the most.” -Rebekkah M., Norman, OK
- “You’re my window to the world in rural northeast Oklahoma.” - Jan M., Eucha, OK

In other impacts, the reporting we have done in and with Indigenous communities has continued to improve a trusting relationship resulting in story tips and requests for reporting on certain issues. We also noted demand for answers to questions through engagement reporting. This was also noted in that our most popular posts of the year on kosu.org were the KOSU Voter Guide and specific information about COVID-19.

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.

In 2020, KOSU made five specific investments in these communities.

1. We hired a full-time Indigenous Affairs reporter to cover the 39 federally recognized tribes that call Oklahoma home.
2. We hired an agriculture and rural issues reporter as these communities are being disproportionately affected by the contraction of the newspaper industry.
3. We collaborated with a group of elementary school teachers to translate COVID-19 information into Spanish in a pilot project.
4. We began a collaboration with Tri-City Collective to restart production of the Focus:Black Oklahoma show, which was ended by another station because of the pandemic.
5. We invested deeply in personal engagement through Facebook groups, our Groundsource texting club, listening session in communities and more. This allowed us to better understand information needs.

In FY2021, we plan to continue the above efforts and try to figure out how to make the Spanish language work we piloted in 2020 a permanent part of our work.

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?

During the pandemic, funding from CPB has been more critical than ever. With contracted funding from underwriting and our university-licensee, the funding we received from CPB allowed us to continue serving our community during what has been one of the most critical information needs in decades. Because this funding has helped to keep the station we were here when so many people started seeking information for the very first time. Thank you.