

Alabama Public Radio CPB Station Activities Survey for 2022

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 diverse 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. In 2022, the APR news team produced 7 hours of radio feature stories, five episodes of investigative podcasts, 7 short video documentaries, and three arts and entertainment podcast specials. We also provide a full schedule of locally hosted and curated 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. APR has been very successful in utilizing our new website platform to increase capacity for our digital workflow, making it easier for listeners to access news, podcasts and commentaries from either their computers or mobile platforms. Currently, three APR podcasts are live and available on all platforms. Alabama Public Radio produced its latest investigative podcast "No Stone Unturned", a five-part series on preserving slave cemeteries in Alabama. APR spoke with African American families who volunteer to try to save these burial sites that are being swallowed by trees and scrub brush or snapped up by developers and paved over. To emphasize that this isn't a "southern" issue, APR travelled to New Jersey where a similar effort is underway to save a slave cemetery.

We also partnered with the Alabama Folk Association, airing a six-episode season of Alabama Folk. Each episode features an Alabamian who carries on a tradition passed down through the generations. The podcast seeks to elevate underrepresented voices and cultures in Alabama. I'm doing the interviews now, and traditions include Cherokee flute making, Laotian cuisine,

Mexican dance, Creek finger weaving, lye soap making in Gee's Bend, Korean hanji, chair caning in the Wiregrass, and Brazilian "little sweets".

Alabama Public Radio continues to prioritize production of short video documentaries for our website and social media pages. This year we produced seven short documentaries for the site, including pieces on a donation only restaurant in rural Alabama, understanding A.I. Art, and a locally owned Bao restaurant with strong ties to its community. These videos have provided a significant boost to our social media numbers, with 3 of our top 5 Facebook posts being these short documentaries. The traction they have had online has helped increase our followers and nearly tripled our Facebook reach in a year. Drexel & Honeybee, our piece on the donation only restaurant, won a Southeastern Emmy.

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. In the summer of 2022, we launched a new mobile app to allow listeners to take APR with them anywhere they go on their Android or Apple device. In November, we changed the format of the HD3 broadcast and app channel to provide classical music to our audience 24 hours every day. These streams are also available on the web.

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.

Alabama Public Radio maintains collaborative relationships with the Tuscaloosa and Mobile symphonies. Part of that collaboration includes four nights of broadcasts of the Mobile Symphony concerts, and it is anticipated that broadcasts of the Tuscaloosa Symphony will begin within the next year. Also, we worked this year with Chamber Music Tuscaloosa to identify and present a concert for Black History Month, featuring the Marian Anderson String Quartet, a group consisting of four black women who presented a concert focusing on music of black composers.

As part of intentional focus on the gulf coast to help grow listenership in the area and better serve their specific needs, APR hosted a listening session for civic, non-profit, governmental, and corporate leaders to discuss the most pressing economic issues confronting the area. Working with contacts in chambers of commerce, museums, and civic organizations, we developed a contact list and invited interested parties to a three-hour listening session. They were eager to share their needs regarding training trades to anyone and everyone; the need for childcare in the off hours (How can a couple work night shifts without childcare?); attracting healthcare

professionals, doctors, and lawyers; and the need for affordable housing. They are concerned about retaining the next generation who often think they need to leave the area to achieve their goals. Our reporters in the region have begun to dig into these areas to find stories and features that support the needs of the community.

This listening session led the Alabama Public Radio news team to produce a new series inspired by our ongoing digital mentorship with the Poynter Institute. The reports, titled “Should I Stay or Should I Go” focused on the problem of losing skilled and educated workers along the Gulf coast to other parts of the country. Salaries are one issue we addressed, but the “good old boy” network for business opportunities is another.

APR’s fourteen-month long investigation into human trafficking in 2021 also prompted an invitation by the U.S. State Department to address a delegation from thirteen African nations. Each of these visitors handle aspects of trafficking in their nations. This speaking opportunity prompted a second by the group Global Ties Alabama to speak about trafficking during an international forum on ZOOM. The APR news team was also shadowed by a video documentary crew from the European public TV network ARTE, out of Strasbourg, France. They sought out APR because of our coverage of the end of Roe versus Wade.

Throughout FY 2022, 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. APR’s latest addition to this effort is University of Alabama Graduate Student intern Cori Yonge. She’s pursuing her Master's Degree while reporting for the APR newsroom. Her first feature, on the first ever Alabama Mushroom Festival was one of the highest performing online stories for 2022. This effort continues to enable APR to produce newscast coverage and long-form features on issues ranging from plans to revive the effort to replace the Interstate 10 bridge over Mobile Bay, to related work to preserve archeological artifacts from Mobile’s past buried in the path of the proposed bridge’s construction. APR’s Gulf coast correspondents also covered the effort to restart AMTRAK rail service between Mobile and New Orleans, which was stopped by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. APR Gulf coast correspondent Guy Busby also reported on the premiere of the Netflix documentary “Descendants,” which chronicles the lives of the residents of Africatown. They’re the descendants of the last kidnapped Africans brought to the Mobile area just before the Civil War aboard the slave ship Clotilda. A professor from the University of South Alabama also served as producer of the new film.

During membership drives, the development team engaged the community by hosting “Coffee Klatches” in our broadcast area including Florence, Mobile, Orange Beach, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, and Daphne.

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, Mobile

Bay Keeper, and Coastal Alabama Business Chamber. These organizations enable APR to engage with the community through multi-media venues.

In addition, organizations including Alabama Association for Non-Profits, Veterans Recovery Resources, Arts Alive, Alabama Rivers Alliance, Valley Arts and Entertainment, Opera Birmingham, Birmingham Ballet, Theatre Tuscaloosa, Kennedy Douglass Trust, Fairhope Film Festival, Mobile Earth Day, Frank Brown Songwriters Festival, Bellingrath Gardens, GULFQUEST, Jewish Film Festival, Pensacola Opera, Mobile Ballet, Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, University of South Alabama, Tuscaloosa Symphony, Mobile Chamber Music Society, Mobile Symphony, Kristin Amerson Youth Foundation, Huntsville Botanical Gardens, McWane Science Center, and Alabama Port Authority use APR to inform listeners across the state about services and performance opportunities.

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 conversations with civic and business leaders at the gulf coast have helped us identify and tell stories about why the community has had trouble retaining young professionals. The collaboration has not only helped develop content for our "Should I Stay or Should I Go" but has also helped foster relationships between the station and the gulf that should help bolster and grow our news presence in communities we have not had many in-roads with. We are hoping to work with these new partners to help attract a diverse and representative group of community members to participate in StoryCorp this fall, which will be in the gulf in Africatown this fall.

APR's investigative features on slave cemeteries in Alabama, a short documentary on the black owned Drexel and Honeybee's donation only restaurant in south Alabama, and a short documentary "The Irritable Bao" on a woman's journey from mission work with her husband in China to a locally owned restaurant whose charitable works have made it a hub in their community, and an audio feature on the Invisible Histories Project which is a nonprofit organization that documents the history of LGBTQ+ people in the South, were all among our best performers on social media this year, accentuating our continuing efforts to cover communities and stories that best serve our diverse state-wide audience.

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

- APR is my favorite source of news that is delivered without an overwhelming amount of opinion, yet still relatable and friendly.
- APR is my twice-daily connection to the news, science and cultural events of the world. Life in Alabama would be impossible without it.
- Thank you for everything that you do for Alabama. It wouldn't be Christmas without the APR broadcast of Lessons and Carols from King's College Chapel! Keep up the good work!
- I listen and really love the classical musical section and also listen to Fresh Air news programs.
- I love the news coverage. It is the most objective and complete out there. I love shows like The Moth Radio and It's Been A Minute. And, of course, I love how calming the voices of All Things Considered help me to relax after a long day of work.
- I just moved to the state and am happy to find the same quality reporting on national and state-wide stories that keep me informed and knowledgeable of the places I live. Also loving the Saturday evening blues programming!
- APR is a reminder to me that even in places in this country that are considered politically "red," we're actually purple. I appreciate the wide range of stories and programs APR provides, but I especially like listening to "Wait wait don't tell me," Moth Radio, Mountain Stage, and "Getting Sentimental Over You" on the weekends.
- What does APR mean to me? Your classical music program has been my solace and comfort during these crazy and stressful times of illness and conflict. Thank you for that little ray of sunshine you've provided me.

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 2022, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2023. 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 minorities and other diverse audiences. In addition to the documentary on audio documentary and podcast "No Stone Unturned: Preserving Slave Cemeteries in Alabama. APR produced stories in 2022 including:

- APR investigated efforts by members of the same family in Marengo County to save all of their homes from being taken by the state, through eminent domain to build a new highway connecting Tuscaloosa and Mobile. The eleven members of the Moore family saw their concern worsen when the State of Alabama broke ground on the new road project, which threatens to swallow up property that's been in generations of their family for over one hundred years.
- APR also reported on an innovative program to help juvenile offenders, of various racial backgrounds, work their way out of the legal system through creative writing. "Writing Our Stories" is a collaboration between the non-profit POINTE Academy, and the Mobile County Juvenile Justice System. It utilizes POINTE writing mentors with a sitting juvenile judge as the literary critic. The offenders are encouraged to use writing to express themselves as a way to find constructive ways to resolve conflict and avoid re-offending.
- APR reported on a new trend that could ease the pervasive poverty among the residents of Boykin, Alabama who produce world famous "Gee's Bend quilts." These handstitched works of art are in high demand from museums and collectors. However, the average income among the women who make the quilts by hand averages \$12,000 a year. Some are managing to earn more by marketing their town work on websites like Etsy.

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. During 2022, APR worked with 12 student interns—75% percent of those students were women or minorities. Interns produced content daily for newscasts. This includes stories on the impact of emotional support animals for young people with mental health challenges, spotlighting trailblazers during the Civil Rights movement, reporting on Alabama's first Black poet laureate, and coverage on the removal of racist language from Alabama's constitution. Interns also contributed content on celebrations of LGBTQ+ members in Alabama communities, reported on efforts to promote HIV testing and awareness, brought awareness to transgender issues, spotlighted women's sports that otherwise go unnoticed, and promoted events on Native American history.

Over the last year, APR staff and contributors 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:

- Crunk Culture (hosted by University of Alabama Associate Professor Robin Boylorn) has covered topics such as environmental issues, racism, gentrification, voter suppression, student loan debt, Black Tax and Quiet Quitting.

- Book Reviews with Don Noble is a weekly book review series that helps raise awareness for new books from a diverse pool of established southern authors as well as a diverse and inclusive cast of up-and-coming new voices. For many young authors, this platform gives them a level of exposure they may not otherwise have, and we encourage them to use the video to help promote their work.
- 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.

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.

