KSMU Station Activities Survey  
Section 6 – 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.

KSMU’s mission is to “encourage the exploration of ideas and their application to citizenship.” We seek to engage our listeners in civil dialogue around current events, public affairs, and the arts. We accomplish this through community partnerships, digital engagement, and a robust schedule of broadcast programming.

KSMU’s monthly program “Engaging the Community,” addresses national and global issues as they pertain to the Ozarks. Listeners are encouraged to submit topic ideas for this monthly program.

Additionally, the multi-part quarterly series “Sense of Community” takes a deep dive into matters of importance to our community. The FY2020 series engaged and involved listeners to highlight a wide array of topics, including: “Dementia in the Ozarks,” which explored the social, financial, and emotional toll of dementia, and where those affected can find support locally; “Table Traditions,” which highlighted local listeners’ family recipes that have been handed down through the generations; and “Take It Outside,” which featured 10 unique local spots to enjoy nature in the Ozarks.

Finally, as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the world, KSMU responded immediately by creating a web page dedicated to keeping the community informed about local resources for testing and treatment, local safety guidelines, and the latest local news related to the pandemic. The KSMU news team also featured more than 800 stories on how the pandemic affected our neighbors and local businesses.

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.

KSMU maintains numerous community partnerships that help support and expand the impact of our work. A few of these key partnerships include:

Making a Difference – through a long-running partnership with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, this bi-monthly series draws upon the personal stories and voices of Ozarks residents to highlight key issues impacting our community. The FY2020 series featured several
“Conversations on Collaboration,” discussing how several local non-profit organizations are collaborating to create change in the community.

Making Democracy Work – KSMU partners with the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri to produce this weekly series covering topics related to the Ozarks and democracy.

STEM Spots, Engaging the Community, and the Missouri State Journal – KSMU leverages its resources as both a public broadcaster and a part of the campus community to bring listeners a variety of public affairs programming from Missouri State University. Examples of this collaboration include “STEM Spots,” a weekly science program hosted by Dr. David Cornelison from MSU’s Physics, Astronomy and Material Science Department; “Engaging the Community,” a monthly program with MSU president Clif Smart that examines national and international events through a local lens; and “Missouri State Journal,” a weekly series that informs the community of events, discussions, and academic research taking place across campus.

Poetry Pals - the Springfield-Greene County Library District, KSMU Radio, and legendary children’s author and poet David L. Harrison teamed up to bring our younger listeners “Poetry Pals” – a weekly children’s radio series on KSMU. The series featured children’s poetry read on-air by Harrison and local librarians.

Election Coverage and Candidate/Issue Forums – KSMU joined a coalition of local organizations– including the League of Women Voters, Leadership Springfield, Drury University, Ozarks Technical Community College, and more – with the goal of educating and engaging voters ahead of the 2020 elections. The coalition produced several candidate and issue forums throughout 2020 which KSMU presented online and on-air.

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.

We hear frequently from listeners expressing gratitude for the programming and information shared on KSMU. Listeners have expressed deep appreciation for our local coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, in helping them make decisions for their families on a daily basis. KSMU’s “Coronavirus in the Ozarks” web page also connected listeners with local testing sites, public health resources, and fact-based news and information to inform listeners about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our region.

KSMU’s election coverage and voter engagement/education initiatives were also well-received. Listeners were grateful for KSMU’s civil, respectful tone, and for opportunities to learn more about local candidates and ballot issues through our various community collaborations. While
increased voter turnout cannot be attributed to KSMU’s efforts alone, the station prides itself on contributing to the engagement and education of voters in our region.

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.

KSMU is proud to provide a variety of services and programming to help meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences.

KSMU is part of the Audio-Reader Network, a reading and information service for individuals who are blind or print-disabled. The service is available free-of-charge and offers daily readings of newspapers, magazines, and books.

“Missouri State Journal,” our weekly series produced in partnership with Missouri State University, informs our community of events, discussions, and academic research taking place across campus. Episodes during FY2020 highlighted a celebration of Latinx heritage, various international cultures of MSU students, programs that help students overcome socio-economic barriers in education, MSU’s Annual Public Affairs Conference, and ways to promote cross-cultural relationships.

“Sense of Community” helped uncover the plight of rural, low-income neighbors battling Dementia; celebrated the diverse heritage of people in the Ozarks with the Mexican, Swiss, Czech, and African dishes featured on Table Traditions; and helped connect our neighbors with disabilities with accessible places to enjoy the outdoors in the Ozarks.

KSMU also offers special holiday programming that celebrates the traditions of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

After the racial reckoning in the summer of 2020, KSMU renewed its commitment to diversity and inclusion in FY2021. KSMU’s FY2021 programs will include “Conversations on Race and Racism,” highlighting the experiences of local Black community members, and “Unsheltered,” which brings light to the challenges facing our local homeless population. We look forward to continuing to leverage our relationships within the university and the local community to bring more programming in 2021 that serves minority audiences.

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?
The grant funding that KSMU receives from CPB helps pay for NPR programming expenses, as well as broadcasting expenses for the entirety of our schedule. Nearly 40,000 listeners tune to KSMU for national, regional, and local news and cultural programming. We are the only NPR station serving our region. The CPB grant is key to helping KSMU maintain a strong and diverse funding portfolio and enables us to serve our community with a robust schedule of programming.