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 2023. 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 2023 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.

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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.

Aspen Public Radio is a rural public radio station which serves a growing and diverse Valley, including Pitkin, Eagle, and Garfield counties. Serving our community for over forty years, the station has an average of 18,000 weekly listeners, over 1,000 members who support us annually with a donation, and a weekly newsletter that is distributed to more than 2,700 unique email addresses. Our audience includes individuals of all ages, races, and income levels. We engage and connect with our listeners on a meaningful level by spurring dialogue and discourse to foster understanding, knowledge, empathy, and respect — conversations they often take out into the wider world. Aspen Public Radio aims to be a conduit for connecting listeners to pressing national and international news, local events, and Valley-wide reporting — as well as to each other. We are committed to providing everyone in the Roaring Fork Valley with trustworthy coverage that includes local, regional, national, and international news, all rooted in a perspective that highlights the issues and new ideas being explored throughout our own community. Furthermore, as an NPR member station, we are a partner in producing quality journalism for our nation as a whole, and through the regional and national distribution of our locally-produced reporting we have a unique opportunity to advance the reach and reputation of Aspen and the Valley by having our stories broadcast throughout the state of Colorado, the region, the nation, and around the world.

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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 2023, we were able to retain our full-time community engagement producer to continue expanding the station's capacity to record and broadcast audio from throughout the community, including our "Ideas, Speakers & Lectures" initiative to share live events hosted by a distinguished group of partners: Wilderness Workshop, the Hurst Community Initiative, Aspen Words, Aspen Music Festival and School, Aspen Center for Physics, the Equity Speaker Series produced by MANAUS and TACAW, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Here House, and Aspen Art Museum. In addition to being archived on our website (aspenpublicradio.org), many of these lectures and conversations were broadcast as radio specials — further expanding their audience. In 2023, we renewed partnerships that led to resuming the annual broadcast of the AMFS July 4 concert live along with the debut of our Sunday Concert series, bringing this weekly concert to listeners around the world live from the Benedict Music Tent; and broadcast of sessions from the Aspen Ideas Festival, Aspen Security Forum, and several other community events throughout the year. These partnerships will continue in 2024. Lastly, in 2023 we provided significant in-kind support for community organizations as a media sponsor, bringing wider promotion and support to partner organizations.

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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.

Having a trusted, reliable place to turn to when you want to know what's happening in your community is so important. Whether it's better understanding the actions of your elected officials, opportunities or concerns around potential policy decisions, the invitation to get involved and participate in community actions, or the introduction of new ideas and creative solutions, free access to news and information and the presence of local journalists are critical to a healthy community. There's evidence that the very existence of robust media in a community acts as a deterrent to those looking to stretch the law or distort the truth. And as a nonprofit organization, Aspen Public Radio does not have a profit motive or shareholders to serve like commercial media. We have a Community Advisory Council who meets regularly to provide feedback to the station, an active Board of Directors, and a growing newsroom capacity which will allow us to deepen the service we provide to our community in the year ahead. It is the responsibility of public broadcasters to provide universal access to non-commercial, high-quality news and information. In a rural community like ours, the daily local service we provide is essential—and sometimes life-saving. In October 2022, the Alliance of Rural Public Media issued a national legislative report, titled "Connecting America: The Essential Service of Rural Public Radio" which provides an overview of public radio in America on how rural radio remains a critical part of the public service across broadcast and digital platforms for many areas, helping to build thriving communities and keeping rural residents informed — with news on the local economy, education, government, public safety, weather, and culture — and providing essential local journalism, lifesaving public safety information, and programming that contributes to cultural preservation and discovery. Aspen Public Radio was featured in this report for our work in 2022/2023 to create a contemporary emergency preparedness handbook for small, rural newsrooms like ours to prepare for coverage of wildfires and any other emergency which would require the station to provide residents and visitors with public safety information. We are Pitkin County's only public broadcaster, and maintain generators and propane tanks at both our studios and broadcast towers so that we have the capacity to remain on the air without power or internet. In a recent listener survey, 82% of respondents indicated yes (an increase from 76% the year before), if there was a wildfire reported in the area, they would think to turn to Aspen Public Radio for emergency news and evacuation information.

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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 2023, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2024. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

The eight media organizations from across the Roaring Fork Valley who worked throughout 2022 to create a valley-wide survey that aimed to gain insight on the Latino community's perception of local news coverage, continued our collaboration in 2023 with the weekly publication of Sol del Valle and successfully building a website to present print content with a digital audience. This media cohort includes Aspen Public Radio, Aspen Daily News, Aspen Journalism, The Aspen Times, Glenwood Springs Post Independent, KDNK Community Radio, Radio LaTricolor 107.1, and The Sopris Sun, with support from the Colorado News Collaborative (COLab) and Colorado Media Project. The goal of the initial survey was to engage community members and Latino-serving organizations to get feedback about local news needs, gaps and adequate collaborative solutions, and to develop a model for collaboration in the Roaring Fork Valley region between nonprofit and for-profit media outlets of various formats that can yield learnings applicable to other similar markets and communities. Building on this information, the station now publishes a story a week in Spanish, published in the weekly Spanish-language newspaper, Sol del Valle, and has expanded the...
use of interpreters by our newsroom to bring the perspectives and experiences of Spanish-speaking community members to our English-language coverage.

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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?

Aspen Public Radio leverages CPB funding to bring our free public radio broadcast service (91.5FM/88.9FM) to everyone throughout the Roaring Fork and Colorado River valleys at no cost to listeners. Historically, financial support has been critical in advancing Aspen Public Radio’s effort to connect our community to trusted, accurate, and important news and information; support the cost of employing local reporters to live and work in our community; and provide overall support to sustain the station's ability to provide daily local news alongside the critical fact-based national and international news programming broadcast 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In 2023, we continued working to assess our capital infrastructure needs, implementing automation system upgrades and conducting a full review of how to plan for and fund future equipment replacement needs, which resulted in two capital improvement projects now being considered for funding in 2023/2024. As a more than forty-year-old organization, our broadcast infrastructure needs ongoing attention and maintenance so that it can hold up in any crisis or emergency. Upgrading in a planned way means that our service will be less prone to failures that could take us off the air and therefore, unable to fulfill our mission—in other words, general operating support will help this crucial effort to better tend to the radio station’s infrastructure work in 2024 and beyond. We have also submitted an application for support through the Next Generation Warning System (NSWG) funding opportunity, and are awaiting CPB deliberation. CPB funding is crucial to this everything we do, and new in 2024 we'd like to launch a media literacy program for local teachers, students, and parents, using local news content to better understand how media uses sources in the reporting process and how analysis of media can improve critical thinking skills while deepening connections to the issues facing our community. At the core of our mission, we are an essential service for local, reliable, free radio news for everyone who lives, works, and visits Aspen, Colorado, and this support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting plays a crucial role in making our work possible.

Comments

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