

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

FY 2020 Local Content and Service Report

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.

The overall goal of WAMC/Northeast Public Radio is to provide programming as varied as the human experience. Our mission is to serve the public by preparing and presenting non-profit and non-commercial educational, instructional and cultural radio and live programs that celebrate the diversity of our broadcast and live audience. Our two discrete program schedules and Internet streams provide a unique blend of national and regional news and information, opinion and commentary, artistic, cultural, and musical programming. 28 translators and transmitters serve listeners in portions of seven northeastern states, serving over 400,000 monthly listeners.

Recognizing the reality of media consolidation, the scarcity of substantive local radio news services, the dearth of opportunities for cultural venues to promote the work they do, and the fundamental necessity of having an informed citizenry, we are committed not only to our cities of licensure but to the broader, regional community we serve. We have news bureaus in the Capital District (Albany, NY), the North Country (Plattsburgh, NY), the Pioneer Valley (Springfield, MA), the Berkshires (Pittsfield, MA), the Hudson Valley (Poughkeepsie, NY) and the Southern Adirondacks (Saratoga Springs, New York).

In addition to our local presence on Morning Edition, we air 18 regional newscasts daily, a one hour, magazine format program at noon and half-hour regional news programs at 3:30 and 6:00 pm.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for WAMC, but also many opportunities. Listenership to our Roundtable panel increased dramatically, in part because so many more people were sheltering in place and listening at home. Additionally, we were able to take advantage of new technology enabling our staff and panelists to operate from home with studio-quality sound. Because they weren't required to travel to the station, we were able to include many new and diverse voices to our panel. This interactive program spent considerable time addressing the major stories of 2020: the pandemic and the election from a local point of view.

One way in which WAMC determines the issues most vital to our listeners is through our annual Ascertainment Survey, which helps to guide our news coverage over the coming year. This long-standing survey examines organizational leaders' opinions on a set of pre-selected issues. We also invite listener participation in our Community Advisory Board, which reviews our programming and makes recommendations to our Board of Trustees. We offer ample opportunity for listener engagement through a 24/7 Listener Comment Line, inviting reaction to any of our programs. Comments are aired weekly, including comments that may be critical of the station. Our afternoon phone-in program, Vox Pop, sparks listener discussion on a variety of subjects, through social media as well as on-air conversation. Open forums result in wide-ranging discussions and Monday's Medical Monday Vox Pop enables listeners to speak directly to physicians in numerous specialties. WAMC has an extensive web presence at <http://www.wamc.org>, providing Internet streaming of WAMC and WAMC-HD 2. We offer a number of different podcasts as well as on-demand listening for many of our programs and integrate our on-air and on-line communities through social media.

We have developed numerous media, educational, performance venue and community partnerships, some of which will be detailed below. These offer everything from free housing for our news bureaus to valuable music programming to free or greatly reduced rents for station-related events. Several of our colleagues in the

broadcast and print media are regular panelists or co-hosts on a number of WAMC programs. Unfortunately, the pandemic precluded our live remote broadcasts in 2020.

Another unfortunate result of the pandemic was the forced closure of The Linda, WAMC's Performing Arts Studio) where music, lectures, debates, films, and more are presented before a live audience. Nonetheless, we remain committed to our local, neighborhood arts and community organizational partners and look forward to reopening our doors once again when it is safe to do so.

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.

WAMC's partnerships with community collaborators have been crucial to the success of our work. Among our key initiatives are:

*** Our Fund Drive Partnerships**

Over the years, like many other public broadcasters, WAMC has offered thank-you gifts to our donors for specific pledge amounts. In an effort to help other community organizations and offer a different kind of "thank you" to our donors, we have begun partnering with various local and national organizations. When listeners call in with their pledge, instead of offering them a CD, coffee mug or tote bag, we are able to give them the opportunity to help someone else.

For example, during one Fund Drive, we joined forces with the Seymour Fox Memorial Foundation, a regional philanthropic organization. For each \$100 pledge to WAMC, the Foundation provided shelter for three homeless people for one night. Donors could also choose to use their contribution to the station to trigger a gift from the Foundation of diapers for babies in need.

*** Daily COVID-19 Briefings from Governor Andrew Cuomo**

Throughout the pandemic, listeners have relied on WAMC to provide them with the most factual, up-to-date COVID information available. To that end, we broadcast the daily emergency COVID briefings from New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, as well as an ongoing series of one-on-one conversations the governor held with our CEO, Alan Chartock.

*** Outstanding Regional News Programming**

2020 being an election year, WAMC spent considerable resources on covering local and regional races, in addition to the national election. Local PBS affiliate WMHT hosted a live debate between both major party candidates for the 19th Congressional District in New York on Oct. 15. Rep. Antonio Delgado, a Democrat who's represented the district since 2019, debated Republican challenger Kyle Van De Water at the WMHT studios in Troy, NY. Due to safety precautions, a live audience was not invited to this year's debate. Dan Clark, host of the statewide public affairs program New York NOW on PBS, moderated the debate. Ed McKinley from the Times Union and WAMC Hudson Valley Bureau Chief Allison Dunne served as panelists for the debate. The event was produced by WMHT in partnership with the Times Union and WAMC.

WAMC hosted special Election Night coverage on Nov. 3 and on a Massachusetts primary day Sept. 1.

During FY 2020, WAMC relied on producers throughout our region to produce a special nine-part series on Aging, covering topics ranging from the economics of aging to the importance of multi-generational households.

WAMC collaborates with other public radio stations across New York including WNYC, WBFO, WXXI, WSKG, NCPR and WRVO as well as PBS affiliate WMHT. This has led to increased use of WAMC's New York-focused stories by other stations in the state, promoting WAMC's original reporting. Being a part of this collaboration has benefitted WAMC's news coverage and therefore improved and expanded information delivered to the station's listeners.

We continued to air content cross-promoted with WMHT's New York Now, including several interviews with newsmakers. We coordinated on occasion with WFCR to share audio of western Mass. newsmakers, and conducted regular interviews with WNPR in Connecticut about Connecticut politics and government.

* Arts, Culture, Politics and more on The Roundtable:

WAMC's morning program, The Roundtable, is a daily three-hour live program committed not only to strong and in-depth coverage of world affairs but also to keeping listeners informed about what's going on in their communities and beyond.

The program begins with a two-hour panel discussion about the news of the day with a regional slant provided by host Joe Donahue and WAMC President and CEO Alan Chartock, and several guests to round out the panel. Representatives of the educational community, the medical community, the LGBTQ community, the African American community and local journalists are regularly on hand to participate and listeners weigh in on the topics through e-mails, many of which are read on the air. The program continues with thoughtful interviews with A-list newsmakers, authors, artists, sports figures, actors, and people with interesting stories to tell.

Each day on The Roundtable, WAMC features a Congressional Corner segment affording listeners an opportunity to hear directly from their elected representative about issues that are of most concern to them. Every Member of Congress and/or United States Senator who represents any geographical area within WAMC's broadcast range is invited to appear. In FY 2020, we were joined by Rep. Paul Tonko, NY-20, Rep. Antonio Delgado, NY-19, Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, NY-18, Rep. Anthony Brindisi, NY-22, Rep. Jim McGovern, MA-2, Rep. Richard Neal, MA-1, Rep. Joe Courtney, CT-2, Rep. Peter Welch, Vermont, Rep.-elect Mondaire Jones, NY-17, Rep. Nita Lowey, NY-17, Sen. Charles Schumer, NY, Sen. Chris Murphy, CT, Tedra Cobb, NY-21 candidate, Liz Joy, NY-20 candidate.

WAMC's daily module, The Academic Minute, features researchers from colleges and universities around the world, keeping listeners abreast of what's new and exciting in academia. The Academic Minute features a different professor each day, drawing experts from top national and international institutions.

Due to the pandemic, we were not able to host interns as in previous years, but our News Division did welcome a remote intern from Williams College in Massachusetts.

WAMC has solid relationships with regional colleges and universities, frequently featuring professors as commentators and experts on our local and national programs. We partner with several colleges to offer journalism students hands-on training in news gathering in their own region. Three of WAMC's senior staff members teach university-level courses in Communications and Journalism at local colleges and universities.

In association with the New York State Writers Institute, WAMC's Jackie Orchard and University at Albany professor Elaine Salisbury conducted a workshop entitled "So You're Young and Want to Write."

We continued partnering with the New York State History Museum and the New York State Historian on our podcast, A New York Minute in History.

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.

The impact of our initiatives can be seen in the unprecedented success of our fund-raising, the measurable success of our fund-drive partnerships, the scores of awards we have received, and the growth in our online community as evidenced by increases across the board in page views, visitors to live audio and video streams, Twitter and Facebook followers, online contributions, and users of our mobile applications. Anecdotal evidence also comes from specific feedback from listeners, both throughout the year via their online e-mails and comments, and during our on-air fund-raising campaigns when they are invited to comment on our programming.

Awards:

Massachusetts Broadcasters Association Awards: “Soundbites” Award. First place honor for the 2019 Housing Series.

AP Awards from the New York State Associated Press Association: Lifetime Achievement Award for WAMC’s CEO, Alan Chartock; Art Athens General Excellence of Individual Reporting to WAMC news anchor Brian Shields; Spot News Coverage: First Prize to Josh Landes for “Tragedy Hits Sheffield Family;” Weathercast: First Prize to Paul Caiano and Garret Argianas; Public Service AP Award: Second Place to WAMC for “Housing Series;” Sports Coverage: Second Place to Jesse King for “Play Ball: Vintage Teams Preserve Baseball History in New York;” Digital Presence AP Award

Regional Edward R. Murrow Award: “Use of Sound” in “Albany Symphony to Celebrate the Uncanny Therenin”

New York State Broadcasters Association: “Outstanding Live On-Scene” Tanglewood

Fund Raising:

WAMC’s three annual fund drives bear witness to the station’s success – listeners contributed over \$3 million dollars during FY 2020 in support of the station’s work and underwriting by area businesses and organizations also exceeded \$3 million. During pledge drives, listeners have the opportunity to tell us exactly what they like – and what they don’t like – about WAMC. All of their comments are read on-air.

Fund Drive Partnerships:

Our cause-driven fund drive partnerships have, in particular, drawn an incredible response from both our partners and from our listeners who are enthusiastic in their response. Hundreds of callers made it a point to tell their volunteer that they thought the partnerships were the best kind of fund raising and the best “premiums” we ever offered. We continue to reach out to other organizations for fund drive partnerships and are able to feature two or three during each drive.

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.

WAMC's daily locally produced programming regularly covers issues of relevance to minority groups including people of color, women, children, and people with disabilities. Our subject-specific public affairs programs which are distributed nationally to other public radio stations free-of-charge also address minority and diverse audience needs.

Once we are safely able to open, The Linda (WAMC's Performing Arts Studio) will offer live lectures concerts films and more, much of which will be broadcast regionally. Programming includes world folk and popular music, jazz, films, lectures forums and debates.

Since making a concerted outreach effort to our diverse local community we have helped bring a wide variety of new programming to the Linda. Through affordable rentals, partnerships and grants we have provided our neighbors in our inner-city neighborhood access to a high-quality performance venue.

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?

Since the bulk of our grant is used to purchase national programming any decrease in the amount of that grant would either necessitate our seeking other funding to purchase such programming or would result in our cutting back in the usage of such programming.