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.

During FY21 WWFM continued with its primarily classical music and jazz format, along with public affairs programming. WWFM’s programming, by its very nature appeals to the needs of a diverse audience. During FY21, WWFM continued to work through the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a classical music network, we continued to face the fact that concert productions for live, in-person events had come to a halt. For WWFM The Classical Network, up until the pandemic began, broadcasts of local classical music concerts provided a steady stream of new content, so we had to be creative to continue with community-minded programming. Through communications with listeners during the quarantine period, we learned that music played a very important part of our listeners’ lives so we continued with our weekly Listener Request Hour, which was a new program series we began at the start of the pandemic to connect with our audience in quarantine at home. Listeners responded favorably and the program continues today. WWFM was one of the first stations to broadcast live concerts during the height of the pandemic from our Licensee’s college campus Black Box Theater, even while the campus was physically closed for the safety of all. These concerts, broadcast live and streamed, offered listeners hope that they could still enjoy the beauty of live music making even when regular concert hall events had been cancelled because of the pandemic. Our interview program, A Tempo, offered information to the community about how arts organizations were re-connecting to the community with new educational and musical programs to provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the arts even under COVID restrictions. In addition, WWFM has broadcast partnerships with approximately 80 educational institutions, performance organizations and arts & culture organizations and venues. They range from Ivy League universities to world-class conservatories, from high schools to early music groups. These partnerships provide proprietary long-form programming to multi-platform outlets, combining a mix of broadcast, in-person and digital media. Our programming includes a mix of community awareness for the arts, audience engagement and educational content. During the pandemic, we gave listeners another chance to enjoy concerts from these partnerships in encore concert productions from our The Classical Network in Concert series. This program move kept our locally produced concerts in front of our listeners hungry for such events that were not happening in person because of the pandemic. WWFM maintains a website, which includes an interactive Community Events Calendar where organizations can post information about their events, and that info is then available for the general public to view on the WWFM website. Many times over, WWFM listeners have said they’ve been grateful to have the opportunity to learn about and enjoy the arts and culture and music offered by WWFM through the pandemic – that we’ve provided a connection to the beauty of the arts, an oasis for comfort and hope while were all physically separated during the pandemic.
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.

Our core values remain those of an educational arts institution based at a higher education institution, Mercer County Community College. Our dozens of partnerships span higher education, music conservatories, high school, community arts groups and music professionals. These relationships provide us with an endless stream of local concert content, and our partners with exposure for their missions. WWFM enjoys a symbiotic relationship with these types of programming partners, which number approximately 80 organizations. Two examples continue to include our long-time, locally produced music appreciation programs, What Makes It Great and Inside Music. Here education and entertainment are treated as equal elements within those program productions. Since pandemic restrictions left us with little new concert material to produce, we prepared from the archives encore broadcasts of concerts by our partnership organizations. This not only provided wonderful entertainment for our listeners, but also helped to promote excellence in performance by our community musical organizations, thereby keeping classical music, arts & culture alive during the pandemic. Also, our public affairs programming has shown how our world continues to thrive during challenging times, while highlighting the creative and unique ways organizations continue to provide programs, education and information to those in need during the pandemic.

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 best indicators of success with partners are in retention. Our list of approximately 80 community partners – organizations and institutions that find value in expanding their resources to provide content, speak to us to engage in the best traditions of public broadcasting. We produce local concerts offered from our partnership organizations for air. This allows WWFM to provide a great diversity of musical programs reaching our equally diverse audience – something for everyone. Annual local broadcasts of An Evening of Readings and Carols from Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, NJ, are a holiday favorite among our local audience and diverse listeners nationwide through streaming. It continues to be one of our most listened to events over WWFM, with requests for links on our website so friends, families, and others from afar can enjoy the program as well. Our educational programs, mentioned above, What Makes it Great with Rob Kapilow and Inside Music with George Marriner Maull, also continue to be popular because of their music appreciation focus. WWFM also offers locally produced public affairs programming on A Tempo, All in the Details and Trenton 365. Various non-profit arts & culture organizations are featured in a wide variety of public affairs programming each week on WWFM as detailed in our public file reports, linked through wwfmm.org. Additionally, although a few years back, we’re proud of the fact that two of our locally produced programs, Cadenza and Between the Keys
have been recognized nationally with the prestigious ASCAP Deems Taylor/Virgil Thomson Award for Broadcasting. Our local programming continues to be of value to our audience as many have contacted us to say how much they enjoy what we produce locally – including program content and our local hosts. Most of our part-time hosts were laid off during the pandemic in order for our college to remain financially responsible during uncertain pandemic times. It is our aim to employ more local hosts to allow WWFM to continue with its successful programming partnership concept in the year to come.

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 2021, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2022. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Our JazzOn2 HD2 station offers multi-cultural programming including jazz, world music, Latino culture programs, and public affairs. This reaches a diverse audience worldwide through streaming. By its very nature, we believe that classical music and jazz appeals to wide and diverse audiences that appreciate the arts and music and find it necessary for fulfillment in life. WWFM offers community members and students opportunities to produce and/or host programming and learn the basics of broadcasting through internships and work-study programs, offering mentorships to the next generation of broadcasters. As opportunities are available, we participate in career education events to introduce people to jobs in radio, among them the annual Rider University Arts Networking Career Event, now held online through Zoom because of in-person pandemic restrictions. We intend to continue and expand, as staffing allows, our partnership programming concept, and continued and new outreach events in FY22, especially as pandemic restrictions start to turn the corner for the better.

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?

Our CPB funding provides the edge that allows WWFM programming to be innovative, creative and educational while constantly evolving to provide new and engaging content. We’re able to offer exclusive specialty programming (music and informational) and concert programming combined with a carefully chosen blend of nationally syndicated programs to meet the needs of our diverse public radio audience. While our listener membership donations offer the largest source of revenue, our CPB grant funding provides the extra revenue needed to maintain the program services our audience expects from WWFM. And for that we are grateful! Our program content and our listenership would suffer a great loss of education and entertainment listening opportunities should CPB funding not be a reality.