

CPB Local Content Report – 7/1/21 through 6/30/22

VPR and Vermont PBS began FY22 by [officially becoming a merged public media organization](#), and capped off the year by [launching our new name, Vermont Public, and brand identity on June 23](#).

At this unique time, our goals and approach to the year were twofold. As with any merger of two long standing legacy organizations, we were working diligently behind the scenes to integrate everything from our staff to accounting systems to workflows, while developing a new strategic plan and brand identity that would help deliver on the promise of the merger to better serve our community into the future.

And in the midst of all that, we continued to center our service around the needs of our audience through education resources, multi-platform storytelling, music and events that helped our community members make sense of our rapidly changing world and connect with one another.

Video storytelling

As a merged organization, Vermont Public now has greater capacity to tell stories on multiple platforms. During our first year as a joint licensee, producers, videographers, reporters and editors worked together to create several short form, on demand videos within our existing local programs to enhance our storytelling. The videos have had high impact online, particularly on Instagram, including:

- Our [Brave Little State compost video](#) provides a visual companion to our podcast episode.
- *Vermont Edition* Host Connor Cyrus sat down with George Floyd's brother, Philonise, [in this interview](#).
- We [toured the former state prison in Windsor](#), which was shut down in 2017, as lawmakers debated the future of the property.
- 'Homegoings', a series of conversations with artists of color in Vermont, produced two video episodes in addition to the podcast: [Three Vermont teens on power, history and hope](#) and [Ferene Paris Meyer](#).
- Our 2022 public opinion poll found that [most Vermonters expect major impacts from climate change](#).
- A [broadcast-first special](#) provided analysis of Gov. Phil Scott's budget address in early 2022.
- Video coverage of the announcement by [Sen. Patrick Leahy that we would not seek reelection in 2022](#).

Audience-Centered Reporting

Brave Little State is Vermont Public's podcast driven by listener questions and involves listeners in the research and reporting of the answers. Our most popular episodes of FY22 were:

- [Vermont vs. New Hampshire: What's the beef?](#)
- [Why do people like Phish? A guide for the uninitiated](#)

- [Six years ago, Amish families began settling in Vermont. How are they doing?](#)

We also heard from many Vermont newcomers about how they've used the podcast to learn about their new home state, leading us to [produce an episode focused on newcomers](#). We later held a [New Vermont Mixer event](#) in July 2022 to provide a welcoming space for new Vermonters to get to know each other.

The engagement journalism team worked with seven reporters to [create “engaged beats” that invite our audience to shape our coverage of issues](#) such as the economy, aging, housing and state politics. Reporters crafted mission statements that articulate their approach to a beat and prompt the audience to reach out online, by land line or in the case of one beat, write a letter to a P.O. box in Pittsford.

Learning Guides

But Why, our podcast for curious kids, [creates learning guides to complement each episode](#). After listening to an episode, caregivers and educators can use the learning guide to deepen children's understanding of what they've learned. We also provide transcripts and some episodes are supplemented with [coloring pages](#), experiments or recipes. Our learning guides were designed to meet Common Core standards.

Public Opinion Poll

In January and February 2022, Vermont Public released the [results of a statewide public opinion survey](#) that gauged how Vermonters were feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic, broadband, the dairy industry, race, policing, the economy and the opioid epidemic. In addition to extensive broadcast and digital coverage and analysis of the results, the full results, methodology, and appendices were made available to the public and other media outlets for additional reporting.

Primary Debates

With [rare open seats for U.S. House and Senate](#), all eyes were on Vermont's 2022 primary election in August. In June 2022, Vermont Public hosted a [series of debates between candidates for statewide office](#). They aired on the radio and broadcast on television, YouTube and Facebook to reach the broadest possible audience.

Virtual Events

We continued to host primarily virtual events in FY22, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While we looked forward to engaging in person again, virtual events have created many unexpected opportunities to host meaningful conversations that foster civic engagement, promote dialogue, mobilize geographically-dispersed audiences, expand learning opportunities, and provide access to experts and thought leaders. There have been good responses to the live events, but we've also found that the conversations can have a second life on our YouTube channel. Some event highlights from the year include:

[The Cannabis Question](#): With retail cannabis arriving in Vermont, we hosted a virtual screening of The Cannabis Question from NOVA, which investigates the latest scientific evidence for its potential benefits and risks. After the screening, our reporter Bob Kinzel hosted a panel discussion and took audience questions.

[Storm Lake](#): A film that looks inside the *Storm Lake Times*, a Pulitzer-winning newspaper keeping local journalism alive. Following the screening we discussed the current newspaper industry in Vermont with a panel of local news leaders, hosted by our managing editor.

[For The Love Of Rutland](#): A screening of [For the Love of Rutland](#) from our *Made Here* film series, followed by a panel discussion led by reporter Nina Keck, who covers Rutland and central Vermont.

We have received feedback from the community regarding the impact and effectiveness of our local content and the services we provide. Here are quotes from some of the feedback we have received.

"Thanks for wanting to know how to help reach all the deaf and hard of hearing students. The transcripts and YouTube video with closed captions is perfect. I asked my student and he stated to include topics related to deaf and hard of hearing students such as sign language, cochlear implants, hearing aids, deafness vs. hard of hearing." -NYC Teacher using *But Why*

During the pandemic, our [Kids & Education resources](#) with the Vermont Agency of Education were seeing 500-800 web views per month. In 2022, this has increased to 2,000 users per month.

"Thank you for the PBS Kids kits. We will be handing them out next week and I'm sure they'll be a hit." - Wendy de Forest, Richmond Free Library

"I am getting positive feedback for the content of the kit and the online content as well." -Cheryl Sloan, Charlotte Library

In 2019, when legacy Vermont PBS signed our contract with PBS LearningMedia, we had 3,000 Vermont users. By July 2021, we had 6,000 users. Today, we have more than 10,000 Vermont users connecting to more than 400,000 resources.

"Thank you for your services! Thank you for your part in the security net around me with your meaningful content. I continue to live alone in our home with supportive visits from family and friends. Everyday I listen and am informed, and rely on you for interpreting the world. Today I was touched again by the story of Dr. Kimberly Blake and every afternoon feel a warm connection to the voice and casual style of [announcer] Betty Smith. Also feel seen and heard by women's stories of personal freedom, plus remarkable histories of little known heroines and heroes of the past. Keep it up! I am only 92 and want to keep learning!" - Sylvia

"Thank you so much. I think if we all hold those ground rules in our hearts, we can step out and simply have conversations with others, without judgment or trying to change one another. It's simply sharing our stories; not proving that our story is right." - Catherine, on One Small Step

"This program was exceptional. Thanks to all who produced it and participated in it. As I step into a new year, these voices are a reminder that goodness and caring prevail amidst the clamor that sometimes seems deafening. I was especially touched as I listened to all of the invitations for coffee, strolls through orchards, and continued conversations. VPR continues to enrich my mind and my soul." —Ham Gillett, Windsor, writing about One Small Step

Vermont Public has participated in new partnerships and collaborations, including with other public broadcasting entities.

One Small Step

We were honored to be one of six stations to participate in [One Small Step](#) during FY22. The nationwide initiative aims to bridge political divides and strengthen communities, one conversation at a time. In [collaboration with StoryCorps](#) and other community organizations throughout Vermont, we connected residents with different views who might never talk otherwise for a simple, personal conversation. We worked with several community organizations, including [Braver Angels of Franklin County, Vermont](#), [Front Porch Forum](#), [Vermont League of Cities and Towns](#), [VT Council on Rural Development](#), and the [Ethan Allen Institute](#).

Giving Tuesday Partnership

Vermont Public and the Vermont Foodbank joined together for the seventh Giving Tuesday fundraising collaboration, where every gift to Vermont Public also provided meals for the Vermont Foodbank to deliver to people facing food insecurity. The Vermont Community Foundation and other private donors funded this effort. The 2021 campaign was the best ever, resulting in 116,825 meals. In addition to the incredible community impact, Vermont Public received \$241,125 in donations from 3,101 gifts.

Education Initiatives

Vermont Public makes learning accessible by curating educational “anywhere, anytime” resources through broadcast, radio, digital, offline, and live events. Vermont children, teachers and families are invited to engage interactively with safe media content in living rooms, classrooms and on the go across platforms by knowledgeable media mentors.

Our education projects focus on providing local opportunities and new access to our trusted brand. We look to reach key audiences through strategic local partnerships, grants for affiliate project collaborations, and by highlighting locally produced content through the national reach of the PBS LearningMedia platform.

We continue to partner with the Vermont Agency of Education weekly, updating our [curated Education webpage](#) with local and national standards-based resources at each grade band.

With the support of foundations like the Couch Foundation and Alma Gibbs Foundation, we have created [learning guides for But Why](#) (PreK/K-1) which were distributed in booklet form at the 2022 Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children Conference.

Through a partnership with the Vermont Department of Libraries, we distributed 230 Summer Kits to students, which included reading bingo, recycled journals with pens, STEM activity books (English/Spanish), stickers and bookmarks, and PBS Kids App Kids' Club cards.

Partnerships abound, other Vermont organizations have helped by sharing their rich local content and curricular connections. We have been able to work with *Seven Days*, Montshire Museum, ECHO Center for Lake Champlain, Clemmons Family Farm, and others to bring learning opportunities to the community. These organizations create wonderful resources for young people.