6.1 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 reached new audiences you engaged.

WUSF is a comprehensive public media organization that operates an NPR news station, WUSF 89.7-FM, and WSMR 89.1 and 103.9 reaching an audience of 350,000 weekly. We are one of the most trusted news sources in the state. As part of the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network, WUSF FM provides an invaluable resource in times of crisis, offering a powerful combination of reach, expertise, and community trust. For years, our journalists have focused on health, the environment, state and municipal government, transportation, and the economy. In the past year, we produced news stories that focused on the following pressing issues within our region: changing demographics of our state, Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, Black Mental health and the difficulty of receiving mental health care, and how journalists can rebuild trust in the community. WUSF’s stories focused on significant issues that impact communities across the broadcast region were recognized with numerous prestigious awards. During the summer of 2023, in total, the WUSF Newsroom received more than 50 awards for its journalism published in 2022. WUSF was honored with three regional Edward R. Murrow awards: one for Excellence in Sound for a feature on seagrasses in the Gulf of Mexico. The mental health series was a collaboration with two Black-owned newspapers, the Weekly Challenger and the Florida Courier. Arts Axis Florida was launched three years ago as a response to the Coronavirus pandemic in order to provide a rich and vital community resource during uncertain times when many local arts venues and performance organizations were forced to close their doors. The free and comprehensive platform continued to grow in FY23 as a hub for arts organizations in Florida by offering an events calendar; hosting videos and multimedia content; an archive of educational resources; and the production of podcasts. Today, over 170 arts organizations take part, and we are known for producing two regular podcasts, The Zest and Happy Medium. A new Jazz Brand Manager was hired, and he has worked tirelessly to feature the performances of local Jazz musicians and bands on our arts website. Around Sarasota, we started the Community News Collaborative. Using the community insight of three reporters and an editor, the project produced over 100 stories filling in the news coverage for that area by covering events with historic underpinnings and changes to social services like 211.

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.

WUSF partners with news organizations, nonprofits, community organizations, and individuals across media and regions because values revolve around trusted journalism, community partnership, and reflecting the culture around us. In the past year, we collaborated with the following organizations: Journalism: Weekly Challenger Florida Courier Poynter Institute WLRN WGCU Kaiser Health News Solmart Media Underwriting; All Faiths Food Bank BayCare Health System Bok Tower Gardens Collard Greens Festival St. Petersburg Pride Festival Arts Axis Florida CAMP (Contemporary Art Music Project) Creative Pinellas Florida Orchestra Tampa Museum of Art Tampa Arts Alliance Tampa City Ballet Heritage Village Hermitage Artist Retreat Bazaar on Lime Harn Museum of Art Selby Gardens Ringling Museum of Art This list of partners represents on a handful of our community-based collaborations.
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.

In October 2022, WUSF changed gears and moved to make WUSF an all-news station. Instead of Jazz programming during the night, we now feature BBC news. We moved all Jazz programming to Arts Axis Florida. At the same time, WUSF Newsroom expanded on the solutions-based journalism approach—featuring local voices—and it allowed reporters to continue to focus on community issues this past fiscal year, including: Health Stories – WUSF News produced 1,422 stories Politics – WUSF News produced 1,386 stories Environment – WUSF News produced 1,698 stories Public Safety – WUSF News produced 1,044 stories Arts — WUSF News produced 148 stories Underserved Communities – WUSF News produced 723 stories WUSF News journalism focused on explanatory journalism, with the goal of helping the audience understand an increasingly complex world. Other noteworthy news topics included Health (transitioning out of the coronavirus pandemic), environment (impact of climate change and loss of habitats due to development), and politics (US Supreme Court abortion ruling and its impact on Florida residents), plus local culture stories were prominent this reporting cycle. WUSF remains focused on becoming the first-choice multi-media, news + information + entertainment platform for the West Central Florida region. For example, we are developing a newsletter based on important local news stories targeted in reaching women aged 18-44. After seeing WUSF’s digital platforms remain flat during FY22 across all digital platforms, WUSF’s digital audience showed gains by the end of FY23. On WUSF’s websites, news users on wusfnews.org increased 248% compared to the end of FY22, while Arts Axis Florida saw a 113% gain in users during the same period and Health News Florida received a 112% increase in users compared to the end of FY22. On social media platforms in FY23, WUSF continues a slow but steady growth in audience across all platforms, with thousands of followers on each platform. Looking closer at the audience numbers, Instagram grew to about 4,000 followers; with Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) remaining flat with about 13,000 on Facebook and nearly 15,000 on Twitter. During FY23, WUSF continued its focus on producing short videos to engage with a younger and more diverse audience. The WUSF TikTok channel was key to that strategy when it was launched in FY22. In FY23, it hosted dozens of videos with hundreds of views and a couple with thousands of views, including one with more than 5,000 views; however, during the last quarter of FY23, the State of Florida approved a bill to ban the use of TikTok on state government computer systems, including universities. Due to its affiliation with the University of South Florida—a higher education institution of the State of Florida—WUSF stopped posting content on TikTok at the end of FY23. As to online listening on the WUSF stream, it continued to see solid audience growth, with active sessions doubling by the end of FY23 compared to FY22. As for podcasts, The Zest continued to gain audience with a 150% increase in downloads at the end of FY23 compared with FY22, while downloads for the Arts Axis Florida dropped by about 80% during the same time period.

6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

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.

During the past fiscal year, we collaborated with two Black-owned newspapers to produce an award-winning series on Black Mental Health. We also created a collaborative news entity in the southern section of our area, where one of our partners was Solmart Media, a Spanish-language media company. They featured over 34 of our news stories for their audience, which includes Hispanic and immigrant populations.

6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

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?

CPB funding has allowed WUSF the ability to report on important topics in West Central Florida. This foundation has given WUSF the resources to equip our station and journalists with the tools and equipment necessary to serve the public with the news and information it needs to make informed decisions about the issues in their lives. This includes engineers, IT, and managers. Continued funding from CPB confirms what our audience tells us every day—that WUSF is worthy of the investment. CPB Funding has also allowed WUSF to be able to transform in a post-pandemic world. On a daily basis, we continue to respond to the community and report on important topics. Today, our staff includes 92 staff members—35 journalists, 6 engineers, 8 digital brand managers, and the appropriate administrative staff to support our crucial work.

Comments

Question Comment

No Comments for this section