

KOSU Local Content Services Report - 2025

Submitted to CPB on February 15, 2025

Describe your overall goals and approach to address identified community issues, needs and interests through your station's vital local services, such as multi-platform lon 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.

In 2024, KOSU focused on several key areas to address community needs. This was done through expansion of our local public service newsroom, community outreach and expansion of content offerings to include short-form video.

Newsroom Expansion - KOSU's newsroom now covers at least four beats not offered by other mainstream media newsrooms including water, agriculture and rural affairs, mental health and addiction and Indigenous Affairs. We continue to work to fill the information gaps being left as commercial newsrooms in the state continue to contract. Part of this work is leaning on the public private partnership model to add journalists as other outlets continue to contract their local service. Since late 2019, the newsroom has grown from 3 FTEs to 10 FTEs. This reporting is delivered to audiences through text message, radio broadcast, community newspaper collaborations, podcast, email newsletter and social media platforms.

Trust Building - As commercial journalism has contracted, most people have never engaged with a journalist. If they have, it has been during a brief moment when that person has driven into town for a story and then driven out. During 2024, KOSU hosted a number of events including Dungeons and Dragons competitions and listening events. Our staff also attended 24 other events to have 1,994 conversations in an effort to build trust. These relationships have helped our newsroom as we often hear from people we spoke to at a later date when they need help finding information or understanding an issue in their community. We also expanded our trust building into digital platforms. For nearly 10 years, we have been building trust with Oklahomans by creating a two-way communication path through text messages. In 2024, we expanded that into WhatsApp and other platforms to have one-on-one conversations with people about their information needs and the issues they face on a daily basis.

Music - In 2024, KOSU Audience and Content Development Director Ryan LaCroix was honored for his work helping to elevate Oklahoma musicians and guide them during the starting periods of their careers. One musician from Norman, OK called Ryan the 'north star' of the Oklahoma music community for the work he does in screening music and providing feedback to local artists on a weekly basis as he creates the Oklahoma Rock Show and the Oklahoma Music Minute. Every week, KOSU plays more than 3,000 hours

of locally programmed music. Most often, these shows are hosted by members of the community.

Reporters Anna Pope and Graycen Wheeler taught a podcasting class during the spring semester at John Rex Elementary School in Oklahoma City. Anna Pope and Anusha Fathepure also worked with 4-H Ambassadors in Stillwater, OK to help high school students better understand how to communicate the story of their project work and the value of 4-H. These are a few of the examples of KOSU journalists giving back to the community and building relationships.

These relationships help reporters do their work as we often hear from attendees who need help understanding an issue that is facing their home or work.

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.

State Government reporting - KOSU leads a state government reporting collaboration that builds on the long-term collaborations of StateImpact Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Public Media Exchange (KOSU, KGOU, KWGS, KCCU and HPPR) to produce and share content that better informs Oklahomans. Through KOSU and the partner news organizations, the state government reporting will reach 65 of Oklahoma's 77 counties through on-air radio broadcasts.

Indigenous Affairs reporting - KOSU had multiple reporting partnerships in 2024 to help Native people tell Native stories. Partners included Osage News, the Kiowa Nation Agency on Aging and many others. One of our proudest collaborations in 2024 was the co-production of a bus tour of Osage County in February 2024 in collaboration with Osage News. More than 100 people signed up, and the tour was led by elders of the Osage Nation who took participants on a personal tour of historical sites.

Focus: Black Oklahoma - The collaboration with Tri-City Collective to continue producing the radio show and podcast Focus: Black Oklahoma (FBO) continued into its fifth year. KOSU supports FBO with studio space, equipment, advice and podcast hosting. We continually look for ways to strengthen this collaboration.

StateImpact Oklahoma - KOSU continues its ongoing collaboration with KCCU, KGOU and KWGS to produce reporting on health, education and the environment. This collaboration is now in its 12th year.

Harvest Public Media - KOSU entered its fifth year of the Harvest Public Media collaboration to produce reporting unique to agriculture, food and rural issues. This collaboration allows reporters from several states to work together to recognize trends and issues that affect the entire region and benefit from additional editorial support.

Community Outreach - KOSU reporters and staff members talked with high school and college classes, moderated and participated in panels, and hosted listening sessions in rural and urban communities at more than two dozen events with about 2,000 people across the state.

What impact did your key initiatives and partnerships have in your community? Describe any known measurable impact, such as increased awareness 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 or from a person served.

The bus tour of historic sites of Osage County in collaboration with Osage News built on trust of previous work covering Indigenous Affairs. The tour included stops that were hosted by elders of the Osage Nation at sites featured in the film and book "Killers of the Flower Moon". More than 100 people attended. Initially, we expected the attendees to be from out of town. However, many people were from the area, including members of the Osage Nation. Many said they came to learn about the history of their community and their ancestors.

Here is a comment from one attendee.

"I have to say, Thank You! It was a great honor to be a part of the first of hopefully many tour's for ya'll. I thought overall it was an informative, fun, well paced tour. I loved the stops. It brought back a flood of memories. I felt that a lot of info was given about The Osage, The Tallchief Family & Theatre, the Dancer's, The Waterbird Gallery, and the amazing Whitehair Museum. A Delightful meal and experience. (Hopefully future tours will include a drive down Kihekah Ave.) 10/10"

Following the tour, several attendees returned to the Whitehair Memorial to research more history. Also, the owner of one of the sites featured credited the coverage KOSU's Indigenous Affairs reporter gave to the plight of the Fairfax behind the movie and the tour to raising enough money to replace the tornado-damaged roof of one of the sites featured on the tour.

As we expanded coverage of Oklahoma government with funding from a CPB grant, our effort has been around making Oklahoma government more accessible to people who have often had a hard time understanding. We experimented in this by making a number of guides to legislation and by posting stories on new platforms including TikTok and WhatsApp.

One of the major focuses of the 2024 Oklahoma legislature was immigration. When Lionel Ramos found out a significant amount of misinformation about this legislation and possible implementation was making its way around the Spanish-speaking community in Oklahoma, he began posting on WhatsApp. This posting led to additional questions and reporting opportunities. Many people said it was the first place they saw and read the actual legislation rather than hearing rumors.

Above are some of the stories we have heard in response to local reporting in 2024. Following are some of the more general comments about the impact of our local work.

"I appreciate that you bring a wide variety of news and information . . . not just politics." - Sandra W., El Reno, OK

"KOSU continues to be the best source for news most relevant to Oklahomans, everyday. Thank you for giving voice to and highlighting matters such as education, indigenous affairs, and agriculture." - Katelyn R. Oklahoma City, OK

"I love KOSU and stream or listen on the radio throughout the day while painting, working around the house, or driving. I appreciate feeling connected to the state from my far northeast corner of Oklahoma." - Jessica S., Miami, OK

"We've listened to KOSU as a family since my kids were young, and now they're civically engaged teenagers. I give public radio some credit for that." - Erin B., Edmond, OK

"I'm really proud of the expansion of the local news coverage on KOSU. The more we can do that the better off we are." Tim D., Enid, OK

Please describe any efforts (e.g. programming, production, engagement activities,) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority or diverse audiences (including, but not limited to new immigrants, people for whom English is a second language and illiterate adults) during Fiscal Year 2024, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2025. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

We will remain in compliance with federal and state rules and regulations. However, much of KOSU's work to provide a public service to the state of Oklahoma benefits a wide array of Oklahomans including minority and non-English speaking audiences.

In 2024, we heard from Jesus M., a teacher in Oklahoma City who says he uses KOSU to teach his students more proficient English and how to be a citizen in Oklahoma.

We also helped many people who traditionally use commercial Spanish language radio better understand state government by using WhatsApp and other platforms including Facebook to understand the impact of immigration legislation. Many told us that they were overwhelmed by the number of rumors they were seeing and hearing in Spanish, and KOSU provided them the first chance they had to read the legislation.

KOSU also continues its work with "Focus: Black Oklahoma". In early 2025, we are broadcasting a series and hosting an event focused on the Black Rodeo scene in Oklahoma. A photography exhibit will be shown in KOSU's Oklahoma City studios and will later be exhibited in Tulsa.

The show "Focus: Black Oklahoma" is produced by citizen journalists and airs monthly on KOSU.

KOSU is also the only mainstream media outlet in Oklahoma to have two journalists focused on reporting on the 39 Tribal nations in the state. We will continue that coverage and expand it in 2025. The expansion will be in collaboration with the Tulsa Local News Initiative, The Oklahoma Eagle and the American Journalism Project. It will focus on better information for audiences being underserved by traditional journalism. Many of those audiences are members of minority communities.

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 allows KOSU to have a base of support to keep our emergency alerting system and basic air chain functioning. As we try to fill the local news and information gap, this important infrastructure is an expensive cost that has proven difficult to fundraise around. Knowing we have this important financial base allows us to support other community partners in the area with their emergency alerting systems. It also allows us to leverage that funding to continue filling the gaps in local information that have been left behind as the commercial news market continues to collapse.

Also, it has been a priority of KOSU for some time to launch a state government beat. Funding for this beat has been elusive because many donors and foundations want to stay clear of anything that seems political. The state government beat we launched in late 2023 would not have been possible without the support of CPB funding. That coverage produced as part of that grant has not only reached KOSU listeners but has been republished in close to a dozen traditional and nontraditional publications and outlets who have also been struggling to cover Oklahoma government.