

# Alabama Public Radio CPB Station Activities Survey for 2023

*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.*

At Alabama Public Radio, our mission is to address community issues, needs, and interests through a comprehensive range of local services. We strive to be an essential and reliable source of high-quality information for our diverse audience. Our transmission system covers a significant portion of Alabama, and in many regions, we are the sole provider of noncommercial news and information. In 2022, our news team produced 7 hours of radio feature stories, five episodes of investigative podcasts, 14 short video documentaries, and three arts and entertainment podcast specials. Additionally, our locally hosted classical, bluegrass, and big band music programs have cultivated an enthusiastic and loyal following. We actively engage with educational, political, religious, and community leaders to identify concerns and needs. Leveraging our new website platform, we enhance our digital workflow, ensuring easy access to news, podcasts, and commentaries for our listeners across both computers and mobile devices.

In addition to our daily broadcast and digital news offerings throughout the state, this year we ran a yearlong investigation into the effects of chemical pollution from coal ash and how it has affected communities throughout the state.

We also partnered with the Alabama Folk Association, airing a six-episode season of Alabama Folk. Each episode features an Alabamian who carries on a tradition passed down through the generations. The podcast seeks to elevate underrepresented voices and cultures in Alabama. This year's topics include pine needle basketry, cypress shingles, the Excelsior Band of Mobile, Choctaw Storytelling, and El Salvadorian pupusas. These stories are not only varied in topic but cover drastically different parts of the state to fully embrace the rich tapestry of artistic communities in our listening area.

We also aired a special broadcast of Roughhousing, which is a Religion of Sport podcast presented by PRX, exploring hazing culture in sports. It centered on the story of Rodney Kim Jr., a former freshman football player at Davidson High School in Mobile, whose career ended after he was brutally hazed by upper classmen on the team.

Alabama Public Radio continues to prioritize production of short video documentaries for our website and social media pages. This year we produced fourteen short documentaries for the APR.org. These pieces include a feature on an ice cream truck that travels the state employing special needs adults who

gain life skills and social exposure through their work on the truck, and a video on The Colony, an African American community built outside the former “sundown town” of Cullman, which is still thriving today generations later. Our documentary work continues to be a major contributor to our digital efforts and is helping to attract a younger audience to our work, and they continue to be our highest engaged content on our website and social media accounts. Drexel & Honeybee, our piece on the donation only restaurant, won a Southeastern Emmy.

Leveraging the mobile app released in 2023, we added a BBC World news stream to better serve our listeners. We have seen steady growth in Unique Users, New Users, Sessions, and Average Sessions per user during 2023. We continue to look for additional uses of the app to engage more potential members. This effort includes a Pledge Free Stream during pledge drives to encourage donations and listening.

*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.*

Alabama Public Radio seeks to address the diversity of its listening audience through its local news coverage, diverse program schedule, and non-broadcast activities.

Alabama Public Radio maintains collaborative relationships with the Tuscaloosa and Mobile symphonies. Part of that collaboration includes four nights of broadcasts of the Mobile Symphony concerts, and it is anticipated that broadcasts of the Tuscaloosa Symphony will begin within the next year. Also, we worked this year with Chamber Music Tuscaloosa to identify and present a concert for Black History Month, featuring the Marian Anderson String Quartet, a group consisting of four black women who presented a concert focusing on music of black composers.

As part of serving the needs of the Gulf coast, from Biloxi Mississippi to Pensacola, Florida, the APR news team continued efforts to help grow listenership in the area. The APR news director collaborated with the GulfQuest Maritime Museum on an hourlong public presentation on the lives of the African captives kidnapped by the nation of Benin and brought to Mobile aboard the slave ship Clotilda—the last such vessel to bring human cargo to the United States before the emancipation. APR recorded the session and produced a four-part series that aired during Black History Month 2023. APR continued the ongoing series “Should I Stay, or Should I Go,” which resulted from a listening session for civic, non-profit, governmental, and corporate leaders to discuss the most pressing economic issues confronting the area. The series focused on why the Gulf coast is losing skilled and educated workers to other parts of the country. In 2023, Pat Duggins reported on efforts to make Mobile more welcoming to women business owners and entrepreneurs. Lynn Oldshue reported on “Why I Left” for this series, focusing on African Americans who sought work elsewhere after growing up in Mobile. Gulf coast correspondent Cori Yonge focused on trained nurses leaving Mobile and Baldwin Counties for better opportunities

elsewhere. Pat Duggins reported on efforts by the AM/NS Calvert Steel Mill to recruit and hire Alabama college students by bringing them on as interns to cultivate an on-going relationship.

The APR newsroom also collaborated with National Public Radio in Washington, D.C. on Alabama stories that aired nationwide. Cori Yonge reported on a citizen reporter bringing his audience the latest “goings on” at City Hall in Fairhope. Cori also reported on how a group of Baldwin County grandmothers are banding together to battle the threat of chemical pollution from coal ash. And Guy Busby explored efforts in Alabama to save the nation’s oyster industry.

APR was also invited by the U.S. State Department to speak to an international delegation from Europe, Central Asia, the Baltics, and the Balkans on how the newsroom teaches our student interns how to avoid news disinformation.

Throughout FY 2023, APR also continued to expand its coverage of issues along the Gulf coast through an innovative effort to recruit and train former print reporters to help address the “news desert” left by the demise of the Mobile Press Register newspaper. APR Gulf coast correspondents Guy Busby, Lynn Oldshue, Mike Dumas, and Cori Yonge reported on issues ranging from the premiere of the film “Descendants” about the Clotilda captives from Africa, the music of “snake handlers” in Alabama, efforts to treat substance abuse along the coast, a new effort similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps at work in Mobile, resuming AMTRAK service to New Orleans, and dealing with menopause as part of Women’s Health Month.

Live in-studio performances and interviews resulting from partnerships with local arts organizations to further promote the efforts of these organizations as well as demonstrating the value of having locally produced classical content; curating and presenting classical music on a daily basis; presenting locally produced programs featuring other genres of music including bluegrass, big band, and jazz.

During membership drives, the development team engaged the community by hosting “Coffee Klatches” in our broadcast area including Florence, Huntsville, Mobile, Fairhope, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, and Daphne.

APR engages with the community through membership organizations including, but not limited to, The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Public Relations Council of Alabama, Baldwin Business Council, Women’s Business Alliance, Mobile Senior Coalition, Mobile Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Partners for Environmental Progress, Mobile Bay Keeper, and Coastal Alabama Business Chamber. These organizations enable APR to engage with the community through multi-media venues.

In addition, organizations including Alabama Audubon, Alabama Association for Non-Profits, Veterans Recovery Resources, Arts Alive, Arts Revive, Alabama Rivers Alliance, Cook Museum of Natural History, Dauphine Island Sea Lab, Valley Arts and Entertainment, Opera Birmingham, Birmingham Ballet, Theatre Tuscaloosa, Kennedy Douglass Trust, Fairhope Film Festival, Red Cross of Alabama and Mississippi, Mobile Earth Day, Frank Brown Songwriters Festival, Bellingrath Gardens, GULFQUEST, Jewish Film Festival, United Way of Southwest Alabama, Pensacola Opera, Mobile Ballet, Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, University of South Alabama, Tuscaloosa Symphony, Mobile Chamber Music Society, Mobile Symphony, Kristin Amerson Youth Foundation, Huntsville Botanical

Gardens, McWane Science Center, and United Way of West Alabama use APR to inform listeners across the state about services and performance opportunities.

*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.*

Through our work on the “Should I Stay, or Should I Go” series, we had a highly successful year telling the success stories and struggles along the coast with retaining promising young members of the workforce and community. These relationships also helped bolster our partnership with StoryCorp in Mobile, which will lead to over thirty on-air pieces focused on community members in the Gulf Coast area. We hope our continued work in Mobile via these projects and our three freelance reporters in the area will continue to bolster our presence and lead to new partnerships in this news starved area.

Our video documentary work continues to focus on underserved and diverse communities throughout the state, ranging from enriching the lives of adults with special needs, the struggles of keeping a small dairy farm operational in Alabama, and the resurgence of an African American settlement outside a former sundown town.

APR’s classical and other music offerings provided curated music experiences in genres not found elsewhere on over the air broadcasts throughout the state. We’ve begun to ramp up the number of live productions we are doing with classical music digitally online as well as partnering with orchestras throughout the state for live-to-tape event performances for broadcast.

**APR listeners provide ongoing feedback about our programming and its impact on the community. Comments like these are typical:**

- I am a long-time listener. I appreciate the weekend programming, especially the music on Sunday night
- I am pledging because you play classical music during the day. I am leaving a station because they don't.
- Thank you for the beautiful music and commentary. It really lifts my day.

- I love this station & the music and programs offered. I grew up listening to Karl Haas on WJR out of Detroit. David Duff reminds me of him/ those times. Thank you!
- I listen every day and especially enjoy the local weekend shows like big bands and crooners! Thank you.
- Thank you what you do, you matter! Thank you for bringing the world into our home.
- I trust APR News to be factual and unbiased. I also love Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me and all shows featuring acoustic folk and singer/songwriter music.
- From my first days in Montgomery in 1984, WAPR has always been my oasis of sanity.
- At home with Covid. Taking time to say thank you for the company your music gives me. Frankly not much on news coverage but donating due to the classical music
- I appreciate the balanced journalism that NPR offers and the individual perspectives. Thank you
- Thank you for providing this valuable service to the state of Alabama!
- Thank you for delivering the news and entertainment consistently and without bias.
- APR is a wonderful companion. Thank you for the excellent programming and service.
- APR is hope in a hopeless world
- Thank you for the wonderful programming, especially the Baroque classical music!
- Public radio is essential.
- Absolutely love the "All things acoustic" program on Fridays.
- Love Morning addition, marketplace and Fresh Aire weekdays and many weekend shows.
- APR is one of my main sources of reliable news. I enjoy Interfaith Voices, All Things Acoustic, and many other shows.
- I rely on APR for news, but one of my favorite moments each week is listening and laughing to Wait Wait Don't Tell Me while I cook brunch on the weekend. Thanks for all you do!
- Driveway moments make the world go round!
- With the loss of most of our printed news in Alabama, I'm happy to support this vital service.
- We are temporarily in NC after moving south from VT, where we were sustaining members of our local NPR station for years. As we will be moving permanently to AL in a few months, I have downloaded the app and have been enjoying listening to APR.
- I start every day with APR and am grateful for both local and national news that exhibits journalist integrity. A rare and necessary find these days.

- Thank you for providing high-quality news and entertainment to me for almost 23 years. I can't imagine starting my day any other way!
- Alabama needs reliable journalism!
- I am a night shifter, enjoy the BBC program every night and Way with words, on the way home on Saturday morning.

***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 2022, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2023. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.***

Alabama Public Radio provides regular on-going coverage of stories of special interest to minorities and other diverse, and often underserved audiences. In addition to the audio documentary “Bad Chemistry,” APR produced stories in 2023 including:

- A four-part series during “Black History Month 2023” on life for the African captives brought to Mobile area aboard the slave ship Clotilda. News Director Pat Duggins hosted an hour-long public presentation at the GulfQuest Maritime Museum with Bill Green, a member of the Clotilda Descendants Association. The event was then split into four seven-minute-long segments for air on APR. In keeping with that theme, APR Gulf coast correspondent Gus Busby reported on the premiere of the film documentary “Descendant,” and what’s next for the community Africatown, which was founded by the Clotilda captives.
- November of 2023 saw the premiere of APR’s documentary “No Stone Unturned: Preserving Slave Cemeteries in Alabama. This project was recognized with a national Edward R. Murrow award from the Radio Television Digital News Association, an international Gabriel Award from the Catholic Media Association, and a national “Salute to Excellence” award from the National Association of Black Journalists.
- APR continued its series of investigative reports “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” that looks into why the Gulf coast is losing educated and skilled workers to other parts of the country. APR’s Lynn Oldshue presented the segment “Why I Left?” which focused on the departure of African American workers. Lynn also reported on the Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble, a drum corps made up of young people with mental or sensory challenges.
- APR Gulf coast correspondent Cori Yonge reported on a program during Immigrant Heritage Month, where newly arrived migrant students arrived in Robertsdale and worked along Alabama teens to earn a field trip to New York City. Also, for this monthlong observance, APR student intern Valentina Mora reported the stories of migrants who left their home countries to start new lives in Alabama.
- APR intern Josh LeBerte brought listeners the story of the monthly LoDa Artwalk has for Mobile’s LGBTQ community. Josh followed up with stories from Alabama LGBTQ residents for PRIDE Month.

- APR's Joe Moody reported on the history behind Birmingham's Rickwood Field, home of the "Black Barons" team in the Negro League.
- APR news director Pat Duggins contributed another segment for "Should I Stay or Should I Go," on making the Gulf coast more welcoming for women owned businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Joe Moody also took our listeners to the annual "W.D. Handy Festival," honoring the Alabama born "father of the blues."

APR believes that diversity of staff and students leads to diverse, relevant programming. Each semester, APR recruits University of Alabama students to work as interns in the newsroom. During 2023, APR worked with 12 student interns—75% percent of those students were women or minorities. Interns produced content daily for newscasts.

Over the last year, APR staff and contributors have continued to add to the diversity of voices heard on APR. This initiative to produce more local content has not only added variety to our program schedule, but has also promoted diversity by putting more interns, women and people of color on the air and on our website. Commentaries include:

- **Crunk Culture** (hosted by University of Alabama Associate Professor Robin Boylorn) has covered topics such as environmental issues, racism, gentrification, voter suppression, student loan debt, Black Tax and Quiet Quitting.
- **Book Reviews with Don Noble** is a weekly book review series that helps raise awareness for new books from a diverse pool of established southern authors as well as a diverse and inclusive cast of up-and-coming new voices. For many young authors, this platform gives them a level of exposure they may not otherwise have, and we encourage them to use the video to help promote their work.
- **Keepin' It Real** (hosted by Cam Marston who works remotely in Mobile, Alabama) First Place for the Alabama Associated Press Media Editor's Best Commentator or Editorialist Award; also recognized with a Communicator Award of Distinction Honoring Excellence in Marketing and Communication; Communicator Award of Distinction for "Unhinged" commentary.

***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 plays a crucial role in advancing Alabama Public Radio's local mission. With the largest public radio news team in the state, APR News covers essential political, economic, and cultural issues that hold significant importance for the people of Alabama. This funding enables us to sustain a dedicated staff deeply connected to our diverse citizenry. Alabama grapples with notable social and economic challenges, with many counties ranking among the nation's poorest. Given that our broadcast signal reaches over 80 percent of the state, CPB funding becomes instrumental in empowering us to address these issues effectively.

CPB funding not only sustains our extensive news coverage but also plays a pivotal role in delivering curated classical music to a highly dedicated audience. Our commitment to providing a diverse range of programming extends to the realm of classical music, where CPB support allows us to bring rich and carefully selected compositions to our listeners. The funding enables us to maintain a dedicated team of professionals who curate and present classical pieces, fostering a deeper appreciation for this art form among our audience.

This unique offering of classical music caters to a specific and devoted demographic, enhancing the cultural richness of our broadcast. Without CPB funding, the resources needed to curate and present such specialized content would be severely limited, jeopardizing our ability to serve this passionate audience with the same level of excellence.

By supporting our staff, CPB funding facilitates engagement with listeners and local companies, extending our ability to generate high-quality, distinctive local programming. The funding serves as a catalyst, allowing us to leverage added support from our audience and local businesses. Without the backing of CPB, Alabama Public Radio would face limitations in delivering the current level of community programming and outreach that is essential for our mission.