

**Michigan Radio
University of Michigan**

Station Activities Survey (SAS)

Section 6: Local Content and Services Report

**A report required by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting
For the FY19 period (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019)**

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.

Michigan Radio is the public radio service licensed to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Our mission is to produce and distribute trusted content that informs, educates, entertains, and engages people who care about the state of Michigan and the world around them. You can find us on our three broadcast stations (WUOM 91.7 FM Ann Arbor and Detroit, WFUM 91.1 FM Flint, and WVGR 104.1 FM West Michigan), news website (www.michiganradio.org), social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), podcast platforms (i.e., Google and Apple podcasts), and in community spaces.

LOCAL JOURNALISM CONTENT

In addition to offering daily news programming from national and international public radio outlets, such as National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Media (APM), and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Michigan Radio produces and distributes its own quality, local journalism. We employ 31 full-time staff dedicated to creating journalism content, including reporters, producers, editors, and hosts who work at our headquarters in Ann Arbor and at bureaus in Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids.

Michigan Radio's team of award-winning journalists presents statewide news in hourly newscasts throughout the day and multiple times per hour during drive/commute times. In addition, our content staff develops in-depth reporting via feature stories, enterprise and investigative reports, long-form interviews, and podcasts. The following list highlights a sample of the news initiatives produced by Michigan Radio in the 2019 fiscal year (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019):

(1) Believed

Michigan Radio first began investigating sexual abuse allegations against former Michigan State University (MSU) and USA Gymnastics doctor, Larry Nassar, after the *Indianapolis Star* brought the issue to light in a September 2016 report. Michigan Radio covered the Nassar sexual abuse scandal for over a year in traditional public radio form, following developments and airing spots, features, and reporter two-ways both locally and nationally. But, people still had big questions, not least of which was: how did Nassar get away with it for so long?

Believed, a nine-part podcast series, was our answer to that question. Launched in October 2018, the podcast presented a deeper exploration of *how* it was that Nassar was able to abuse hundreds of women and girls for more than two decades. Podcast Hosts Kate Wells and Lindsey Smith told stories never heard before, the stories of the women who suffered Nassar's abuse and eventually brought him down.

(2) PFAS contamination

After its groundbreaking coverage of the Flint water crisis in 2015, Michigan Radio continued to cover water issues that threaten the health and well-being of Michigan residents. The station's most prominent water stories of FY19 included coverage about an emerging groundwater contaminant called PFAS (per- and polyflouralkyl substances). Michigan Radio's newsroom and *Stateside* teams produced more than 100 reports that informed Michiganders of emerging PFAS sites, results of health impact studies, remediation efforts by government and industry, and more.

(3) Midterm elections

Leading up to the November 2018 midterm elections, Michigan Radio produced local news coverage that gave people a deeper, better understanding of the issues than short, headline stories can provide. Reporters and hosts developed the type of in-depth coverage unique to public radio, thoughtfully and thoroughly exploring important local, state, and national political issues:

- *Candidate interviews*: Michigan Radio's *Stateside* and *Morning Edition* teams produced long-form interviews with all the Democratic, Republican, and third party midterm candidates for Michigan governor, attorney general, and Supreme Court justice. The conversational interviews helped voters get to know the candidates, focusing on their professional qualifications and views on big political issues.
- *Ballot measures*: Michigan voters decided on three ballot measures in the midterm election: 1.) legalizing recreational marijuana, 2.) changing the way the state draws political districts, and 3.) reforming voter rights. Michigan Radio helped unravel the complexities of each ballot proposal with exclusive articles on its news website and in-depth interviews with the Citizens Research Council of Michigan on *Stateside*. Additionally, Reporter Steve Carmody produced a series of reports on how Colorado's

2014 legalization of recreational marijuana can serve as a “road map” for Michigan. Carmody visited Colorado to explore how the new law has affected law enforcement, underage use, business investment, and public health in that state.

- *Immigration*: Michigan Radio’s newsroom and *Stateside* teams produced more than 50 reports about how Trump-era immigration policies affected the lives of Michiganders in 2018. The ongoing reporting followed attempts by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain and deport Iraqi nationals and other undocumented immigrants living in Michigan, among other events. In addition, Reporter Tracy Samilton embedded with a caravan of protesters, who were traveling from Ann Arbor to the Tornillo Detention Center in Texas to protest what they called President Trump’s “cruel” immigration policies. Samilton’s resulting series of stories covered the activities of the protesters and the conditions of Tornillo, which houses undocumented, juvenile immigrants.
- *Voter voices*: In the month ahead of the midterm election, Michigan Radio’s *Stateside* dispatched reporters and producers throughout the state to ask people what was on their minds. More than 30 “Voter Voices” interviews revealed that Michiganders are concerned about gerrymandering, equal rights, equal pay, health care coverage, taxes, education, and the national political divide, among many other issues.

(4) Editorial and programmatic initiatives

In FY19, Michigan Radio continued to offer several station-produced, editorial and programmatic initiatives, including:

- *Stateside*: Michigan Radio’s hour-long, weekday newsmagazine program is hosted by Cynthia Canty (Monday-Thursday) and Lester Graham (Friday). The program focuses on topics and events that matter to people all across the state. *Stateside* works with the Michigan Radio newsroom to provide in-depth coverage of critical news stories. Long-form interviews and reporting on *Stateside* have been a critical element of numerous reporting initiatives described in this report. *Stateside* also produces special series about arts and culture, mental health, education, literature, and Michigan history, among others.
- *That’s What They Say*: This weekly segment is hosted by Linguistics Professor Anne Curzan and Michigan Radio Host Rebecca Kruth. Together, they explore our changing language and explain why we say what we say.
- *Commentary*: Featured commentary is presented regularly from Sports Commentator John U. Bacon, Detroit News’ Columnist Daniel Howes, Hall of Fame Teacher Matanga Ragatz, and editorial cartoons (online) by John Auchter.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Michigan Radio is a participating station in the Emergency Alert System (EAS). As such, we disseminate critical information about national and state emergencies to the public via our three FM signals. Michigan Radio also provides severe weather alerts based on notifications from the National Weather Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At Michigan Radio, we aim to meaningfully engage with members of local Michigan communities in order to facilitate civilized conversations and the respectful exchange of ideas. In FY19, we implemented several initiatives that helped us engage with the public, both in the digital space and in communities:

(1) Digital platforms

Michigan Radio's most successful digital engagement efforts are happening on Facebook and Twitter, where users interact with one another and with our journalists about news and events they care about. We concluded FY19 with more than 51k Facebook followers and over 40k Twitter followers. In addition, our work on Instagram is growing, ending FY19 with nearly 7k Instagram followers.

(2) In-person events

Michigan Radio regularly engages with members of the community at special station events. For example, in FY19 approximately 950 people attended the station's nine Issues and Ale conversations in seven different communities, and approximately 200 people attended the station's two *Stateside Live* programs in Dearborn and Ann Arbor.

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.

Michigan Radio takes pride in being a valuable, contributing member in Michigan communities. One important way we do this is to engage in productive partnerships with community organizations and other news outlets. Here are highlights of our FY19 partnerships:

MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

(1) WAMU 88.5 FM, Washington DC's NPR station

Michigan Radio is an editorial partner to WAMU's *IA Across America*, a collaborative effort to bring local coverage of critical issues to a nationwide audience leading up to the 2020 general elections. Michigan Radio and five other public media stations, from Alabama, Colorado, Texas, Kansas, and Minnesota, are working closely with *IA*'s production team to source stories, conduct live broadcasts and events, produce collaborative content, and elevate local journalism.

(2) Interlochen Public Radio (IPR)

Michigan Radio has a content sharing partnership with IPR, which is located in the northwestern part of the state in the Traverse City region. IPR broadcasts Michigan Radio's daily *Stateside* program.

(3) Michigan Public Radio Network (MPRN)

Michigan Radio is an active member of MPRN, a consortium of 10 public broadcasters that supports a shared capital news bureau in Lansing.

(4) Detroit Journalism Cooperative (DJC)

In FY19, Michigan Radio completed its fifth year as a member of the DJC, a cohort of five non-profit media outlets working together to document life in the city of Detroit after its historic 2013 bankruptcy. Our DJC media partners include *Bridge Magazine*, Detroit Public Television, WDET 101.9 FM, and New Michigan Media.

(5) EncoreMichigan.com

Michigan Radio's *Stateside* has an ongoing partnership with EncoreMichigan.com to produce conversations every other week about Michigan's professional theatre industry. *Stateside* producers work with *EncoreMichigan*'s Editor-in-Chief David Kiley to develop thoughtful commentary and highlight current and upcoming performing arts performances.

(6) LocalSpins.com

Michigan Radio's *Stateside* has an ongoing partnership with LocalSpins.com to produce monthly conversations spotlighting new recordings by West Michigan bands. *Stateside* producers work with *Local Spins*' Editor and Publisher John Sinkevics to create inspiring reviews of Michigan's rich musical talent.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

(1) Michigan History Center

Michigan Radio's *Stateside* has an ongoing partnership with the Michigan History Center to produce weekly conversations about Michigan's history. *Stateside* producers work with the Center's archivist to develop stimulating conversations and cultivate a collection of related, historical photographs (available on michiganradio.org).

(2) MorningSide community residents

Michigan Radio partnered with residents in Detroit's MorningSide neighborhood in a year-long, citizen journalist initiative. A main goal of the project was to teach people how to tell their stories in a podcast format. In all, two professional and five citizen journalists produced 12 episodes as part of the *MorningSide 48224* podcast, garnering a combined estimate of 2,500 downloads.

(3) Community organization sponsorships

Michigan Radio regularly partners with local community organizations in order to help increase the visibility of their services and events. In FY19, we partnered with 29 different organizations in ten different communities to promote their services and events on-air and online at no cost. Based on the station's current on-air and online trade rates, the value of the broadcast and online media exposure was over \$140,000.

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.

At Michigan Radio, we pride ourselves in providing quality, community service journalism to the people of Michigan. We have built a station-wide culture in which hard work, respect, and integrity are expected and valued, and we believe this enables us to make the greatest possible impact in Michigan communities.

One way we measure our impact and effectiveness is by participating in local audience research. In the 2019 Public Radio Tech Survey conducted by Jacobs Media, over 600 Michigan Radio listeners indicated why they listen to public radio. The top five reasons include: (1) being informed about the news, (2) more credible and objective programming, (3) deeper news perspective, (4) enjoy learning new things, and (5) presentation of balanced perspectives.

We also monitor a variety of metrics in order to measure the effectiveness of our work. At the close of FY19, for instance, Michigan Radio had a monthly broadcast audience of 950,000 listeners (Nielsen Audio Spring 2019 NRD), approximately 400,000 unique website users per month, 150,000 live stream users per month, and a contributing membership exceeding 34,000 people.

In addition, we frequently find indicators of success as we implement key initiatives and partnerships throughout the year. Here are just a few of those FY19 successes:

(1) Believed

Feedback about *Believed* from people across the country and internationally, including from survivors of sexual abuse, was overwhelmingly positive. For example, an anonymous Nassar survivor wrote to thank us for making the podcast. She explained that comments from family, coworkers, and friends about “those girls” in the Nassar scandal left her upset and confused. Now, she tells people that the *Believed* podcast helped her understand how Nassar got away with his abuse and that they should listen, too. In addition, the mother of a Nassar survivor wrote to thank us for helping people understand how it was possible that parents of the abused girls did not know about the abuse. (Note: In order to protect their identities, the names and direct quotes of our commenters are not used here.)

Believed became the first podcast produced by a member station to be co-produced and distributed by NPR. It topped the Apple Podcast chart one week after its debut and remained in the top 30 throughout the next eight weeks. To date, it has garnered 6.2+ million downloads. In addition, the series won 12 journalism awards, including Michigan Radio’s first ever Peabody and People’s Voice Webby awards. “Nominees like *Believed* are setting the standard for innovation and creativity on the Internet,” said Claire Graves, Executive Director of The Webby Awards. “It is an incredible achievement to be selected among the best from the 13,000 entries we received this year.”

(2) Stateside

Stateside is Michigan Radio’s third most-listened-to weekday program, with a weekly, cumulative broadcast audience of over 116k people. Because of its significant following, the daily, locally-produced program provides an important space to hold conversations about local news and events, policy issues, and culture and lifestyle stories. Here are just a few listener/user comments from FY19:

- “During these challenging times where everything you hear, see, read on the media is negative, it is easy to feel overwhelmed, disempowered and hopeless. The focus of your show (for me) is positive. I am regularly moved with the many stories I hear on your show, from eye glass companies using recycled plastic in Flint, to half way homes that help teens get from foster care to college. It has inspired me to do more in my community as well! So thank you for sharing many optimistic, empowering stories, which show us... we can all do our part to use our energy and resources to make our communities/Michigan/the world a better place!" – Kelly M.
- “I wanted you to know that many people attended several of the Michigan showings of *Intelligent Lives* because of your interview on Stateside. Folks who would never had known about the event and/or the subject matter. Many approached me with expressions

of appreciation saying they left the events feeling more hopeful, better informed, more aware of the potential of people with intellectual disabilities, and more knowledgeable of resources.. I heard this over and over.” – Janice F.

Lastly, *Stateside* earned four journalism awards, including best “news special or public affairs program” and “musical programming” and merit for “mini-documentary or series” from the Michigan Association of Broadcasters and second place for “use of sound” from the Michigan Associated Press Media Editors.

(3) PFAS contamination

Michigan Radio’s ongoing, in-depth coverage of PFAS contamination has helped bring widespread attention to the issue. Michigan residents and government officials alike count on the station’s reporting for information about testing efforts, government response, and research about the health effects of the chemicals. In response to a story about PFAS contamination in Oscoda Township, a Facebook user commented: “Thank you, Michigan Radio, for finally reporting on this, and please keep it in your focus. The Wolverine PFAS incident has been well-publicized, but this one has not.” The station’s FY19 PFAS coverage earned two awards, including best “mini-documentary or series” from the Michigan Association of Broadcasters and first place for “best continuing coverage” from the Michigan Associated Press Media Editors.

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 2019, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2020. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

One of Michigan Radio’s strategic goals is to be more reflective of the state of Michigan and to better relate to more diverse audiences. We are striving to accomplish this in several ways. First, we are making strides to increase cultural, racial, and gender diversity among our staff through broad recruitment efforts, targeted professional development opportunities, and the expansion of our internship program. With the establishment of an internship fund in 2016, we are able to provide paid, on-the-job learning opportunities for young people from all backgrounds, including those who may not be in a position to otherwise accept an unpaid position.

Second, we are making concerted efforts to increase cultural, racial and gender diversity among the news sources used in our reporting through extensive networking and research efforts. We are also thoughtful and intentional about producing local content that increases cross-group

understanding and strengthens conversational ties between diverse communities. Here are a few examples from FY19:

- *MorningSide 48224*: Michigan Radio implemented a citizen journalist podcast project in Detroit's MorningSide neighborhood as part of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative. The podcast elevated the voices of MorningSide residents and helped a statewide audience better understand their Detroit neighbors.
- *Coverage of indigenous communities*: Michigan Radio Data Journalist Kaye LaFond produced a dozen reports on local tribal communities in FY19. Her reporting largely covered the tribes' sometimes misunderstood fishing practices and efforts to protest an oil pipeline running through the Straits of Mackinac. LaFond's reporting brought the not-often-heard voices and issues of Michigan's indigenous people to a broad audience.

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 represents 5% of direct revenues for Michigan Radio. This allocation is entirely directed to the purchase of national programming from NPR, American Public Media, and Public Radio International. CPB funding provides substantial support that allows for the investment of other financial resources into important local news and information priorities. For example, it extends our ability to hire and retain a statewide news staff, grow and expand our flagship program, *Stateside*, and enables us to host community outreach forums.

We also recognize that indirect support from CPB includes payment of various music licensing fees for broadcast programming, which benefits all of public media. In effect, the value and impact of CPB support, both direct cash through the CSG, and the offsets of services that a station does not have to pay directly, make CPB participation in a successful public media operation crucial to our success.

**For more information about the contents of this report, contact Ellen Han, Associate Director of Development, Grants and Communications, at erinck@umich.edu and/or 734-764-9210.*