



WQCS – SAS Report Section 6

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.

The mission of WQCS is to provide high quality, appealing and culturally enriching radio programming that informs, educates and entertains, with special emphasis on serving the local interests and needs of Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and Saint Lucie counties. While there are pockets of great wealth in the WQCS listening area, the local per capita income is still generally well below the state average. In addition, due to the area's heavy dependence on agriculture, it also has one of the highest seasonal unemployment rates in the state. WQCS remains the area's sole source of in-depth national news and public affairs programming. The station is also the only source in the four-county area for NPR News, BBC News, classical music, traditional jazz, radio drama, adult alternative music, blues, variety, state and local news. WQCS produces an award-winning daily public affairs program examining issues of immediate concern to the station's large listenership. Given special emphasis are topics relating to emergency management, education and environmental issues. WQCS also produces a weekly Program "Treasure Coast Happenings", to address community events, fundraisers, and other important local information, often from underserved communities. With the emergence of COVID-19, prevention education has become a primary mission during the last fiscal year.

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.

WQCS is a designated LP1 station. The radio station serves as the Emergency Alert station for Indian River, Saint Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee counties. WQCS is an active member of FPREN (Florida Public Radio Emergency Network) and the Station Manager serves on the Florida Public Media Organization's Board. WQCS is connected via ISDN/IP to all five local EOC's (Emergency Operation Centers in Indian River County, St. Lucie County, Martin County, Okeechobee County, and the City Of Port St. Lucie) and broadcasts timely emergency weather related updates; WQCS has an operational studio inside the Saint Lucie County EOC. Annually, WQCS prints local hurricane information brochures. These brochures are included in membership mailings and are distributed in bulk to the local chambers of commerce, libraries and IRSC (Indian River State College) campuses. They are published in English, Spanish, and Creole to reach as much of the community as possible, including those not proficient in the English Language. Special pre-produced hurricane preparedness PSA's and pre-recorded audio of what to do before, during and after a storm are readily available for air should a storm threaten. In the last year, the WQCS newsroom covered breaking news on-air and through social media tools - on weather advisories and tropical updates, local Amber Alerts, emergency evacuations and road closures. WQCS was a media sponsor and participated in the City of Port St. Lucie Hurricane Expo. The Hurricane Preparedness Expo

provided educational presentations and the community was able to connect with some of the best businesses and emergency services providers on the Treasure Coast. WQCS was a media sponsor for the St. Lucie County Safety Festival. WQCS was there to provide hurricane information to the community.

When COVID-19 began to have an effect on the Treasure Coast Community, WQCS immediately partnered with the Health and Wellness Department of Indian River State College to broadcast safety information on how to prevent the spread of the virus. We also aired emergency briefings from local, statewide, and national authorities to inform the public as quickly and effectively as possible. Those briefings eventually included best practices for behavior and testing locations during the pandemic.

WQCS provides tower space for three amateur radio repeaters, which are used to facilitate communications throughout a four-county area during special events and emergency situations. This is a part of the station's outreach activities with national, state and local organizations of vital importance to public safety communication. The WQCS newsroom shares public affairs packages with the Florida News Exchange, through PRX and Florida Public Radio via FTP. Some of these stories were aired on the Florida Public Radio's program Capitol Report. WQCS operations manager assisted IRSC educational services with providing assistance to students with special needs and provided audio assistance on various college projects including editing soundtracks for the IRSC Planetarium shows. The WQCS Chief Engineer sits on the Saint Lucie County Code Enforcement Board. The WQCS Station Manager and two Underwriting Specialists serve as mentors for IRSC's "LEAP" program, helping first-year students, providing resources for student success.

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.

WQCS Operations Manager provided technical audio support to IRSC's (Indian River State College) educational services for college students with special needs. WQCS engineer, in conjunction with the Indian River County EOC, participated in tests of the NWS (National Weather Service) HazCollect dissemination of NWEMs (Non-Weather Emergency Messages) in the state of Florida using the EMnet software. In addition, the Operations Manager is an active member of CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network); the weather data collected is used by various organizations including the National Weather Service and Emergency Management officials. Students from IRSC continue to produce a program mirroring All Things Considered named Pioneer Radio and are tutored by the WQCS news managers. WQCS produces Treasure Coast Happenings, a local 5-minute interview program, which gives area non-profits a chance to promote their upcoming fundraising and community outreach efforts; WQCS produces Community Focus, a daily 5-minute public affairs program that airs within NPR's Morning Edition and All Things Considered. The WQCS Chief Engineer visited Engineering classes at Indian River State College and spoke to aspiring engineers about careers in broadcasting. As the median age of radio engineers increases, it is crucial that a new generation is educated. Several students were hosted for tours and welcomed to return to continue their education on radio engineering. COVID-19 information throughout the Spring of 2020 helped to educate the population of the Treasure Coast to the dangers of large gatherings and eventually the recommendation of wearing facial coverings. This timely and relevant information may have reduced the exposure of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

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 the programming and engagement activities provided by WQCS is a 24-hour per day Radio Reading Service, using the SCA of the station. Each week, volunteers read books, newspapers and magazines for the benefit of the blind and visually impaired, or others with a disability preventing them from reading printed materials. Our Radio Reading Service has been on the air since 1994. WQCS volunteers read from the Treasure Coast Newspaper and the Palm Beach Post. The volunteers read for two-hour shifts, six-days per week. We also simulcast the Minnesota Talking Book to provide readings of many national periodicals. Our service is available to group homes or those who sign up for a specialized radio which we provide to them free of charge. Another community outreach activity through our Radio Reading Service program, is facilitating a central gathering point for our local chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. Monthly meetings are held at the radio station on the second Tuesday of each month. When evaluating potential on-air programming, various objectives are taken into consideration, including if the program meets the needs of our diverse audience demographics and/or the interests of our listeners. Furthermore, an issues and programming list was developed following an audience survey where we received input from the community on issues they felt were of concern to them. The WQCS News Director uses that issues and programming list as a guide when approaching and developing stories for air. During emergencies like hurricanes, we feature segments broadcast in Spanish and Creole, for non-English speaking households. Our Hurricane Preparedness flyers are also printed in those languages in addition to English. Our Jazz program, "The Jazz Most Wanted Countdown" features diverse Jazz from all corners of the world, and complements the Jazz weekend program locally hosted. It has been well-received by our audience and has brought new fans to WQCS. As a radio licensee of Fort Pierce, Florida, we focused COVID-19 information to the underserved populations living within the city, publicizing increased COVID-19 testing sites specifically designed for those populations.

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?

The CPB grant has enabled WQCS to continue to provide national programming to our audience and to allow the station to support local programming and reporting efforts. WQCS relies on multiple funding sources, and is grateful for the federal assistance provided by the CPB. The CPB grant ensures that WQCS will remain a treasure on the "Treasure Coast". Our award-winning station has continued to remain a stable and reliable source for news and information. This stability comes from our federal dollars, that have helped to support this public radio station and have allowed us to continue our mission, which is to provide high quality, appealing and culturally enriching radio programming that informs, educates and/or entertains, with special emphasis on serving the local interests and needs of Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee and Saint Lucie counties. We would not be able to fund our continuing operations without the assistance of the CPB funding. With escalating program costs from NPR and other program providers, we would likely have to discontinue programs or face a reduction in staff without the help of CPB. With reduced revenue during the pandemic, the CPB grant was able to keep WQCS professionally and technically ready to report daily on the COVID-19 news that helped to keep people safe.