



WGLT Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives and University Alignment 2021-2025

Vision

WGLT aspires to be McLean County's first and most trusted destination for local news. We aim to earn and maintain the trust of our community with consistent, high-quality, timely content and coverage. WGLT will serve as a training ground for the journalists of tomorrow in every facet of our news operation, leading with the understanding that independent journalism is the foundation of a thriving democracy. We will innovate in all areas of our business to remain financially sustainable so that we may serve a dynamic, thriving, and diverse community.

Mission

WGLT is McLean County's leader in local news. We provide the highest quality local, national, and international news coverage; and also shine a light on local music, arts, and culture programming. WGLT champions independent, nonprofit journalism as our public service duty with on-air and digital content freely available to all. We operate at the center of our community, and we are committed to facilitating an ongoing dialogue that educates and challenges our audience.

WGLT is McLean County's leader in local news, music, arts, and culture programming.

- We earn the trust and support of our audience with consistent, high-quality, and timely content and coverage.
- We are transparent, accountable, and fair in our funding and editorial decisions. When we make mistakes, we correct them. We turn conflict into opportunity by engaging our audience in collaborative corrections.
- We use our skills as listeners, writers, speakers, facilitators, and organizers respectfully and persistently.

WGLT is a reliable resource for the local, human-centered side of current events.

- We fact-check rumors and hearsay to provide a common, accessible set of facts from which people and institutions can make reasoned decisions.
- We facilitate deliberative, depolarizing dialogue to build empathy and move our community forward.
- We subvert common expectations of media with a balanced perspective that reflects our audience and community.

WGLT is a champion for independent journalism as critical for local democracy.

- We select stories and sources to highlight and feature, not conceal, diversity of perspective and experience.
- We mentor and work with a balanced group of both seasoned and aspiring journalists to build a robust local journalism skillset and sustainably fulfill a vital community responsibility.
- We support and advocate for every community's right to local reporters and grassroots news coverage.

WGLT is of the community, by the community, for the community.

- We regard our listeners, supporters, and the community as primary stakeholders to success.
- We are constantly changing, growing, and evolving to reflect and express the community we serve.
- We meet our community members where they are and take extra steps to reach the historically marginalized.
- We partner with local businesses and organizations for underwriting and events to demonstrate our public service commitment.

WGLT is a conduit for dialogue and collaboration at the center of a connected community.

- We bring together the resources and educational mission of our host institution—Illinois State University—with the practical, dynamic project of community life.
- We feature award-winning and thoughtful National Public Radio (NPR) and other public media programming that educates and facilitates critical thinking.
- We connect our community honestly and intimately with itself and extend that connection to others across the region, nation, and globe by broadcasting our stories and bringing others' stories home.

WGLT is a partner for those seeking innovative ways to express and explore new ideas in community.

- We showcase the diversity, complexity, and nuance of community culture through an eclectic mix of news, music, arts, and culture.
- We take risks, push ourselves, challenge our audience, and adapt to an ever-changing media environment.
- We maintain institutional knowledge and regard history, while joining new generations to co-create and tell the stories of our community.

Strategic Objectives

1. Commit to a consistent level of effort and a process of continuous improvement that keeps us individually and collectively nimble, resourceful, and ready for unforeseen challenges and opportunities.
 - Constantly pursue the impossible goal of “too many ideas from everyone.” Share our best ideas and practices across teams and stations as we discover them.
 - Lean into difficult conversations and situations with an open mind, then self-evaluate with humility and a willingness to change course.
 - Activate and step forward to lead innovative, imaginative, and force-multiplying local and national projects.
 - Represent McLean County, ISU, and the School of Communication in NPR and journalism projects with the potential for widespread societal influence. One example is the American Democracy Project.
2. Grow our reporting staff to support deeper, broader, better reporting on community issues.
3. Hire, support, and lift up minority and historically marginalized voices so we truly and justly represent the community we serve.
 - Provide mentorships and career paths for students whose perspective and content keep us relevant.
 - Recruit a diversity of perspectives to our internal team and our network of external partnerships.
 - Proactively create opportunities for staff and partners with perspectives underrepresented in Public Media to recapitulate diversity, inclusion, and equity through creative and programmatic decisions regarding sources, coverage areas, and target audiences.
4. Continue to integrate and align WGLT’s operations and trajectory with ISU through more curricular and co-curricular learning and community engagement opportunities.
 - Seek out and engage in opportunities to work with ISU’s School of Communication, other departments, and centers where our goals and resources align and/or complement one another.
 - Welcome students and faculty to engage with WGLT at our current and future physical space on campus.
 - Build and experiment with new opportunities for student-driven projects and beats.
 - Seek out and engage students in opportunities to explore convergent media partnerships to the benefit of our campus and community.
 - Partner with campus units such as ISU’s Foundation and Career Services to navigate available funding streams and partnerships that match WGLT’s operations with student research and academic programs.
5. Pursue digital and on-demand media with the breadth and depth of coverage needed to attract a new generation of listeners and to remain agile in a constantly changing and fragmented media environment.
 - Optimize content and products to meet audiences where they are, including building, retaining, and monetizing on-demand and online audiences.
 - Add new coverage areas to attract the needs and interests of audiences in our local community, especially audiences in communities historically excluded from or marginalized by public media.
 - Leverage data and analytics including that provided by NPR to take informed, targeted action for building a diverse audience.

6. Strengthen WGLT's financial position to support sustainable growth and expand the station's margins for risk and experimentation.

- Continue to maintain a balanced budget, monitor finances weekly, and revisit our plan frequently to ensure sustainable operations and to stave off complacency.
- Actively demonstrate to university leadership the station's role in advancing ISU's mission to justify funding and in-kind support while maintaining journalistic integrity.
- Explore new, accessible, and easy ways to engage with WGLT's core audience, including new entry points for interns, interviewees, and listeners on all platforms to identify themselves as WGLT supporters such that they can better stay up to date on, participate in, and advance WGLT's mission.
- Build and maintain a dedicated coalition of community leaders who may be called on to act as advocates for public radio with possible high net-worth or institutional supporters.
- Stay informed of new strategies from NPR and elsewhere for monetizing new revenue streams, including online and digital media products, and engaging in pilot projects where applicable.

Illinois State University Core Values Alignment

Learning and Scholarship

- “We Gladly Learn and Teach”
- Provide a convergent media learning laboratory to ISU students
- Share novel and relevant content to inspire learning in our listeners and readers
- Generate new insights and expand thinking with rigorous journalistic inquiry and analysis
- Give voice to local knowledge that has been historically unsupported by traditional academic or media authorities

Diversity and Inclusion

- Champion student talent, experiences, and perspectives as a major source of diversity at ISU, WGLT/WCBU/The Vidette, in McLean County, and within public radio
- Do the extra legwork to reach more diverse sources and then have the hard conversations

Respect

- Communicate with listeners, readers, and supporters thoughtfully and with an open mind
- Earn our support without gossip or clickbait, respecting the complexity of the community we cover and the issues at hand
- Respect ourselves and the community enough to test our limits and challenge our assumptions

Collaboration

- Convene the talent represented by The Vidette (students/ISU), WGLT (BloNo), WCBU (region), NPR (nation) to advance common goals
- Maintain a station culture that expects and respects contributions from all
- Actively seek unlikely or unusual sources and partners both within and external to station staff

Individualized Attention

- Ensure that WGLT internships and professional opportunities are substantive and sensitive to learner contexts
- Lend the authority and credibility of institutional media to the lives and particulars of our neighbors’ lives and struggles
- Grow and retain our audience one person at a time
- Resist the forces of the “corporate attention economy” and maintain in-depth, high-quality focus on local, complex, and true news

Civic Engagement

- Staff the station and its projects with community members who are invested in the health of our civic institutions
- Seek out and participate in matters of consequence to the community, from the League of Women Voters to NAACP and more
- Help to make our local institutions and their operations accessible for all to understand and engage with
- Lift up our community organizations, small businesses, and civic institutions and make plain their value to our audiences’ quality of life
- Engage at and connect with local, regional, and state issues, events, and culture

Integrity

- Maintain steadfast dedication to transparency, accountability, and fairness
- Earn listener, reader, and supporter trust with continued mission-driven, value-based content
- Maintain a sustainable business model