

Valley Public Radio

Local Content and Services Report

February 4, 2021

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

The purpose of this section is to give you an opportunity to tell us and your community about the activities you have engaged in to address community needs by outlining key services provided, and the local value and impact of those services. Please report on activities that occurred in Fiscal Year 2020. Responses may be shared with Congress or the public. Grantees are required to post a copy of this report (Section 6 only) to their website no later than ten (10) days after the submission of the report to CPB. CPB recommends placing the report in an "About" or similar section on your website.

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.

Valley Public Radio went into the 2020 year with a range of goals to serve the needs of our community through a range of original, locally produced content. From local short and long-form reporting within local breaks on national programs, and on our local program Valley Edition [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/valley-edition>], to podcast/broadcast initiatives and community engagement events, we aim to bring listeners programming that helps them understand their world. We developed our goals and initiatives through meetings with Community Advisory Council, Kern Advisory Council, online listener surveys, community engagement activities, and source-building in communities throughout our broadcast region, as well as extensive audience research.

In 2020 we launched a number of new projects including a partnership with StoryCorps for a station-hosted stop in the 2020 StoryCorps Mobile Tour in Fresno, and the launch of the StoryCorps San Joaquin podcast and broadcast series. [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/storycorps-san-joaquin>] The StoryCorps project involved extensive community engagement (described in detail below in Section 2). We also began collaborating with WNYC's Science Friday to create special multimedia coverage in a special project on a serious disease endemic to our region known as valley fever, and a reporting series about the lives and jobs of immigrants in the San Joaquin Valley.

As we always do, we worked to ensure our local news coverage was responsive to community needs and current events. We also worked to respond immediately to the COVID-19 crisis, with local reporting, [<https://www.kvpr.org/term/covid-19>] collaborative coverage with other stations in the new NPR California News Hub, and new arts and culture programs and podcasts developed to fill a need in the community in the wake of the pandemic. We aired regular press conferences from California Governor Gavin Newsom, providing critical info about the COVID-19 response, and our reporters were featured on statewide broadcasts discussing the pandemic response. Our local reporting included daily news reports on COVID, in-depth reporting on the impacts to local farmworkers and other essential workers, and weekly talk show segments analyzing the latest COVID-19 numbers, the challenges of testing, shutdowns, and the vaccine effort.

As the summer went on, the protests for racial equality became a major issue nationally and locally, and our reporters covered protests in Fresno and Bakersfield, we convened discussions with local leaders from communities of color on Valley Edition, and we aired special coverage of issues of race and equality from national program distributors. In the late summer and fall, our region was hit by the worst wildfire season in memory, including the Creek Fire, which made national news when it became the largest single wildfire in California history. With the fire threatening our transmitter (it came within a few thousand feet of our mountaintop transmitter site) our team was dispatched to cover the story and the devastation in our mountain communities. Reporters Laura Tsutsui and Madi Bolanos appeared on nationally broadcast NPR programs including Morning Edition to share the story with the nation, and our team continues to cover the aftermath of the fire.

We also responded to the pandemic crisis with non-news programming. With artistic events and venues closed, and listeners sheltering in, the need for special arts and culture programming that spoke to the moment became imperative. We developed special series and programs to serve listeners with local programming. Those included The Time of Your Life [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/time-our-life>] a collaboration between KVPR and acclaimed local author Mark Arax, featuring the short stories of Armenian-American author and playwright, Pulitzer winner, and Fresno native William Saroyan. The series featured his works read by Arax and other local poets and authors, with commentary on his literary legacy, the Fresno community and how his stories inform our present day.

We also produced Play On [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/play>] in collaboration with the Fresno Philharmonic and conductor Rei Hotoda, a celebration of the power of music to help heal and transform lives during trying times featuring local recordings from the archives of the Fresno Philharmonic.

Another music focused series was Beethoven: Crisis and Creativity [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/beethoven-crisis-and-creativity>], which used the 250th birthday of the famed composer to examine his music through the historical context of his times, and how it relates to our current era of upheaval. It featured more archival recordings from the Fresno Philharmonic and those drawn from the Philip Lorenz Memorial Keyboard Concert Series, as well as interviews with some of the top classical pianists in the world.

The other major activity of the past year was a significant change to our programming schedule, to better serve our audience. [<https://www.kvpr.org/post/1a-other-new-programs-join-valley-public-radio-midday-lineup>] Prior to September 2020, our station was a split format news/classical station. Over the last decade, through extensive audience research, we have seen these two different programming formats attract different audiences, with news listenership growing, and classical audience shrinking. Our news listener is also more than twice as likely to be ethnically diverse. Given the audience split, it became evident that trying to serve both groups of listeners on one channel by switching programming formats from news to classical, back to news, back to classical and back to news (all within the span of eight hours) was not serving either group. In September 2020, we consolidated our midday, weekday programming on KVPR and KPRX with a news/talk format, adding 1A, Marketplace, KQED's Forum and KERA's Think to our existing programming with Morning Edition, Here and Now and All Things Considered. At the same time, we publicly launched KVPR Classical, a new 24/7 classical programming service on digital formats, including HD-2 and streaming platforms. Following this change, our Fall 2020 Nielsen ratings were the highest in station history.

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.

Collaboration was a key part of our success in the last year. We worked with local community groups, arts organizations, and other public media broadcasters to expand our reach and impact.

In early 2020, we collaborated with the national non-profit StoryCorps to host the StoryCorps Mobile Tour in Fresno, [<https://www.kvpr.org/post/storycorps-mobile-tour-visit-san-joaquin-valley-2020>] with additional recording sessions in Bakersfield. We held community engagement sessions with local community groups, including those outside our typical audience. This led to special recording sessions in Fresno and Delano focusing on documenting the memories of Japanese Americans who lived in internment camps during WWII in California, and the lives of farmworkers in the farm labor movement of the 1960s. While the mobile tour was cut short by 2 weeks, and a planned listening event did not take place due to COVID, we did successfully launch a new podcast drawn from the over 100 conversations recorded as part of this project, which we call StoryCorps San Joaquin.

[<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/storycorps-san-joaquin>] As part of this project we also collaborated with the Community Media Access Collaborative, which helped host the mobile tour and provided production support, as well as over two dozen local community groups who participated in outreach activities with the StoryCorps team.

We also saw the broadcast and online publication of content in collaboration with WNYC's Science Friday focusing on the airborne fungal disease coccidioidomycosis (valley fever). Our reporter Kerry Klein contributed to broadcast and multimedia reporting by Science Friday's Lauren Young, and Science Friday aired some of our original reporting about groundbreaking developments in efforts to treat this often deadly disease. <https://methods.sciencefriday.com/valley-fever>, <https://www.sciencefriday.com/articles/avenal-prison-valley-fever/>, <https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/valley-fever-covid/>, <https://www.kvpr.org/post/fever-dust-science-friday-spotlights-valley-fever>

Valley Public Radio also was a part of the new NPR California News Hub in its efforts to cover both COVID-19 and California's record wildfire season. The hub came online just as the crisis was developing, but allowed stations to more easily collaborate and share content. We aired statewide special broadcasts about COVID-19, and our reporters were often featured on air in analysis segments before or after live press conferences by California Governor Gavin Newsom. This collaboration fostered by the CA News Hub later played out in coverage of the protests for racial justice and California's wildfires.

We also approached community partnerships in developing new programs and specials. In the summer, we aired a Storyteller's Showcase program we recorded prior to the pandemic at Bakersfield's Beale Memorial Library, featuring true stories told before a live audience. The library was a partner in this broadcast. Our new series the Time of Our Life [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/time-our-life>] was a collaboration between the station and award winning local author Mark Arax. David Aus, with acclaimed author Mark Arax, exploring the short stories of Fresno-born author William Saroyan, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award. Saroyan's stories not only are important to local Armenian-Americans, they speak to the unique elements of our local culture and the immigrant experience in the

United States as a whole. Beyond that the series explored how the pandemic reshaped our lives in a similar way to that of Saroyan's era in the 20th century. In the radio series, local authors from the present day joined Aus and Arax to discuss Saroyan's writing, the community, and what his legacy means for us amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Play On [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/play>] was another pandemic-inspired series hosted by David Aus and conductor Rei Hotoda of the Fresno Philharmonic, exploring the power of music to unite us and provide solace amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It was followed with another collaboration with the Fresno Philharmonic and the Philip Lorenz Keyboard Concert Series, celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. [<https://www.kvpr.org/programs/beethoven-crisis-and-creativity>]

Near the end of the year, work began on a new collaboration between Valley Public Radio, Radio Bilingue, The Fresno Bee and the newspaper Vida en el Valle. The project, which is now underway as the Central California Media Collaborative Lab, will bring audiences of all partners enhanced coverage of COVID-19 and its impact on diverse communities and essential workers.

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.

Our coverage of the airborne fungal disease valley fever got national attention this year in part through our partnership with WNYC's Science Friday. <https://methods.sciencefriday.com/valley-fever>

Listener Daniel Garst wrote us following the national broadcast: *"Kudos to your excellent reporting on valley fever today in "Science Friday," I love that show, we need hard science now more than ever and journalists like you and Ira Flatow help fill a badly needed void. I'm glad to be sustaining member at KVPR and look forward to doing my little bit in this mini fund drive to support the station and the outstanding work you, Joe Moore, and the rest of the KVPR team do in keeping us enlightened and informed about crucial current events."*

This comment was similar to many others we have received about our coverage of this issue, such as this comment posted on our Facebook page following our broadcast in January 2020 about a breakthrough in treating the disease: <https://www.kvpr.org/post/eureka-moment-valley-fever-case-paves-way-new-research-treatment-options>

Listener Aaron Dwoskin wrote: *"Incredible! So exciting for the people in the valley- such a terrible illness."*

The need for this coverage is greater than ever. In December 2020, the California Department of Public Health announced that 2019 had reached a record high, calling for more public awareness of the disease, as a key to early diagnosis. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR20-321.aspx>

Our prior coverage of valley fever has been mentioned in Columbia Journalism Review and was recognized by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who has made the fight against valley fever one of his top priorities for residents of his district, where the disease is endemic.

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 2020, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Valley Public Radio has dedicated the time of reporter Madi Bolanos [<https://www.kvpr.org/people/madi-bolanos>] to reporting on the issues of diverse and underserved communities in the San Joaquin Valley. She has reported extensively on issues ranging from immigrants detained at the Mesa Verde facility in Bakersfield amid COVID-19, farmworkers struggling to do their jobs amid wildfires and the pandemic, and immigrant owned businesses in agricultural communities barely hanging on through the health and economic crisis. This bilingual reporting is essential to our ability to serve our community. We are expanding this effort, as work began late in 2020 on a new collaborative between our station, Radio Bilingue, the Fresno Bee and Vida en el Valle which will have our outlet's share coverage and resources to better bring these stories to the communities we serve.

Our efforts to serve diverse communities also extend to recent programming changes. In our region, Latinx residents make up a majority of the population. Nielsen's ratings indicate that about 1/3 of our audience identifies as Hispanic, and our news listeners are more than twice as likely to be Hispanic when compared to our classical listeners. Our shift to a consistent news/talk format during weekdays will help to better serve this large and growing part of our population and ensure the station's long term audience and relevance in our region. Beyond news programming, we also regularly broadcast the bilingual (English/Spanish) classical music program Concierto.

We have also done additional outreach work to the African American population. Valley Edition host Kathleen Schock [<https://www.kvpr.org/people/kathleen-schock>] has produced a great number of reports and community discussions on issues facing the valley's Black residents, from an in-depth program on the challenges of raising Black children in the valley [<https://www.kvpr.org/post/what-its-raise-black-children-san-joaquin-valley>] to deep dives on racism and implicit bias [<https://www.kvpr.org/post/civil-rights-attorney-chris-bridges-racism-and-implicit-bias>].

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 is absolutely essential to our service to the community. Through supporting our purchase of national programming, CPB funding makes our local journalism possible. With the audience and platform provided by Morning Edition and All Things Considered, our investment in local news, both short form and long form would not be viable. We air our local news within the national programs, and that wouldn't be possible without CPB's support. The combination of local and national is the key ingredient that makes our station, and our public media system great, and is what allows us to serve our community needs. This year, the stabilization funds from CPB were also essential to our fiscal health,

ensuring that we could navigate the early days of COVID-19 shutdowns, which saw a significant loss in revenue through our cancellation of major in-person fundraising events.

Of special note, while it is outside of our CSG grant, we want to acknowledge our appreciation of the support CPB provided NPR for the purchase of emergency transmitter kits to be used by stations. In September when the Creek Fire began to move close to our transmitter site in Meadow Lakes, CA we contacted NPR to rent one of their CPB-funded emergency transmitter kits. It was shipped to us overnight at great expense, but it allowed us to make arrangements to go on-air at an alternate site should the fire damage or destroy our facility or prevent us from accessing the area to refuel the generator at the site (which was off the grid for over a week). Ultimately a change in the weather allowed firefighters to make an aggressive stand to save the community of Meadow Lakes and we remained on-air without damage to our facility. Had we suffered damage, and the transmitter kit was not available for rent, we could have been off air for weeks. This was a real possibility as wildfires across California resulted in ALL of NPR's emergency kits being rented out by stations from LA to the Oregon border.