

Local Content and Service Report

The [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB) distributes community service grants (CSGs) to noncommercial public television and radio stations that provide significant public service programming to their communities. CSGs help stations expand the quality and scope of their work, whether in educational, news, public affairs or other programming — all of which represent an immeasurable value to the American people.

Community Service Grant recipients must report to their communities each year on the content and services they create to meet their community's local needs, and the impact of the same. The following report highlights KUT 90.5, KUTX 98.9 and "Texas Standard" programs and services in 2021.

- 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.**

KUT, Austin's NPR affiliate, and KUTX, the Austin music experience, are committed to delivering in-depth news coverage through a local lens and diverse, intelligent explorations in local music, lifestyle and culture. We invite audience engagement throughout all our platforms, with broadcast, podcasts, websites, robust social media, events, and customer service focused on hearing from the community and responding to their interests and needs. Our local coverage is guided by that input and longstanding newsroom staff knowledge of the community, with a focus on equity and affordability. In spring 2021 KUT also conducted a market research study to understand the needs of the community. The study confirmed interest in topics KUT covers and provided guideposts for future work. Primary coverage revolves around how state and local policy affects residents, education, environment, growth, and changing demographics.

In 2020-21 KUT and KUTX continued a heavy focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on Austin and Texas residents. KUTX started offering morning news reports from sister station KUT to better inform its music audience. KUT's newsroom worked diligently to inform the public about vaccination options, strains on the healthcare system, and continuing challenges of the system, often in both English and Spanish. Our audience was paying attention. The station's Ashley Lopez was named Reporter of the Year in the "Austin Chronicle's" annual Best of Austin reader poll. Lopez covers both health and politics, and her work was at the forefront of reporting on threats to voting rights in Texas.

Both stations invested in more digital content over the past year. KUT converted a daily COVID newsletter into a daily general news newsletter, to better inform our digital audience of what's going on at the local and statewide level. KUTX relaunched its [website](#) with more music news, information, and emphasis on raising the profile of local artists. "Texas Standard," our statewide daily newsmagazine, saw a more than 40 percent increase in monthly audience in 2021 compared with 2020, and is continuing that growth trend into the new year.

KUT and KUTX also invested more in on-demand listening for our audiences. A second season of "Pause/Play," a podcast originally started to chronicle what happened to Austin's live music scene during the pandemic, pivoted to explore equity, affordability, and housing in Austin, and how that

affects the creative class. The podcast continues to garner praise from listeners and the music community, and was a finalist for Best Podcast in the annual “Austin Chronicle” Best of Austin reader poll.

In the wake of devastating winter storms that knocked out power for millions of Texans – sometimes days on end – KUT News launched the podcast “[The Disconnect](#),” a look at how failed energy policy led to the disaster that killed more than 200 people statewide. The podcast has had more than 260,000 downloads, and listeners have praised the way the thoughtful series gave context to the confusing circumstances around the failure of the state’s power grid to meet demand in the harsh weather. “This is what great reporting sounds like. It’s good to hear a clear and concise explanation of what happened,” said one podcast reviewer.

KUT used “The Disconnect” for several hour-long specials during the year and made the programming available to other Texas stations as well.

In-person events have been difficult during the pandemic. However, KUT and KUTX continued to explore new ways to engage with the community. After the winter storm there was so much confusion around what happened with the storm and what might happen next that the KUT newsroom held both a Reddit ‘Ask Me Anything’ and live call-in show. A special episode of “Texas Standard,” “The Long Haul,” allowed people affected by the pandemic to tell their stories in their own words on the one-year anniversary.

Throughout the elections KUT also used the Hearken tool to solicit ideas and answer questions from community members.

KUTX held its annual Summer Jam hip-hop festival as a virtual event, and it received thousands of views. Even more important, the local PBS station, KLRU, decided to air it multiple times, helping to amplify the audience for these local bands at a time when struggling artists needed more exposure.

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.

KUT continues to partner with “The Texas Tribune,” the “Austin Monitor,” an online city hall reporting nonprofit called, NPR and the stations of The Texas Newsroom (a collaboration generously supported by CPB) to strengthen our digital efforts to keep our community informed about the news and issues most relevant to them. We are also in the early phases of an informal partnership with KAZI, a community radio station focused on providing news, information and entertainment for Black Austinites. So far, we have shared some technical and revenue knowledge, and are working to share some content and potentially fund a local news reporter together.

The “Texas Standard” daily newsmagazine remains the centerpiece for the efforts of The Texas Newsroom, the CPB-funded collaborative that has helped the four largest public radio stations in the state coordinate their news coverage efforts for more substance and impact. The stations collaborated closely on coverage of the winter storms and on the Texas Legislature, which convened from January to

June and then held three special sessions. KUT also partnered with the “Austin Monitor” on some online local election forums.

Our very successful partnership with NPR’s Next Generation project continues, now as part of the Texas Newsroom collaboration. KUT once again hosted the week-long digital journalism training project, but mentors and professional staff came from across the state.

On the non-profit, public service side, KUTX continues to partner with Austin organizations promoting the health and stability of the Austin Music scene. Organizations such as the SIMS Foundation (mental health services), Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM – low-cost health care for music industry workers), Austin Music Foundation (professional resources for working musicians), and Black Fret (a music patronage organization) are regularly mentioned on KUTX and partner with the station for events to raise money and awareness for each. KUTX annually partners with the Austin Music Foundation and the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division for Love Austin Music Month. This is a coordinated effort to promote the diversity of the Austin music scene.

This year’s Get Involved volunteerism series, which highlights local nonprofits, focused again on pandemic needs, the arts community and, after the winter storms, nonprofits focused on shelter and relief. KUT (and KUTX since 2013) has profiled more than 200 local non-profit volunteer-centric organizations. Organizations are encouraged to use the audio and video profiles we create in a way that works for them. Many use them in e-newsletters or funding appeals and on their websites

Nonprofit organizations also send in their volunteer needs and program information to KUT and KUTX for inclusion in our public service announcements. Many stations across the country either no longer do PSAs or they charge for them. KUT and KUTX continue to provide this service free of charge and we anticipate no change in that policy.

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.

KUT and KUTX have a combined on-air audience averaging more than 300,000 weekly listeners. KUT is often the market leader in audience share, and KUTX is regularly in the top five. The digital audience for our three main websites is about half a million unique visitors, and our podcasts are downloaded almost 300,000 times each month. This leads to strong listener feedback. Here are a few examples:

“KUT is the place I go to escape all the noise. Unlike other news sources that leave me feeling anxious because of their reliance on sensationalism and spin, KUT calms me with their host’s comforting cadences and their “just the facts ma’am” take on reporting.” – Cassidy W.

"I was listening to the radio and overheard a comment from a donor who had moved here during the pandemic, as myself and my family did, and who really articulated the comfort the daily voices at KUT have provided as we've settled into our new town. I felt compelled to donate just as she had done. Thank you for everything you do!" - Chris A

"Love the factual news coverage and breadth of international news coverage that we rarely get from other outlets. As the world gets more connected and smaller every day, I love the exposure my kids get to events happening outside of our neighborhood as we drive to school or commute to sporting activities."- Jami H

"Thank you for teaching me something about music every single day... You are a legend in my world and I am teaching my son what good music is and who good people are through you. Much love always!" – Carissa C.

"I moved to Austin a year ago. It's not easy to make friends during a pandemic. KUTX and KUT have helped me to feel connected to my new community. And the music is badass--so diverse, hits all the genres that I love, old and new music. I love it!"- Renica P.

KUT News and the "Texas Standard" team provided hundreds of stories about the pandemic, the winter storm, and the state legislature, throughout the year. KUT's coverage of both voting rights and the abortion bill passed by the legislature was the backbone of NPR's national coverage of these important issues.

KUTX continued amplifying the work of Austin musicians and highlighting the struggles of the music industry during the pandemic. The second season of *Pause/Play*, the podcast centered on Austin's music scene, focused on struggles experienced by musicians, venues and others in the scene in the aftermath of the pandemic.

- 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 2021, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2022. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.**

KUT's newsroom continued and expanded its Spanish language translations, publishing up to 3-5 stories in Spanish each day on [topics of note for the community](#). "Texas Standard" also began posting Spanish language content, and KUT and Texas Public Radio spearheaded efforts to provide more Spanish-language news for the state by providing translations for The Texas Newsroom. As part of a partnership with the local Univision station, KUT shares that content and can share content from Univision for our audience.

KUT and "Texas Standard" also partnered with the Voces Oral History Project at Moody College of Communication to create content to inform our audience about the significant contributions of Hispanics in U.S. history. One story was a feature for [Memorial Day](#) on "Texas Standard." Another, on mariachis, ran as a [Mother's Day feature](#) for "Texas Standard." For Hispanic Heritage Month, KUT partnered with Voces to run short bios of historically significant Hispanic residents twice a day every day. Voces oral histories of everyday life and the pandemic have also become Sonic IDs for KUT.

KUT continues to air “Latino USA” in a prime slot after NPR’s “All Things Considered” on Sunday evenings. Launched in 1993 at KUT, it is the longest-running Latino focused program on public media. In 2021 NPR made its podcast “Code Switch,” focused on race in America, available as an on-air program and KUT immediately included it in the lineup on Saturday evenings.

We continue to produce, as we have for over 50 years, and air “In Black America.” Hosted by John L. Hanson Jr., “In Black America” is a weekly half-hour program about the African American experience in the United States that is distributed nationally. The program is heard on more than 20 stations nationwide, including on two stations in Austin, and available as a podcast through KUT.org. The podcast has a devoted audience and was downloaded 136,000 times in 2021.

Hanson also hosts the four-hour Friday afternoon funk and soul music program, “The Old School Dance Party,” on KUTX and features African American centric community announcements and engagement. It has become a key part of how KUTX brings The Austin Music Experience to audiences. The music station continued an annual tradition of looking at Austin’s Black music roots with segments during Black History Month. KUTX airs the locally produced music show “Horizontes,” targeted at the Latin and world music communities of Austin. Finally, “The Breaks,” which showcases Austin and Texas hip-hop and R&B, continues to grow and be a rallying point for the Austin hip-hop scene. In 2021 *The Breaks* hosted a virtual Summer Jam, highlighting local and Texas artists. The show was made available through multiple streaming options and on Austin PBS.

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 provides about 5 percent of our budget and allows us to serve current audience and expand for new audiences. A 2021 emergency CPB grant allowed us to offset dips in underwriting and event revenue and enabled us to avoid layoffs that would have affected our content staff and the work we do to provide news, culture and information to the community. CPB funding has been important to the creation of The Texas Newsroom, which provides reporting not only for stations such as KUT, but also underserved rural markets across the state, through six statewide newscasts and KUT’s own “Texas Standard” daily news magazine. And while the Texas Newsroom is not yet entirely self-sustaining, newscast underwriting revenue continues to grow and we are exploring other digital revenue options as well.

CPB funding will be critical to the continued growth of our newsroom, and to expanding community engagement efforts in the coming years. KUT and KUTX are working hard to reach audiences we haven’t reached or served well enough in the past, especially communities of color. To do this while maintaining our core audience, we will need to keep growing. Thank you for all CPB does to make this possible!