

2022 Local Content Services Report - KOSU

Submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on February 9, 2023

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.

Digital Transformation - In numerous studies and census data, Oklahoma has been identified as the state with the most rapidly diversifying neighborhoods and a state with an exponential explosion of Spanish-speaking population. In addition, Tulsa tied with Indianapolis in the 2020 census as the fastest diversifying city in the country. As a public media station, it is KOSU's duty to seriously reevaluate how the content we are producing is reflecting these rapidly changing communities. We need to be better at finding ways to onboard people into community life and the civic process, and we need to deliver that work through platforms these audiences prefer. In 2022, we committed to a digital transformation project through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to evaluate our work, the biases that have traditionally informed that work and move through a design thinking process to begin changing. KOSU's audience is now half broadcast radio and half digital. In 2022, we experimented with ways to use digital media to better serve Indigenous women. In 2023, we will evaluate our learning and move through another design thinking process.

Local News Expansion - As local news deserts continue to expand in Oklahoma, KOSU is attempting to stop the bleeding. We added two new journalism positions in 2022 including a water reporter and a news director. In the last three years, the size of KOSU's local journalism staff has more than doubled from 3 FTEs to 8 FTEs. We now cover beats including agriculture and rural affairs, Indigenous Affairs, community issues and water quality and access. This reporting is delivered to audiences through text message, radio broadcast, community newspaper collaborations, podcast, email newsletter and social media platforms.

Engagement - Engagement and community information is at the center of everything we do. In December 2019, KOSU shifted engagement from being a 'nice-to-have' component of our work to absolutely necessary. The engagement journalist meets with other reporters to design an engagement plan for their reporting and the subsequent distribution of that work. She intentionally asks the reporters what voices are missing from the journalism and how those people could be included in the story. She also spearheads our source tracking to help the newsroom use data to help include more people in our work.

Civic Information - KOSU gets more than 1,000 questions a month through text message and a question box on kosu.org. These questions range from why it was taking so long to get a car title back from the state to how communities could cope with abandoned marijuana farms and what Oklahoma law says about catalytic converter theft. Many of these questions inform our journalism, but we also produced 10 answer guides to help people

better navigate these systems. The digital guides reached more than 105,000 people, and the radio stories were heard by more than 320,000 people through collaborations with other stations.

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.

Youth In Conversation - From book banning to the teaching of critical race theory, the culture wars played out on social media, in school board meetings and in the Oklahoma Legislature in 2022. As we listened to these heated discussions, we noticed that debates over legislation and public policy were missing the voices of the people who would be most affected: students. We worked with community partners across the state including libraries and youth organizations. We traveled the state to just talk. We listened to students read poetry, talked to the lead plaintiff in a potentially precedent-setting civil rights case and we learned from a lot of kids about where our future reporting on Oklahoma's education system might be focused.

Women's Health - Following the leak of the Supreme Court decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case, we started hearing questions from women. We found two issues. Misinformation about what Oklahoma's trigger laws would do was rampant. Rumors were also spreading that Indian Health Services would become an enclave where abortion would still be legal. In an effort to stand in that gap, KOSU collaborated with Osage News to host a community listening session. We also worked with StateImpact Oklahoma reporters to produce an FAQ guide about women's healthcare. This guide was meant to help build trust by answering actual questions and by telling readers or listeners when we were unable to verify an answer because the case law was so new.

Water Project - Some of the most common questions we hear at community listening events and via text messages is about water quality and water availability, especially in rural areas. In 2022, we partnered with Report for America and the Oklahoma Water Resources Center to increase available information. For example, in August 2022, an Altus, Okla. man sent a picture of his water that was a dark yellow color. The city told him it was safe to drink, but all the stores were sold out of bottled water. He was unsure what to do. KOSU reporters Graycen Wheeler and Kateleigh Mills went to the city's water supply and took test strips for manganese, which was causing the dark yellow color. They produced videos, radio stories and stories for kosu.org to help people understand the trace mineral and whether it was harmful. The Altus Times republished the story. The editor told us they were too understaffed to go into this level of depth on the issue.

Indigenous Affairs Reporting - KOSU had four different reporting partnerships in 2022 to help Native people tell Native stories. Partners included the Institute for Nonprofit News, Osage News, Muscogee Media, BBC and independent journalist Rebecca Nagle (Cherokee). These collaborative reporting efforts produced stories about criminal prosecutions in Indian Country, economic development and women's health.

Focus: Black Oklahoma - The collaboration with Tri-City Collective to continue producing the radio show and podcast Focus: Black Oklahoma (FBO) continued. KOSU supports FBO with studio space, equipment and advice. We continually look for ways to strengthen this collaboration.

StateImpact Oklahoma - KOSU continues its ongoing collaboration with KCCU, KGOU and KWGS to produce reporting on health, education and science. This collaboration celebrated 10 years in 2022.

America Amplified - KOSU again worked with America Amplified during 2022. This partnership helped us to create more thorough voting guides. We also worked together during the days leading up to the election and on election day to answer people's questions in real time. Some people told us having access to a real person to answer their questions helped them feel more at ease on election day.

Harvest Public Media - KOSU entered its third year of the Harvest Public Media collaboration to produce reporting unique to agriculture, food and rural issues. This collaboration allows reporters from several states to work together to recognize trends and issues that affect the entire region and benefit from additional editorial support.

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.

Youth in Conversation - By partnering with local groups such as Tulsa sexual education non-profit Amplify, Tulsa Changemakers and Focus: Black Oklahoma, KOSU worked with partner StateImpact Oklahoma to amplify youth voices that were going unheard in traditional media. The experience is probably best summed up by an interaction KOSU and Amplify had with MJ, a transgender student from Tulsa. She told us it isn't often students' voices are considered as a valid response to the issues that are being heard at the Capitol. Even more so, she said, when you are a part of the community that is being hurt the most by legislation and statewide dialogue. She closed the interview by saying: "This is the first time someone has asked me about it." We recorded 20 youth conversations.

Reproductive rights guides - As confusion grew around Oklahoma's tightening of abortion access following the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, KOSU produced a guide and held a listening session in Pawhuska attended by members of the public. This guide and subsequent event led to in-person interaction about women's health and gave communities a better understanding of how the state was legislating abortion. There were 22 attendees at the in-person event.

Teaching controversial topics FAQ - Oklahoma teachers were lost and confused following the passage of a so-called ban on critical race theory in the state. So KOSU partnered with StateImpact Oklahoma to put together a Frequently Asked Questions document to help them navigate the thorny new law, which restricted how history can be taught in the classroom.

About the coverage, one parent told KOSU, "Thank you for your great coverage of education in Oklahoma, especially your coverage of vulnerable students."

Voter guides - KOSU's most consumed online resource in 2022 was its voter guides. These connected potential voters to reliable information about candidates and items showing up on ballots across Oklahoma. Reporters from several Oklahoma public radio stations worked collaboratively to produce this work.

Following are some of the other comments we have received.

"I didn't know about the 1921 Greenwood (Black Wall Street) massacre in Tulsa until about 15 years ago. I was living in SEK and regularly listening to KOSU public radio while at work in Altamont (a former recognized sundowner town, coincidentally). KOSU did a piece on it. I was shocked. Today, I learned more. Everyone should learn more. Start here, and plan a visit soon" - Kitra Cooper

"I see y'all working very hard to support local artists and have seen that support growing in pure coverage and also growing in the variety of artists and genres featured through the years. It's visible and I believe that makes an impact on our awareness of what's happening in our communities!" -- Lacey Elaine Dillard, Musician from Oklahoma City

"I'm older & not very tech or text savvy , but love the articles received and the writers are fantastic. I look forward to them each week, and have learned so much more than I've ever known about OKLAHOMA! Thank you All for such excellent work and sharing it with the public. It is greatly appreciated!!" - Text Message Newsletter recipient

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 2022, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2023. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Blindspot: Tulsa Burning - In 2021, KOSU collaborated with Tri-City Collective, WNYC Studios and History Channel to produce a podcast. It was the only podcast conceived by people who actually live in Tulsa. In 2022, that podcast was honored with a number of awards including the duPont-Columbia, an NAACP Image Award and a Webby Award. The podcast was also a finalist for a 2022 Peabody Award.

Focus: Black Oklahoma - The intent of Focus: Black Oklahoma is to produce a show created by and for Brown and Black Oklahomans specifically focused on the culture of these communities and the issues that uniquely affect them. A group of citizen journalists produces the show each month. In 2022, the show focused on maternal health of Black women, the future of Greenwood and more.

Indigenous Affairs - KOSU has one of two mainstream media reporters reporting for Indigenous communities. We intentionally strive to include the perspective of Native people in all of our reporting, not just the issues that are unique to Indian Country. The content we produce is shared widely with other public radio stations and tribal media outlets. In 2022, the work of KOSU Indigenous Affairs reporter Allison Herrera was twice cited by U-S Supreme Court justices during hearings or opinions.

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?

Funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting provides a base of support that we can leverage to raise additional funding in our community. It is critical to have this support to hold up the services that have been considered traditional to public radio, but it is also critical as we think about parts of our communities that have not had access to traditional news because of affordability or other issues. This funding allows us to provide free and fact-checked information for everyone, and it helps us to lift up the local arts community by playing the music of Oklahoma artists.