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-from content, digital and in-person engagement, education services, community information, partnership support, and other activities, and audiences you reached or new audiences you engaged.

KSMU’s mission is to “explore ideas and deepen our shared understanding of what it means to be an engaged member of the community.” We seek to engage our listeners in civil dialogue around current events, public affairs, and the arts. We accomplish this through community partnerships, digital engagement, and a robust schedule of broadcast programming.

KSMU produces several programs focused on local community issues, including multi-part quarterly series “Sense of Community,” that dives beyond the headlines to provide in-depth coverage on national issues as they pertain to the Ozarks, and “Making a Difference” – presented in partnership with our local community foundation - that draws upon the personal stories and voices of Ozarks residents to highlight key issues impacting our community.

Other local programs such as “Arts News” and “Studio Live” highlight the latest in the local performing arts, visual arts, and music scenes. KSMU’s “Weekend Outlook,” online “Community Calendar” and related on-air announcements highlight local community events related to educational opportunities, nature and conservation, fitness, kids and families, nonprofit events, and more.

Studio Live gives us the opportunity to engage with our listeners each month as we partner with a local brewery and the bands that perform on Studio Live give a free concert at Studio Live Social Hour the night of the broadcast. We also host quarterly KSMU Trivia Nights in partnership with another local brewery that brings in very dedicated listeners and each event sells out weeks ahead of time.

This mission-driven content has allowed KSMU to cultivate a local audience that is thoughtful, diverse, community-minded, educated, and engaged.

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.

KSMU maintains numerous community partnerships that help support and expand the impact of our work. A few of these key partnerships include:

“Making a Difference” – through a long-running partnership with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, this bi-monthly series draws upon the personal stories and voices of Ozarks residents to highlight key issues impacting our community. The FY2023 series addressed issues identified in CFO’s Community Focus 2021 report. Topics included: a series of essays written and recorded by teachers in rural Ozarks, the history of the non-profit’s efforts in disaster recovery; and looking at the future of philanthropy.
“Making Democracy Work” – KSMU partners with the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri to produce this weekly series covering topics related to the Ozarks and democracy. This collaboration between KSMU and the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri on this program has been in existence for over 40 years.

“ Astro Brief,” “Engaging the Community,” and the “Missouri State Journal” – KSMU leverages its resources as both a public broadcaster and as a part of the campus community to bring listeners a variety of public affairs programming from Missouri State University. Examples of this collaboration include “Astro Brief,” a weekly science program hosted by Dr. Mike Reed from MSU’s Physics, Astronomy and Material Science Department; “Engaging the Community,” a monthly program with MSU president Clif Smart that examines national and international events and their impact on the university community; and “Missouri State Journal,” a weekly series that informs the community of events, discussions, and academic research taking place across campus.

Election Coverage and Local Candidate/Issue Forums – KSMU is part of the Informed Voter Coalition, a group of organizations including the League of Women Voters, Leadership Springfield, Drury University, Ozarks Technical Community College, and more, with the goal of educating and engaging voters ahead of local elections. The coalition produced several local candidate forums throughout 2022 and 2023 which KSMU presented online and on-air.

“These Ozarks Hills” – KSMU also highlights the rich history of the Ozarks region through partnerships with local storytellers and historians. The show “These Ozarks Hills,” is a monthly radio essay from renowned Ozarks storyteller Meredith Sisco.

KSMU branched out to produce our first podcast in FY 2023. “Talking History” is a collaboration with the Missouri State University’s History Department. Hosts Dr. Djene Bajalan and Patrick Needham interview a history expert for a deep-dive on a new topic each month.

3. What impact did your key initiatives and partnerships have in your community? Describe any known measureable 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.

We hear frequently from listeners expressing gratitude for the programming and information shared on KSMU. In letters, emails, and phone calls, listeners often voice their deep appreciation of our local coverage on important community issues and events. One example of measurable impact comes from KSMU’s partnership with Springfield Community Gardens. A representative from the garden said, “KSMU provided spots to help with marketing Gardenpalooza and your support helped us bring out 600 attendees to the event! THANK YOU!” Another example comes from the support we provided the Springfield Earth Day Festival: “We want to take a moment to thank you so much for being a part of our festival this year. I’m happy to announce that the festival raised $33,000 to split among our nonprofits in 2023! Of course, none of this would be possible without the sponsors and media partnerships we have been fortunate enough to form with you.”
KSMU’s election coverage and voter engagement/education initiatives were also well-received. Listeners were grateful for KSMU’s civil, respectful tone, and for opportunities to learn more about local candidates through our various community collaborations. While increased voter turnout cannot be attributed to KSMU’s efforts alone, the station prides itself on contributing to the engagement and education of voters in our region.

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 2023, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2024. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

KSMU is proud to provide services and programming to help meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences.

KSMU is part of the Audio-Reader Network, a reading and information service for individuals who are blind or print-disabled. The service is available free-of-charge and offers daily readings of newspapers, magazines, and books.

“Missouri State Journal,” a series produced in partnership with Missouri State University, informs the community of discussions, initiatives, events, and academic research taking place across campus. Episodes during FY2023 highlighted various international cultures of MSU students, celebrated LGBTQ history month, looked at Black Girl Talks, a mentorship program for black adolescent girls, and how to practice sustainable tourism.

KSMU’s “Sense of Community” featured several topics throughout FY2023 that shed a light on diverse and underrepresented populations including; “Living through Art,” stories of 10 artists in the Ozarks, “Faces Behind the Numbers,” stories of 10 local people who died of COVID 19, and “Shorter Lives” a look at the reasons behind the drop in Missouri life expectancy.

KSMU partnered with Missouri State University’s Public Affairs Conference to bring Morning Edition’s Leila Fadel to speak to college students and members of the community. The event was such a success that KSMU will be providing a speaker from NPR for each year’s Public Affairs Conference going forward.

We look forward to continuing to leverage our relationships within the university and the local community to bring more programming in FY2024 that serves minority audiences.

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 grant funding that KSMU receives from CPB helps pay for NPR programming expenses, as well as broadcasting expenses for the entirety of our schedule. More than 42,000 listeners tune in to KSMU for national, regional, and local news and cultural programming. We are the only NPR station serving the
Ozarks region. The CPB grant is key to helping KSMU maintain a strong and diverse funding portfolio and enables us to serve our community with a robust schedule of programming.