

2024 Local Content Services Report

Submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on February 15, 2024

- 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. That transformation work continues. In 2024, we will hire a digital producer to continue meeting Oklahomans in their preferred technology format with civic and community information.

Local News Expansion - As local news deserts continue to expand in Oklahoma, KOSU focused on the creation and flourishing of a new information ecosystem that serves modern Oklahomans. Part of this work is leaning on the public private partnership model to add journalists as other outlets continue to contract their local service. Since late 2019, the newsroom has grown from 3 FTEs to 9 FTEs. We now cover beats including agriculture and rural affairs, Indigenous Affairs, community issues and water quality and access and state government. 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. Many of these interactions inform the journalism we pursue.

- 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.**

State Government reporting - KOSU secured a two-year \$250,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 2023 to increase coverage of state government. That position was filled in January 2024 and will increase the frequency and depth of our state capitol reporting. The resulting work will build on the long-term collaborations of StateImpact Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Public Media Exchange (KOSU, KGOU, KWGS, KCCU and HPPR) to produce and share content that better informs Oklahomans. Through KOSU and the partner news organizations, the state government reporting will reach 65 of Oklahoma's 77 counties through on-air radio broadcasts.

Indigenous Affairs reporting - KOSU had multiple reporting partnerships in 2023 to help Native people tell Native stories. Partners included Osage News, New York Public Radio and Bloomberg. These collaborative reporting efforts produced stories about The Osage Reign of Terror as depicted in the book and film *Killers of the Flower Moon*, the federal Indian boarding school system, and women's health. KOSU also collaborated in events with Osage News, Circle Cinema, The Tulsa Artist Fellowship and the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities at the University of Tulsa.

Focus: Black Oklahoma - The collaboration with Tri-City Collective to continue producing the radio show and podcast Focus: Black Oklahoma (FBO) continued into its fourth year. KOSU supports FBO with studio space, equipment, advice and podcast hosting. 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 the environment. This collaboration celebrated 11 years in 2023.

Harvest Public Media - KOSU entered its fourth 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.

Next Generation Radio - KOSU partnered again with Next Generation Radio, as well as The Indigenous Journalists Association and OSU School of Media & Strategic Communications for *NPR NextGenRadio: Indigenous* in 2023. This five-day, digital-first workshop focused on providing training to college journalists, most of whom were Indigenous, to tell stories of Indigenous peoples.

Community Outreach - KOSU reporters and staff members talked with high school and college classes, moderated and participated in panels, and hosted listening sessions in rural and urban communities at more than two dozen events with about 2,300 people across the state.

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 services? Please include direct feedback from a partner or from a person served.**

KOSU Waterline survey - In response to consistent comments from listeners and a stream of water news, our water reporter and engagement reporter created an ongoing survey for folks to tell us about their trust (or lack thereof) in their drinking water and issues with water quality. We heard from listeners who dealt with water line breaks, burst pipes and mud seeping into their water lines after breaks were fixed. We also heard accounts of concerns over agricultural runoff, boil orders, and smelly, discolored and hard water. One person told us, "My dog wouldn't even drink it when we first moved here." Another said their water "...often smells and looks bad. I sometimes get sick from drinking it." Finally, another person said our reporting was the first time they've ever thought about what's in their drinking water. Those reporters also continued outreach with the community of Guthrie in the fall of 2023, hosting a listening session with residents following the drought-caused closure of the public pool, a blue-green algae bloom restricting recreational activities at the local lake and concerns over a nearby wastewater plant pumping raw sewage into a creek.

State legislative preview - As part of ramping up our state government coverage, we completed a significant legislative preview in early 2023, previewing bills our reporters were seeing. We created a single landing page on kosu.org for the preview, and rolled out the previews daily for about two weeks on-air. We also created specific previews for Instagram, as we see more younger users seeking and consuming information through posts, reels and stories on that platform.

Voter guides - With a local election nearly every month, KOSU continued to put a strong emphasis on voter guides in 2023, highlighting as many local races and bond issues as possible. In the interest of public service, these were widely shared with partner stations in Oklahoma. That resulted in comments like this from Doug in Oklahoma City: "You guys saved me from missing an election this week. Thanks for alerting me!"

Tribal voter guides - 39 federally recognized tribal nations call Oklahoma home and many held tribal elections in 2023. To help inform tribal citizens, we created multiple guides for elections in Cherokee Nation, Quapaw Nation, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma and more.

Fact checks and Frequently Asked Questions - Ongoing issues between Oklahoma's governor and tribal governments in the state have created murky waters for even the biggest news followers. We took the time to fact-check incomplete and misleading statements made about tribal compact negotiations and allegations that there are separate speed limits between Indigenous and non-Indigenous drivers. Doing so helped to dispel some myths and

misinformation being created by those comments. In the wake of the state highway patrol appearing to abandon decades of precedent of honoring many tribal nation car tags, we collected listener questions about what that means for them. As a result, we compiled a list of frequently asked questions and answers to those questions.

Focus: Black Oklahoma community listening sessions - Focus: Black Oklahoma hosted four community conversations in Claremore, Ada and two in Tulsa in 2023. The goal was to focus on urban and rural communities who may feel left behind and unheard as culture wars divide people. The hope is to diversify the voices and perspectives heard on the show and give people agency in a larger discussion.

Here are some other comments we received in 2023:

"KOSU helps me understand this complex, fast-moving world." - Kathryn, Stillwater

"KOSU has been extraordinarily helpful for me in the past few years. KOSU has brought critical thinking to help me to navigate current political and ethical waters." - Dorothy, Stillwater

"As a STEM teacher, KOSU helps me keep up to date on technology." Carrie, Norman

"KOSU programming is a part of our daily lives. Everyone in the family listens to it on their way to work/school in the morning (and coming home) and it has sparked some fantastic dinner conversations!" - Angel, Arcadia

"I finally understand the importance of understanding what is actually happening here in Oklahoma. National news sometimes feels beyond my control, but local issues, when I hear of them, they feel much more personal." - Tom, Harrah

- 4. Please describe any efforts (e.g. programming, production, engagement activities) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority or 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 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.**

Focus: Black Oklahoma - The intent of Focus: Black Oklahoma is to produce a show created by and for BIPOC 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 2023, the show focused on DEI funding at schools, Syrian refugees in Tulsa, the search for unmarked graves from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and more.

Indigenous Affairs - KOSU intentionally strives 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 2023, KOSU Indigenous Affairs reporter Allison Herrera covered ongoing tribal sovereignty issues in Oklahoma, the legal saga surrounding an Osage County wind farm and Muscogee Freedmen fighting for tribal citizenship. Herrera's reporting also heavily focused on the highly-anticipated release of *Killers of the Flower Moon* and the generational trauma associated with its real-life events.

5. Please assess the impact 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. This funding is also critical for maintaining Emergency Alerting Systems for the state of Oklahoma. KOSU is a primary relay to many rural broadcasters who may not have an engineer to troubleshoot at critical times of public safety. The funding we receive from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting helps us to have a base of equipment and tech support to keep all Oklahomans safe at the times when they most need it.