

CPB STATION ACTIVITIES SURVEY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020

This is a copy of responses submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as part of the Station Activities Survey submitted February 15, 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.

WYPR's mission is to inform and connect the listeners we serve in the Baltimore Metropolitan area, and throughout the entire state of Maryland. We do this with our expanding news department, our two daily locally produced talk programs, our suite of podcasts at WYPR's Podcast Central, our on-air connections with the leading cultural institutions of Baltimore and Frederick, and our media partnerships with an array of local organizations and institutions. In addition, our Community Advisory Board runs a series of ascertainment meetings in which overlooked and underserved groups are brought to the attention of WYPR's reporters and producers.

The Covid-19 pandemic was, for much of the year, an overarching story and problem for WYPR and our audience. Even as our reporters began working from their homes, WYPR poured effort into covering the pandemic. We began a new daily podcast, *The Daily Dose*, to extend our news reporting to a digital audience. Our new RFA reporter had her beat changed to health, so that we had a reporter dedicated to covering the pandemic. Both of our daily talk programs dedicated themselves to deep dive coverage of Covid-19 in our area, and public health press conferences were broadcast live to our audience. As the Covid pandemic continues, WYPR continues our robust coverage. This was also an election year, and despite the need to cover the pandemic and despite the challenges of broadcasting remotely, WYPR was able to give our listeners the full election coverage they expect from us – from news reporting on the campaigns to *Conversations with the Candidates* on Midday to live in-studio coverage on election night.

In the wake of Baltimore's urban unrest of several years ago, WYPR assigned a reporter to investigative coverage of police malfeasance and corruption. Our reporter worked with the Center for Investigative Reporting to do national segments on police corruption, and we continue to follow it closely. We have a reporter dedicated to news from Baltimore County, another following Baltimore City, a dedicated health reporter, and a reporter dedicated to statehouse reporting. In addition, we have robust environmental reporting, much of it dedicated to the state of the Chesapeake Bay. The Environment in Focus, a weekly program, tackles issues from an environmentalist's point of view.

Podcast Central: WYPR's best-known podcast is Out of the Blocks, which tells the story of urban residents in their own words. This year WYPR received a grant from the NEA to produce segments remotely, tracking changes in those neighborhoods and the effects of Covid-19. Out of the Blocks has gone to Indian Reservations, big cities, and small towns to let people tell their own stories. In addition, the musical content of Out of the Blocks is such that it receives a grant from the Maryland Arts Council. Out of the Blocks was originally a radio show. And it continues to air on the radio in somewhat different form than the podcast. As previously mentioned, WYPR began aggregating our daily news content into a podcast called The Daily Dose. Conceived first as solely a vehicle for local Covid-19 information, it has morphed into a full vital daily on-line news program, with bonus reporting that doesn't appear on the air. It is a major next step in our digital strategy. WYPR also believes that culture is every bit as important to our listeners as news, so our podcasts also cover the culture beat. Essential Tremors talks to musicians about the works that have influenced them, and the works of local icon Edgar Allan Poe are featured on Poe Theatre on the Air. We have two locally originated talk programs, both of which air daily. On the Record allows Sheilah Kast, a long-time veteran of network TV and radio news, a chance for an unmediated deep-dive interview with community newsmakers and leaders. Midday is our daily call-in show, giving listeners a chance to interact with newsmakers, politicians, and artists. Despite the challenges associated with Covid-19, Midday still managed to broadcast interviews with candidates for all local and state-wide offices; Midday also won a regional Murrow Award this year for a program celebrating the life of the late Elijah Cummings. Future City is a monthly program hosted by nationally best-selling author Wes Moore and takes on the challenges faced by urban Baltimore by speaking with those in other cities that have faced and beaten those challenges.

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.

WYPR emphasizes on-air media partnerships in support of the missions of dozens of area nonprofits. Partners include local theaters, charities, museums, and hospitals. Our media partnerships give free airtime to these organizations to promote their events and activities. WYPR airs a monthly radio collaboration with the director of the Baltimore Museum of Art, and one with the director of the Walters Art Museum. We have collaborated on a weekly environmental program with the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and work with the Kennedy Krieger Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. We provide arts events listings in Frederick, Maryland, in conjunction with the Frederick Arts Council; and we have open access for all area organizations to our on-line Events Calendar. We present an annual live concert by the Baltimore Choral Arts Society and are on-going WYPR sponsors a free outdoor summer concert series with the Friends of Patterson Park, which was altered in an imaginative way this year, and was produced by WYPR producers. WYPR's local music programs are supported by the Maryland State Arts Council. The Covid-19 pandemic was devastating to non-profits and small businesses in the Baltimore area.

WYPR ran a long series of on-air announcements highlighting these organizations and keeping them in the public mind. Though many of the non-profits we work with have scaled back their events this year, we have kept our ties and supported as many on-air as possible. Social justice issues are addressed both on-air with “Future City,” and “Out of the Blocks,” (Winner of 2018 Edward R. Murrow Journalism Award) and podcasts. *The Daily Dose* podcast is bringing our news reporting to an on-line audience.

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 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.

Though we are based in Baltimore City, WYPR is heard throughout most of the State of Maryland, from populous suburban counties to remote and rural counties in Western Maryland on the Eastern Shore. Our programming connects listeners across the state, and while we shine a direct light on the urban problems of our metro area, we attempt to do it in a way that is understandable and relatable to everyone. “As a stay-at-home Dad WYPR helps me and my 11-month-old daughter stay connected to Baltimore and beyond as we hunker down during the pandemic.”-Sebastian “Thanks for keeping us up to date on COVID and for enriching our lives with Midday 1A and Fresh Air.”- Richard “Thank you for being my lifeline this year!” – Nicolle Of course, for any organization that relies on member donations, membership is a key litmus test for success. WYPR’s membership revenue was up 3% in 2020, despite the economic challenges of the year.

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 2018, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2019. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

The heart of WYPR’s listening area is an urban center recently scarred by racial unrest, so naturally the heart of WYPR’s program policy addresses issues of disparity. And the Covid-19 pandemic that dominated the news for most of 2020 also is a marker of disparity. Our news reporting and talk shows all delved into how communities of color have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Author Wes Moore (whose best-seller *The Other Wes Moore* told the story of two young Baltimore men who shared a name but had vastly different fates) explores solutions to Baltimore’s problems on WYPR’s *Future City*. Recent topics include “Closing the Digital Divide” and “Affordable Housing and Covid-19.” Both of our local daily talk shows dedicate frequent programs to the issues facing our Latinx and African American communities; and *Midday* has several recurring series tackling those issues, such as *Midday in the Neighborhood* and *Culture Connections*. The Baltimore Cease-Fire is an attempt to stem the

violence that engulfs the city, and Ericka Bridgeford, Cease-Fire's founder, is a guest on Midday every cease-fire weekend. Topics on our daily interview program On the Record have ranged from "Migrant Women in the Food Industry" to "Repercussions of Covid-19 On Black-Owned Businesses."

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 essential to WYPR in our quest to provide service to our community. CPB funding helps our established programs and podcasts; allows us to take chances on new programs, podcasts, and other means of service; and allows us to continue to grow our local news reporting which is increasingly essential to our audience. This was further highlighted during the pandemic as many of our usual sources of income disappeared – CPB was vital in allowing WYPR to weather the storm. And although we have here been talking about locally originated programs, CPB's importance in allowing us to present national and international news to our listeners should not be minimized. Just as growing news deserts make our local programs essential; those same audiences have fewer and fewer alternatives for world and national news, and filling that gap is an important part of our being as well.