

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

The purpose of this section is to give you an opportunity to tell us and your community about the activities you have engaged in to address community needs by outlining key services provided, and the local value and impact of those services. Please report on activities that occurred in 2019-20.

Responses may be shared with Congress or the public. Grantees are required to post a copy of this report (Section 6 only) to their website no later than ten (10) days after the submission of the report to CPB. CPB recommends placing the report in an "About" or similar section on your website. This section had previously been optional. Response to this section of the SAS is now mandatory.

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 of our platforms, with 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. Primary coverage revolves around how state and local policy affects residents, education, environment, growth, and changing demographics.

In 2019-20 KUT & KUTX engaged in new strategic planning efforts that prioritize audience engagement and community impact; creating a culture of excellence (including diversity, equity and inclusion); revenue and fundraising diversification; charting a digital path; and building sustainable infrastructure. In addition, the team rolled out a new [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion action plan](#) for the audience, requesting feedback and the public's help keeping us accountable for continued efforts to engage more diverse audiences. Among the changes to come from those efforts are more Black and Latino artists on KUTX, additional diverse on-air voices, a new regular feature on our daily statewide newsmagazine, Texas Standard, focused on the issues Black Texans face, and expansion of our diverse source tracking efforts to include state news sources.

Before the pandemic forced a shutdown of in-person events, KUT & KUTX held multiple community events, including forums on West Texas issues, homelessness in Austin and health issues related to the pandemic. KUT also held a live showing of our very popular ATXplained storytelling series for an audience of about 1,200 community members. The stories are built around answering audience questions about our community.

While the inability to hold events in person in the community has complicated some of our engagement efforts, we found that our online events could reach a much broader audience. After in-person events were halted, KUT began holding a weekly online series with the Dell Medical School exploring health care issues related to the pandemic, garnering digital audiences of as many as a thousand community members at a time. At the beginning of the pandemic we began carrying critical public health press conferences at the local and state level live on air and online to keep the audience informed.

We also used our ATXplained engagement tool and Google surveys to solicit specific audience questions about Covid-19, healthcare policies, and the vaccine and later answer those, both in local coverage and on Texas Standard.

KUT added two reporters in 2020 to cover very fast-growing outlying counties that have seen significant growth and demographic change as people of color and others have left Austin for cheaper suburbs because of a lack of affordability in the core. The reporters, based in Hays and Williamson counties, have been able to report on how these communities handle new challenges, and how well they respond to the needs of their new residents.

KUT's Views & Brews series, a podcast and community event series focused on culture and the arts, took the regular events online, with panels on healthcare, homelessness, social justice and many aspects of the pandemic that allowed the audience to present questions just as they would in person.

On the music side, the KUTX team pivoted to informing the community about the financial effects of the pandemic on Austin's nationally-recognized music community. The station worked through social media and on air announcements to connect musicians in need with those who wanted to help. We took our in-person Studio 1A sessions and turned them into online KUTX at Home events, including interviews with the artists and streamed shows. KUT & KUTX also launched a podcast series, Pause/Play, focused on what happens to the music industry that is so vital to the Austin economy and quality of life. The popular series has been cited by numerous artists, such as Jackie Venson and Nakia Reynoso, as an important contribution to efforts to get much-needed assistance for the ailing community.

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, an online City Hall reporting nonprofit called the Austin Monitor, 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.

In the past year the station has strengthened ties with the journalism department of the University of Texas Moody College of Communication in an effort to improve experiential learning for students and create additional content for our audience. One example of that is through the department's newly created podcast unit, The Drag. KUT provided editing and guidance as well as engineering and technical assistance for the student operation's first podcast, The Orange Tree, which made it to the top ten of Apple podcasts in 2020. Another example is through partnering with the Voces Oral History project to integrate some of the oral histories of Latino experiences done by students into coverage and sonic IDs.

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. For the 2020 elections, journalists from KUT worked with the journalists at KERA, Houston Public Media and Texas Public Radio to provide comprehensive statewide coverage of the national and state elections for not only our stations but stations across the state, with a specific focus on the growing and diverse Latino vote. KUT also partnered with KVUE, a local TV station, and the Texas Tribune to plan, execute and air a U.S. Senate debate before the March 2020 primary.

Our very successful partnership with NPR's Next Generation project continues. KUT has hosted this week-long digital journalism training more often than any other station in the system. Although the pandemic drove the sessions online, KUT again participated in the program, which gives a diverse group of college participants interested in radio and journalism the skills and opportunity to report and produce their own multimedia story. Those chosen for the project are paired with a professional journalist who serves as their mentor. KUT has been an enthusiastic partner in this with NPR and Doug Mitchell and have also pulled the UT School of Journalism into the program. KUT has employed at one time or another nearly a dozen graduates of the program, including three who are working here currently.

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 talked about on KUTX and partnered with the station for events to raise dollars 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 in February. This is a coordinated effort to promote the diversity of the Austin music scene.

Our ongoing Get Involved volunteerism series has continued its partnership with local nonprofits. Every month both stations air an audio profile of a local nonprofit organization that relies on volunteers to help accomplish their mission. With the Covid-19 outbreak and ensuing economic downturn, Get Involved pivoted to featuring more nonprofits directly impacted by the pandemic. And as our community grappled with social justice and equity issues in the wake of summer protests over police violence, Get Involved also turned its focus on nonprofits that assist and promote the wellbeing of people of color such as Six Square, Austin's Black cultural district, and El Buen Samaritano. 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 are also encouraged to 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.

KUT's Sonic ID project has been giving listeners a chance to chronicle their version of everyday life in Central Texas for closing in on two decades. We continue to focus on gathering voices on our Sonic ID's that are both reflective of our community as well as different than what you might generally hear on public radio. We regularly encourage listeners with shout outs to contribute to what the Austin American Statesman called "...one of the largest oral history projects in Central Texas." These short 30-60 second stories often spotlight what makes Austin a special place while they give a voice to a wide variety of people who describe what it means to live in Austin and Central Texas. These spots air up to 10 times daily throughout the schedule on KUT. Doing this kind of work is labor intensive and it is truly one of those areas where our CPB grant makes a difference. A big push over the last year has been to diversify the voices heard in these short vignettes and thanks to a new full-time producer we are making

progress in that area. They play a vital role in helping KUT “sound like Austin”. It’s a project that we are committed to continuing.

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 audience averaging more than 300,000 weekly listeners. KUT is often the market leader in audience share, and KUTX is regularly in the top 10. That means it is not unusual to hear from partners and members who have been affected by our coverage and outreach. Here is what a few members have written to us in the past year:

“When March hit and it was scary to step outside and no one knew what to do, I counted on NPR to help me navigate the COVID situation. As I continued my journey to try to understand how to support racial justice efforts and fuel my search to support BLACK LIVES MATTER, you were there. With the mayhem of the election, I used knowledge as my buoy and you brought that to me. I've been a loyal listener ever since. I wish I could give more. Y'all have given me so much this year. I'm grateful.” -Rebekah M.

“I really appreciate local and national news that is hype-free. I have grown more and more weary of corporate news sources that are relying on selling me products and keeping my eyes on their ads. KUT and NPR are always somehow at the eye; the calm center of swirling controversy. I rely on you for local, national, and international news and thoughtful analysis that isn't designed to simply raise my blood pressure. Also, today I had a question about something that was broadcast on air and emailed, and before the morning was over I had received a response from both Jennifer Stayton and Ally Ortegon. That blew my mind, and I so appreciate it. You guys are amazing.” - Meredith H.

“I have lived in Austin for 6 years and listen to KUTX every day. You guys have been a ray of sunshine, and literally the best radio I have listened to. I remember the first two weeks I was in Austin, I heard y'all play Shakey Graves-Dearly Departed, and I was like "wow this is some amazing music that I have never heard"... and the list kept on going... Israel Nash, Wild Child, and many more. Thanks for introducing so much good music to people like me, and thanks for supporting Austin Music! Love y'all!” - Cohl B.

Our Get Involved spotlight provides some of our best outreach, as mentioned above, connecting hundreds of volunteers to nonprofits. Here’s what one nonprofit exec had to say:

"Without volunteers, we could not help as many people as we do, but we always need more volunteers, both as individuals and groups. KUT listeners are people who care about their community and who can make time in their lives to help those less fortunate." - Suellen Mills, Vice President for Volunteer Services of Meals on Wheel and More.

During the pandemic KUT started a daily newsletter devoted to coronavirus news, which quickly accumulated more than 14,000 subscribers and prompting plenty of appreciation from the audience, including this comment during our spring membership drive: "Donating because of the daily coronavirus newsletter. Thank you for the hard work in keeping the community informed during this scary time."

KUT News and the Texas Standard team provided hundreds of stories about the pandemic throughout the year, providing vital information about public health safety, the logistics of navigating a shutdown, testing, and the vaccine. The team explored the impact on everyday Austinites and Texans, dug into disparities in health care and disproportionate impact on different ethnic groups, reported on the struggles of health workers, and provided as much consumer information as possible to help guide the community through an unprecedented time.

KUTX continued a strong mission of amplifying the work of Austin musicians and highlighting the struggles of the music industry during the pandemic, as well as offering comfort to the community in hard times. A new KUTX at Home series allowed interviews and performances for broadcast as well as online, and the radio also held dozens of 'socially distanced popups' with artist performances.

Among the other offerings KUT & KUTX provided during the pandemic was a 10-part podcast series called Pause/Play chronicling what the local music industry has gone through during the pandemic.

KUT's Views & Brews live event shows online have allowed a higher-level of engagement than was achieved in person. Some shows on the pandemic and social justice issues last summer received hundreds of views on Facebook and the KUT and Cactus Cafe websites.

In 2019, KUT continued an effort to diversify the voices our audience hears in our local news coverage. In 2018, we began tracking the sources we use based on gender, race/ethnicity and expertise. The intention was to more accurately reflect the diversity of the community we serve. We made some gains in terms of the gender balance and representation of people of color in our sources. We completed a full year of the project in September 2019 and shared the data with the public in early 2020. We are continuing this project into 2020 and beyond, making a concerted effort to cultivate sources outside of our traditional ones and become a better news source for our entire community.

The Austin Chronicle through online voting of readers once again in 2020 named KUT and KUTX the stations of the year in Austin for the news and music services that we provide Austin. The KUTX website continues to showcase local musicians and brings attention to a diverse range of musical genres made here in Austin. KUTX also provided hundreds of produced music videos to be shared with other Non-Comm AAA stations as part of the VuHaus project in an effort to expose local musicians to a much wider audience than ever before. We continue to be key players in this area as VuHaus joined up with NPR music. Well known musicians such as Lyle Lovett, Kathy Valentine, Israel Nash, Joe Ely, Shakey Graves, Hayes Carll, Rhett Miller, Dana Falconberry, Adrian Quesada, Ray Wylie Hubbard, and Bruce Robison (and dozens more) talk about our support of local Austin music in recorded announcements that we are able to air year round to encourage participation as KUTX members.

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 2017, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during 2018. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

In 2020 KUT launched in earnest an effort to provide news in Spanish for Austin and Texas audiences, and have translated hundreds of stories online through our En Español web pages on kut.org and texasstandard.org. Early efforts to provide Spanish language coverage of Covid testing sites and health

safety information received thousands of reads, coming in among the top read stories on our website the days they were published.

One of our new audience members had this to say:

“Mi nombre es Sara, la razon de mi correo electronico es para agradecer a KUT el mantenerme informada. Emigre a los Estados Unidos hace 23 años, KUT me ayudo para aprender Ingles, entender la cultura pero sobre todo sentir que no estaba sola, siempre escuchando sus historias. Este pasado 15 de Septiembre recibí mi Green card y estoy muy emocionada finalmente este Viernes podre viajar a Mexico y visitar a mi familia despues de tantos años, quise compartirlo on ustedes pues KUT fue ese puente para entender la cultura, se que hay muchas familias que como yo no pueden ver a su familia por muchos años y eso es muy triste. Muchas Gracias.” - Sara Perez

KUT News continues to report on issues of importance to minorities and other diverse communities in Austin, with a focus on equity across all of our coverage areas. In the summer of 2020 in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, KUT provided not only daily coverage of local, state and national protests, but also dug deeper into the underlying issues behind the protests. The KUT News team reported on the history of Austin area police shootings, explored police funding and training, and invited community experts, advocates and residents to share their stories on social justice, policing, and equity.

Texas Standard added regular commentary from the founder of the LBJ School’s Center for the Study of Race and Democracy about race in Texas and America. The show’s reporters and producers covered the significance of the social justice movement across the state.

KUT News and Texas Standard made a concerted effort to cover the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Latino residents of Texas with stories about disparities in testing and vaccine access, health care concerns, hot spots along the border that weren’t receiving state attention, and more. Texas Standard also aired an hour long documentary on the issue called “Ofrenda: A Decimation of People, a Celebration of Life.”

Another hour long documentary from Texas Standard took a close look at the impact of the growing Asian population in Texas. The show, titled “Overlooked No More: How Asian Texans Shape the State,” explored politics, culture (including Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Indian heritage in Texas) and health.

Nationally, 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. We continue to produce, as we have for over 50 years, and air *In Black America—IBA*. *IBA*, hosted by John L. Hanson Jr., 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 here in Austin and available as a podcast through KUT.org.

Hanson also hosts a four hour Friday afternoon funk and soul music program, *The Old School Dance Party*, on all-music KUTX that plays music seldom heard in Austin 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. KUTX spent much of 2020 diversifying the station’s music library, in an effort to better amplify musicians of color and provide more well-rounded cultural content. The music station began an annual tradition of looking at Austin’s Black music roots with segments during Black History Month. KUTX airs the locally produced music shows *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 continues to be a rallying point for the Austin hip-hop scene. A weekly podcast is gaining audience, and in 2020 *The Breaks* again hosted Summer Jam, this time virtually, bringing together local artists. KUTX worked with Austin PBS to air the show multiple times to help amplify these artists.

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 is an important source of funds that enables us to fulfill our programming mission and continue to grow. In particular, an emergency CPB grant in 2020 after the pandemic knocked out all of our event-based sponsorship helped us to keep our stations' operations despite a significant economic downturn. We receive about 5% of our budget from CPB grants and that makes it possible for us to purchase national programs from distributors presenting diverse viewpoints. CPB funding allows us to provide news and information for the Austin area that became critical in the early days of the pandemic. It allowed us to launch a daily newsletter on COVID-19 news and helped us launch our Spanish language initiative.

Because CPB funding helps with our programming costs, we can also increase our newsroom, which we did to the tune of five full-time positions in a year between 2019 and 2020. We were able to add an executive editor to improve the quality of our journalism and focus on engaging more of our community; an editor for Texas Standard; a transportation reporter, and multiple positions focused on providing more of our content online.

Meanwhile, CPB has been key to the creation and then success of The Texas Newsroom, allowing us to provide more statewide content on Texas Standard – which goes to 28 stations across Texas free of charge – and six daily newscasts. Thanks in part to CPB support, we were able to provide robust and comprehensive statewide coverage of the pandemic, social justice issues, and the elections in 2020.

CPB funding is the difference between maintaining and growing service at a time when local news is endangered in cities like ours that are losing newspaper journalism. Because of CPB we are able to help pick up the slack in news and information that is so necessary for civic engagement in this community. We are very grateful. Thank you!