

SAS RADIO REPORT

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.

WKSU continues to initiate, conduct and be involved with successful initiatives that connect with underserved audiences. WKSU is Ohio's largest public radio outlet. Station programming is broadcast from a main tower near Akron, four regional towers and two translator transmitters. The coverage area reaches 22 counties in Northeast and North Central Ohio, and parts of Western PA—home to nearly 4 million people. The towers broadcast 4 HD Radio digital channels (primary broadcast, classical music, Folk Alley and all news). Content is also available streaming online. WKSU shares news stories and other reporting via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

WKSU held a pop-up newsroom at the Portage County Fair, which brought together staff with the general public to have an open discussion. It provided an opportunity for community members to bring forward issues that concerned them. Additional pop-up newsrooms were canceled due to COVID-19.

WKSU's planned reporting focus was on social justice issues, immigration, local and national election coverage. We were forced to make a drastic change when the pandemic hit in March and audience interest in local news pertaining to the global health crisis began to increase dramatically. Our focus then was providing the most current information about the coronavirus. The newsroom redeployed all resources to cover COVID-19 and the profound impact on our region. WKSU produced 70+ spots and features, carried the Governor's briefings, added weekend newscasts and developed interactive tools for audience members to ask questions. More than 150 COVID-19 questions were answered.

We continued with stories in our *Watershed* series on the 50th anniversary of the burning of the Cuyahoga River and the current state of the Cuyahoga, Ashtabula and Black Rivers, along with Lake Erie that ties them together. Environmental activism, promoting and protecting Lake Erie, and sharing the river with commercial and recreational users were some of the stories produced. It was important to take stock of our waters to consider what they were, what they are now and look at the opportunities and threats they face in the future.

Because of the confusion with residential recycling, we produced a series titled "*Reduce Reuse Refocus*". One of the reporting goals was to help the community better understand the recycling process. We looked at what was working, the path recycling takes, the challenges that face areas that don't provide curbside recycling, and ideas being tried elsewhere to provide possible solutions for our area. We created an interactive online guide for all the communities in our listening area after learning there was not a one-stop repository of this information.

WKSU marked the 50th Anniversary of the May 4 shootings at Kent State with four hours of special programming including a live co-hosted simulcast radio show with

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WCPN that included current and former presidents of KSU and survivors of the shooting. Reporters from both stations talked about their coverage of the anniversary. WKSU's senior producer produced and directed a radio adaptation of a new play drawn entirely from the May 4 Oral History Project. It featured monologues that reflect the voices of the time. May has always been a time to reflect on civil protest at Kent State, but the rest of the nation soon saw demonstrations against racial injustice after the killing of George Floyd. WKSU provided coverage of local Black Lives Matter marches and protests against racism and police brutality.

We continued our beat involving social justice that digs deeply into stories which help us to give the community a better understanding of serious social issues and the greater impacts they have. It's reporting that has a resonance locally while telling a story that is all too common to people across the country.

Over 200 community members attended an open house at our broadcast center in October. They had the opportunity to participate in guided tours, a scavenger hunt, hear about our 69 years of history, meet staff, and purchase merchandise.

WKSU sponsors many arts and culture events, making an effort to attend in person and share station information with diverse audiences. One such event is sponsoring the Tremont Arts and Cultural Festival, a two-day event featuring fine art and crafts, community outreach organizations, music and a mix of food reflecting the different ethnic heritages of the neighborhood.

WKSU has a long-standing relationship with the Cleveland International Film Festival. Recognized for its inclusion of foreign language, LGBTQ and urban films, CIFF is truly one of the region's most-diverse cultural institutions. WKSU also has a presence at The Cleveland Orchestra's Blossom Festival, Akron Symphony Orchestra, and the Akron Roundtable, a monthly speaker series that WKSU records for later broadcast. Many of these events were canceled or transitioned to a virtual event this year.

We followed the continuing news at the closed GM plant in Lordstown, OH and it's reopening as an upstart company of an all-electric pickup and the economic effect it has on the region. The purpose of our multi-part series on the elections highlighted the barnstorming tour of Ohio by author David Giffels was to get a better understanding of the people who live here, the issues that concern them and what that might foretell about the 2020 presidential election.

Other stand-out themes in ongoing features included science and innovation (Exploradio and Exploradio Origins), local sports (The View from Pluto), regional music (Shuffle), Kent State University accomplishments (Elevations) and the arts (State of the Arts).

A summary of WKSU's news coverage this year:

- Impact of the Opioid epidemic
- 50th Anniversary of May 4th at Kent State
- Confusion over household recycling
- Impact of the closing of Lordstown's GM plant
- The faces and sounds of the arts, musicians, and public art in our region

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- Social justice issues in our region, including race relations, immigration and housing
- National, state and local elections, including ballot issues, throughout our coverage area
- Coronavirus and its effects on the economy, local arts organizations, and our listeners

In the coming year, we plan to continue to explore:

- Continuing impact of the coronavirus pandemic
- Local and national 2020 elections
- Economy
- Music in our region
- Science and innovation
- Arts
- Immigrations issues
- Social justice
- Evictions
- Infant mortality
- Election protection
- Learning Curve – WKSU's reporting initiative examining the past, present and future of K-12 public education in Ohio

Stories from WKSU's newsroom are available online, with informational links and additional story background. Sections include *Watershed*, *Akron Initiative*, *social justice*, *the 50th Anniversary of May 4th, 1970 at Kent State*; *OH Really?*, *Mark's Almanac*—a look at history through a 90 second lens, and *To Understand Ohio*.

The WKSU.org website allows reporters to assign categories to their posts to make them easier to search and share through social media. Community events are searchable from their own calendar and from web features for station collaborations.

Along with WKSU.org, station content can be streamed via free mobile apps. The WKSU mobile app connects listeners to all four of WKSU's content streams and provides links for news reports from WKSU and NPR, and community events info. WKSU's award-winning website continues to focus on stories created by the WKSU news team and content partners such as the Ohio Public Radio Statehouse News Bureau, NPR, Your Voice Ohio, along with station information and events. There are sections for the Exploradio series, The View from Pluto, Shuffle and State of the Arts.

WKSU focuses on promoting listening through smart speakers and through TuneIn and iHeartRadio. WKSU staff continue to be aware of emerging technology developments so our listeners can listen to our station in the manner most convenient for them.

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.

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WKSU has an ongoing commitment to working with WCPN, our public radio colleagues in Cleveland to insure the broadest coverage for our listeners. This includes the Statehouse News Bureau bringing WKSU listeners news from our capitol in Columbus, OH and OPR—Ohio Public Radio, designed to facilitate and coordinate reporting efforts by Ohio's Public Radio news rooms and bring coverage from each newsroom to the other stations in the state.

In FY20, WKSU continued its collaboration with radio, television and newspapers through the state in "Your Voice Ohio", and focused reporting on election 2020.

WKSU also collaborates with our license holder, Kent State University. This year we continued our five-minute module, *Elevations*, featuring a student, staff or faculty member of Kent State by showcasing their work at Kent State for our listening area. We engage journalism and communications students in our membership/communications and news departments as interns. We continue engaging student media in partnerships to create content for our website including graphics and maps using data journalism. For FY20, WKSU's *Morning Edition* Host was the advisor to Kent State University's student media internet radio station, *Black Squirrel Radio* and taught Storytelling with Sound, an advanced journalism class for KSU. Two other staff members also taught undergraduate level classes in the journalism school.

WKSU partnered with Kent State University's Department of Psychological Sciences and Brain Health Research Institute to present the program: How Science Can Help: Fostering Connection in a Fractured World. Social media and the 24-hour news cycle have contributed to a national climate that is more polarized than ever. People report being more isolated than at any time in history, and the rates of depression and anxiety have skyrocketed as a consequence. Cutting-edge research shows that empathy and social connection is still possible, even after tragedy. Following two TED-style talks, WKSU host, Jeff St. Clair, lead a moderated discussion. Talks provided concrete suggestions for fostering compassion and empathy for others, even under stressful circumstances and even for those who are quite different from us. The second series of these talks scheduled for the spring of 2020 was canceled.

WKSU prides itself on being an integral part of Northeast Ohio. The station provides a public radio and media service, as well as taking pride in being a visible force in the community. WKSU staff members participate in various community-related activities. The news director was on the board of the Akron Press Club. Staff regularly speak to community groups and with groups of high school and college students.

In September, a presentation about public radio in America was given to The Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program participants who were all English teachers in their home countries. Kent State is the inaugural group for media literacy to be a concentration for the Fulbright TEA Program funded by the US Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by IREX. The emphasis of this program is on media literacy for teachers.

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Staff members of WKSU designed a media literacy workshop in FY20. This is a community engagement effort to provide the tools necessary for people to navigate through media – digital, print, TV, radio, etc.; and to know what questions to ask and where to find clues as to what point of view a particular entity has or what their ethics policy is. We hosted our first workshop in conjunction with Wooster Public Library on March 5, 2020 just before the pandemic hit our area. Additional workshops were postponed until FY21 when they were presented virtually.

Staff members work with students at local schools to present information on broadcasting and its various possibilities. The station also gave tours to interested community members. WKSU staff members – including reporters, on-air hosts, and administrative staff – supported cultural and arts organizations by serving as WKSU representatives and building community engagement at regional events.

WKSU continues to be a strong supporter of arts and cultural organizations and events throughout the region by offering promotional assistance for institutions including The Cleveland Orchestra, Apollo's Fire, the Akron Art Museum, the Canton Museum of Art, Magical Theatre Company (a theatre group for young audiences), Weathervane Community Playhouse, Karamu House, Wooster Chamber Music and many others. WKSU has sponsored and hosted events for the Cleveland International Film Festival. Attendance at these activities in communities throughout WKSU's 22-county listening area is a strong reinforcement for the positive work being created by organizations throughout Northeast Ohio. Many of these organizations were hit hard by the pandemic and had to cancel most of the events for the 2020 season.

FolkAlley.com is a streaming music service featuring folk, Americana and roots artists. WKSU continues to carry FolkAlley as one of our HD stations and is available on our app and as a stream on our website. We also air their nationally syndicated two-hour weekly program.

Since 1996, the annual Hunger Challenge provides an opportunity for WKSU to address a community need: hunger. This day of the end of year on-air drive allows WKSU donors to make a greater impact for their community by offering a thank you gift of meals. During the Hunger Challenge, donors give to WKSU and then have the option to select meals which are then donated to one of WKSU's regional foodbank partners. Donors are supporting independent journalism and have the opportunity to help those in need by selecting the thank you gift of meals. Sponsors of the Hunger Challenge help pay for the thank you gifts of meals. WKSU employees stepped up their commitment to the Hunger Challenge this year, by volunteering at local foodbanks. As part of their volunteer work, staff bagged more than 1,445 brown bag lunches and made 810 hot meals for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. At the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, they sorted 8,495 pounds of food which provided 7,079 meals to those in need.

Representatives from the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank are guests in the studio during the Hunger Challenge. Additionally, pre-produced testimonials from Campus Kitchen representatives air

throughout the day. Collectively, these representatives offer information and details about hunger in the community and how the agencies operate.

WKSU's mission statement says that "WKSU creates a shared civic and cultural life that connects communities through a diverse mix of media that extends the heritage of Kent State University." Based on the above criterion, it is evident that reaching 22 Ohio counties and parts of Western Pennsylvania; WKSU truly connects and reaches out to constituents in the Northeast Ohio region.

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.

As an active part of the Kent State University community, the station has long-played a role as a real-world educational experience. WKSU recruits Kent State journalism and communication students to work at WKSU while completing their degrees, this gives students the chance to develop real and marketable skills – such as gathering and producing news reports – while working alongside station professionals. These jobs at WKSU create a solid building block for the next generation to learn in a setting that enhances their education and can be used as a catalyst for their careers. This association with students also gives staff members a glimpse into rising trends and the minds of younger consumers.

While most of the KSU students work in the award-winning WKSU newsroom, there are also interns learning about public relations, event planning, and communications in their positions. WKSU encourages hands-on learning and often has student interns participate in the day-to-day functions of the station.

The station also hosts a graduate student who is paid through the Walton D. Clarke Fellowship. This scholarship is a partnership with the Kent State College of Communication and Information to give a graduate student a two-year experience with hands-learning at the radio station.

WKSU was awarded the Portage Park District Foundation's 2020 Environmental Conservation Award in the Education category. The yearly award is given to an organization that shows great passion and work for educating the public on complex environmental matters. WKSU was nominated for the award due to works such as Watershed, and Reduce, Reuse, Refocus. WKSU is committed to continuing to make content that keeps our readers and listeners informed and educated. We received many phone calls and emails thanking us for providing this recycling information that people were not able to locate for their own community.

Guests with a connection to NPR and public radio are often retained for public speaking engagements at the Akron Press Club and the Akron Roundtable through the efforts of WKSU. Because WKSU encourages learning, giving journalism students access to NPR professionals is one way that the station strives to bring the experienced world of

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journalism and radio to local young people in our community. Station reporters and professional staff often speak to high school and college classes.

As part of community educational outreach, WKSU also hosts community tour groups each year, guiding school children, college students, Cub Scouts and others through the broadcast center and studios. WKSU's offices are ADA compliant and easily accommodate people with disabilities.

Organizations all over Northeast Ohio support WKSU via their underwriting/sponsorship of the station. Their organizations are impacted by our audience attending their events, purchasing their goods/services, and associating their brand with quality. WKSU has community organizations that have sponsored WKSU programming for 5, 10, 20, even 30+ years. These organizations share their impact stories with WKSU on how their business has improved, but also enjoy being associated with a well-respected media organization that benefits the community.

With the growth in WKSU's social media presence, this "halo" effect can be somewhat tracked by marking response and share rates of stories on the station's Facebook (WKSU.FM), Twitter (@WKSU) and Instagram (wksu897) feeds – which applies to stories on any topic.

WKSU has reorganized our volunteer strategy and has a strong group of volunteers who help in a variety of ways – from stuffing envelopes, making thank you calls to donors, doing research for our news staff, to representing the station at community events throughout our 22-county 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 2020-18, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021-19. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

WKSU's programming and news coverage is intended to reach to all Northeast Ohio communities. Reports at the beginning of the fiscal year focused on the environment, continued coverage of immigration, issues surrounding the opioid crisis, a long-range focus on the origins of the universe reported in 90 second bytes, our "Akron Initiative" reporting, and a listener center project that allows the listener to ask questions that we then report while including the listener in the news gathering as much as they are able to join us. We also followed the continuing news at the closed GM plant in Lordstown, OH and how a new start-up company is providing hope for the Mahoning Valley. Beginning in March, our efforts pivoted to providing the most up-to-date information about the coronavirus.

WKSU focused efforts on meeting informational needs of underserved communities. We were awarded two micro-grants from The Cleveland Foundation, Akron Community Foundation, Knight Foundation and The Center for Community Solutions. These groups joined together to support collaborative projects that would meet the basic information needs of underserved communities. Our proposal focused on both infant mortality and

evictions. We collaborated with The Plain Dealer and Spectrum News1 Ohio for these projects which became known as Informed Communities. We started the background work on this reporting in late FY20. The actual on-air reporting and videos were recorded and aired in FY21. This project stretched our ability to not only tell stories to policymakers and influencers, but to actually create content that would be immediately useful to the people who are most at risk by facing these issues.

Folk Alley, which is available on our app, our HD stream, and on our website makes a conscious effort to honor diversity with its programming. The music stream and syndicated show attempts to add diverse artists in each hour, including African American, LGBTQ, and World (Latin/Hispanic, Cajun, Celtic and African) music artists. The roots-based music that makes up the Folk Alley stream is also rich with songs from Appalachia and historical social issue folk music.

The station works to partner with arts and cultural events with a connection to diverse audiences. Many of these events were canceled or moved to a virtual platform for spring of 2020 because of the pandemic. Our plans had been to continue with our past notable efforts which included sponsoring films at the Cleveland International Film Festival, promoting the Akron Symphony Orchestra's Gospel Meets Symphony, working with Karamu House (a historic African American theatre company) and sponsoring the Tremont Arts & Cultural Festival, a two-day community event celebrating one of Cleveland's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods. WKSU also records and broadcasts monthly Akron Roundtable (a popular community forum) addresses on a variety of topics of community interest.

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?

Support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting via this grant enables WKSU to reach a 22-county area in Northeast and North Central Ohio and parts of Western Pennsylvania, allowing our station to access and provide public radio service to communities and regions that extend far beyond our main broadcast facility in Kent, Ohio. Without CPB funding, WKSU would not have such a broad reach. Without the CPB grant, WKSU could not purchase high-quality programming from National Public Radio, Public Radio International, and American Public Media. In addition, without the CPB grant, WKSU would not have been able to bring additional HD channels to our community, providing 24-7 folk and classical services on yet another platform within our region.

The CPB grant also helps WKSU extend its reach through the news. Northeast Ohio is a diverse region, and although that diversity is a strength in our region, it can also be perceived as a weakness as disparate communities struggle to connect with each other. Many times, WKSU is the glue among those communities because our station and its news service helps people recognize their connection to each other. It is a point of pride for WKSU that our station takes a regional approach to covering the news – an approach that no other Northeast Ohio media can claim.

Many other organizations have recognized WKSU's accomplishments, particularly as related to the news and to reaching into communities to cover important community

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issues. WKSU's journalistic excellence is demonstrated by the countless awards presented to the station and staff by local regional and national organizations. Fiscal Year 2020 WKSU Awards include:

2019

Society of Professional Journalists-Ohio Chapters—Ohio's Best Journalism Awards

- First Place—Best Website, WKSU Staff, "WKSU.org"
- First Place—Best Consumer Reporting, M.L. Schultze; "EBay Finds Akron's Jugglers, Beekeepers and Artists"
- First Place—Best Science/Medical Reporting, Staff; "Navigating the Path to Mental Health"
- First Place—Best Enterprise Reporting, Jeff St. Clair; "Exploradio: Industry 4.0"
- First Place—Best Environment Reporting, Jeff St. Clair; "Exploradio"
- Second Place—Best Reporter, M.L. Schultze
- Second Place—Best Anchor, Amanda Rabinowitz; "Morning Edition"
- Second Place—Best Sports Reporting, Amanda Rabinowitz; "The View From Pluto"
- Second Place—Best Feature Reporting, Amanda Rabinowitz; "Shuffle"
- Second Place—Best Spot News, Mark Arehart; "The Last Goodyear Wingfoot Blimp Takes Flight"

2020

Ohio Associated Press—Ohio APME Awards

- First Place—Best Broadcast Writing, Sarah Taylor; "Contentious Mayor's Race in Barberton"
- First Place—Best Sportscast, Amanda Rabinowitz; "The View from Pluto: One Hot Summer and Two Books Paved a Sports Writer's Path to the Big Leagues"
- First Place—Best Sports Feature, Mark Arehart; "Family on Ice: How a 50-and-Over Hockey League Brings Skaters Together"
- First Place—Best Documentary or Series, WKSU Staff; Watershed
- Second Place—General Excellence, WKSU Staff
- Second Place—Best Reporter, Kabir Bhatia
- Second Place—Best Continuing Coverage, Staff; GM Lordstown Plant Closure
- Second Place—Best Digital Project, WKSU Staff; Election 2019
- Second Place—Best Digital Presence, WKSU Staff; wksu.org

Press Club of Cleveland—Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards (awarded for FY 2020 but presentation delayed until August 23, 2020 because of COVID)

- First Place—Best Broadcast Writing, Sarah Taylor; "Contentious Mayor's Race in Barberton"
- First Place—Best Sportscast, Amanda Rabinowitz; "The View from Pluto: One Hot Summer and Two Books Paved a Sports Writer's Path to the Big Leagues"
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Public Media Journalists Association—Awards

- First Place—News Feature, Ella Abbott—“One Last Performance for 70-Year-Old Member of Ashland University Marching Band”
- Second Place—Hard News Feature, Carter Adams—“Orange Vest Society Bids Lordstown Assembly Plant Farewell After GM Contract Approval”