Grantee Information

ID 1443
Grantee Name WUOM-FM
City Ann Arbor
State MI
Licensee Type University

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 Fiscal Year 2015. 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.

Joint licensee Grantees that have filed a 2015 Local Content and Services Report as part of meeting the requirement for TV CSG funding may state they have done so in the corresponding questions below, so long as all of the questions below were addressed as they relate to radio operations in such report. You must include the date the report was submitted to CPB along with the TV Grantee ID under which it was submitted.

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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.

Michigan Radio is dedicated to covering the news stories that affect our lives as citizens of Michigan, and helping our listeners better understand their state, nation and world. This is why Michigan Radio continues to be the most listened-to public radio news source in Michigan, as well as individually in the state's two largest markets, Detroit and Grand Rapids. Michigan Radio invests significant resources into the coverage of important stories and events across Michigan. The station has full-time reporters based in Grand Rapids, Flint, Detroit, and Ann Arbor. State news stories are presented in newscasts heard hourly throughout the day, and twice to three times per hour newscasts during drive time. This allows these reports to be heard by the widest possible audience, and not just compartmentalized into a single “public affairs” program. Michigan Radio’s reporters, news anchors, and producers also produce long-form reports, interviews, and specials dealing with Michigan’s economy, politics, arts and culture, environment, and other important issues. Michigan Radio stories are frequently heard.
nationally on NPR. The station’s Environment Report covers critical statewide environmental issues with twice-weekly reports on topics ranging from drinking water safety to advances in wind energy. All of these reports, shows and segments are available not just on-air to the nearly half a million people who listen to the station each week, but also through an in-depth online news service at www.michiganradio.org that provides updated news stories throughout the day to more than 200-thousand unique users per month and streaming audio of the station to nearly 575-thousand people per month. The station has established followings on major social network sites, where users can find "Michigan Radio" on Facebook and Twitter. Nearly 36-thousand Facebook "friends" interact with our content and receive news updates, posting. Michigan Radio’s Twitter account, has grown to over 32-thousand. Reporters and producers seek out ideas, sources and suggestions by interacting with the station’s Facebook and Twitter followers. Michigan Radio is actively involved in the communities we serve. We provide over $______ in free airtime and other promotion per year to more than fifty non-profit organizations to help publicize their events. The station also hosts live discussions tied to issues in the news. Our “Issues & Ale” forums are designed to engage people in conversations about important issues facing Michigan, in an informal atmosphere. Over the past year, 12 “Issues & Ale” discussions were held in comedy clubs, brewpubs and taverns across Michigan on topics including fracking, arsenic in drinking water, kids and violence, high stakes school testing, Michigan politics and the November mid-term election. These events typically attract crowds of 100-150 people.

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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.

Michigan Radio has three major ongoing initiatives aimed at improving service to our communities: Two years ago, Michigan Radio launched a new program called Stateside, which features conversations about issues that matter in Michigan. Stateside is hosted by veteran radio and TV broadcaster Cynthia Canty. The show airs Mondays through Thursdays at 3 p.m. and 10 p.m. Each show features a mix of interviews, roundtables, and feature reports. The show has become one of Michigan Radio’s top weekday shows. In 2015, the program featured extensive coverage of Flint’s unsafe tap water and Lansing’s inability to address the state’s crumbling roads. Stateside also partners with the BBC World Service to explore linkages between global news and events and Michigan. In addition to the major news stories each day, Stateside also looks at Michigan’s arts and cultural endeavors. Through a partnership with Interlochen Public Radio, Stateside also airs in the Grand Traverse Region. Second, “State of Opportunity” is a multi-year reporting and outreach initiative looking at the challenges and opportunities faced by children growing up in poverty. Nearly one in four children in Michigan live in poverty. Through weekly feature reports, an online portal, quarterly documentaries and call-in shows, and regular community outreach events, Michigan Radio is creating dialogue and sharing information about this important topic. Within the State of Opportunity project, we’ve launched an initiative called InfoWire that aims to fill the information gap and meets the news needs of families struggling to make ends meet. Infowire stories are explicitly directed at a low-income news consumer. This project is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and involves a variety of community partners including Michigan’s Children. Third, the station’s “MI Curious” project solicits questions for our audience and then station reporters work with the person who asked the question to find the answer. MI Curious is modelled on work done at WBEZ, that helps make the community more integral to the station and the reporting process. Pieces from this series have garnered large amounts of online traffic. Beyond these three initiatives, this year the station devoted considerable editorial resources to in-depth series on a variety of issues important to Michigan’s citizens. • Detroit Journalism Cooperative is an ongoing journalism project looking at Detroit’s bankruptcy in conjunction with Bridge Magazine, Detroit Public Television, WDET and New Michigan Media. • The news department, Michigan Radio’s Environment Report, and Stateside have engaged in high impact coverage of a Flint contaminated tap water and the political and regulatory failures that led to the crisis. • Other multi-part series this year included o “Learning to Teach” a series of six reports, 4 interviews, teacher essays, and a crowdsourced look at the most memorable things teachers said to our listeners. o “Beyond the Battlefield” a series of seven reports, 4 interviews, and a tumblr site featuring videos of 9 vets telling their story of service.

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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.
Our State of Opportunity Project that reports on childhood poverty is continuing to create impact. Michigan residents are becoming informed and are advocating for things they believe will help to create a society that nurtures, protects and takes care of its children. In a Fall 2013 survey of Michigan Radio listeners, the Jacobs Media research firm found 63 percent of people who listened to State of Opportunity reports took some action as a result of listening, such as discussing the issues with family or friends, contributing money to a charity or organization, or attending a community meeting or group. In an investigative series of reports and a documentary, Michigan Radio's Lindsey Smith worked with a Virginia Tech water safety research to uncovered safety problems and regulator failures with Flint's drinking water system. The documentary seemed to kick off a wave of national interest in the Flint story. In the weeks since it aired: - On December 29, a task force appointed by Gov. Snyder to look into the events leading up to the Flint water crisis released a scathing report that placed most of the blame on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality - That same day, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant resigned, along with spokesman Brad Wurfel. In a press release announcing the resignations, Governor Snyder apologized to the citizens of Flint for the state's handling of the crisis - On January 5, the US Department of Justice confirmed it has opened an investigation into the city's water contamination - That same day, Gov. Snyder declared a state of emergency in Genesee County related to the water contamination - A state lawmaker introduced a bill that would make it a felony for state employees to knowingly manipulate data in state reports The station also hosted a community forum about the city's water problem an attendee wrote the station to say the panelists 'provided tremendous service to Flint community residents last night by hosting "Issues and Ale" to discuss the Flint water crisis. They not only provided credible medical, infrastructure and political analysis, but LISTENED to and addressed resident's concerns. They modeled a format for the community conversations that will be crucial in the months and years ahead. Many thanks!' Michigan Radio also provided an important public service in leading coverage about the transformation of the city of Detroit. We are engaged in a collaboration with 5 other journalism outlets in Detroit to improve access to information about the bankruptcy. Michigan Radio has provided much of the original reporting in the collaboration. Finally, a series of longitudinal reports following three Detroit families resulted in audience members offering financial and other resources.

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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 2015, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2016. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Michigan Radio serves a diverse audience across a wide geographic area. Our signal can be heard across southern Michigan and includes the cities of Detroit, Ann Arbor, Lansing Flint, and Grand Rapids. Michigan is not only racially diverse, but also economically and religiously diverse. But despite its multicultural populations, Michigan remains one of the most segregated states in the country, particularly in its urban areas. We believe our news coverage provides an opportunity to create dialogue and understanding across the artificial boundaries within which many Michigan residents live. Within our listening area there are very diverse communities that we cover on a regular basis. While the majority of Michigan residents are white, the city of Detroit is more than 80 % African-American and Flint is approximately 50% African-American. One of the nation's largest concentrations of Arab-Americans is in Dearborn and west Michigan has experienced a dramatic increase in Hispanic immigrants. The Syrian refugee crisis and governor's decision to halt resettlement was heavily reported on by the station. Larger programming initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of diverse communities included Michigan Radio's multi-year reporting, engagement, and outreach project exploring childhood poverty in a state where one in four children live in poverty. The five-year project launched in 2012. Its goal is to move beyond traditional radio reports to include longitudinal reporting, first-person storytelling, youth journalists. The station's journalism has included deep explorations of the relationship between race, poverty and opportunity disparities.

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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 represents 6% of direct revenues for Michigan Radio. This allocation is entirely directed to the purchase of national programming from NPR, American Public Media, and Public Radio International. This CPB funding provides substantial support that allows allocation of resources to critical local news and information priorities — enabling Michigan Radio to provide significant news coverage for our entire
listening area. It extends our ability to hire and retain a statewide news staff which has garnered the station notable awards for state and regional news coverage, to grow and expand our flagship program Stateside, and it enables Michigan Radio to host community outreach forums, such as our established series Issues and Ale, facilitating topical and timely public conversation.

Comments
Question  Comment
No Comments for this section