FY’19 CPB Annual Survey – Telling Public Radio’s Story; Local Content and Services Report

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 reach or new audiences you engaged.

At NEPR, our mission is to provide our community with diverse, high-quality programming that informs, educates, and entertains. We accomplish this with a passionate staff in our newsroom, and with extensive national and international coverage from a wide range of programming provided by NPR, American Public Media (APM), Public Radio International (PRI), and other public media sources. It is also vital to our mission to connect our audience to the wealth of art and culture in western New England. We do this by providing locally produced classical, jazz, and world music programs, and in-depth coverage of local cultural resources by our news department. In addition to the on-air content we provide, NEPR offers a variety of non-broadcast resources, from an impressive line-up of podcasts produced in house and community outreach initiatives, to our Media Lab program for underserved high school students and a robust college internship program. We strive to meet the needs of our community, reflecting its diverse interests in our programming, creating connections and exploring the world – across continents with NPR reporters stationed in far flung corners, and right here in western New England where our reporters cover state and local politics, our eclectic arts and culture scene, exciting academic pursuits at our many local universities and colleges, and so much more.

New England Public Radio is located on street level in downtown Springfield Massachusetts, which brings us closer to the communities we serve and links our space with local businesses and non-profits who can use our meeting rooms, and the local cultural district for programs like Art Stop(s) where downtown businesses become pop up art galleries featuring local artists. We also offer monthly tours of our headquarters to interested listeners and community members. In addition to our headquarters in Springfield, NEPR’s Five Colleges Studio at UMass Amherst connects the station to the five college community and a news bureau in Pittsfield means a beat dedicated to Berkshire County, the western-most county in Massachusetts and one of the most rural.

The NEPR news department focuses on stories relevant to the station’s diverse listening area, a region that includes major urban centers, struggling post-industrial towns, a large rural area and a vibrant academic community. The local news service produces newscasts, long-form features, interviews, commentaries and three news-focused podcasts. In FY ‘19, commentators included Bhuwan Gautam, a Bhutanese community leader in Springfield, Mass.; Ilan Stavans, publisher of Restless Books and professor at Amherst College; Andrew Lam, an author and retinal surgeon who practices in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Pam Larkin, a government major at Smith
College, and president of the Smith College Republican Club.

The station regularly broadcasts stories about state government including a weekly segment with a reporter from the State House News Service, called Beacon Hill in 5. The Short List features a roundtable discussion with reporters and editors from the region’s publications examining the top regional stories of the past week. NEPR recently added a digital editor to its newsroom, and expanded its podcast offerings, making a wide variety of content available to new audiences, including a podcast based on our Valley Voices Story Slam Series.

NEPR has long been a champion of classical, jazz, and world music. The station features a wide range of music throughout the week, including opera, classical, jazz, world, and Latin music. At a time when many public radio stations across the country are switching to an all-news format, NEPR remains committed to being western New England’s source for high quality music programming. In addition to producing over 3,000 hours of local music programming each year, the station is actively engaged in promoting the region’s vibrant music scene including broadcasting material by the Springfield Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra and from both the Marlboro and Yellow Barn Music Festivals. And for decades we have broadcast live concerts from Tanglewood, the summer home of the BSO. Our music hosts are out in the community throughout the year, hosting events like the Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival, pre-concert talks with the Hartford and Springfield Symphony Orchestras, at the UMass Fine Arts Center, and various venues throughout our listening area.

NEPR also manages the NEPR News Network, a seven-station network heard throughout western New England and in portions of New York State which offers 27/4 news and talk content to complement NEPR’s mix of music and news.

In response to its growing streaming and smart speaker audiences, NEPR expanded its on-demand offerings on NEPR.net, on the station’s app and through the NPR One app. Listeners can now hear past episodes of our classical music programming, Tertulia, Jazz Safari and Jazz a la Mode for a week following their original broadcast, and access our locally-produced podcasts on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Google Play and many other platforms.

Our podcast, JazzBeat, and our jazz blog have received praise from many in the jazz world. Our Spanish language program Tertulia features interviews with local artists, musicians, politicians and others and those interviews are archived at nepr.net as well. In 2019, we added new episodes to our classical music podcast Presto! and featured dozens of new stories from local storytellers on the Valley Voices podcast, which has grown out of our original storytelling event, Valley Voices Story Slam.

In FY’17 NEPR completely revamped its online presence, moving its website to NPR’s Core Publisher platform and in doing so dramatically increased our online traffic. We’re gearing up to move to NPR Digital’s new Grove CMS in 2020 which will enable us to expand our digital offerings substantially once again, adding video capability and other features that will increase our ability to engage with our audience, and will apply to the Knight Foundation for additional funding for expanding our digital footprint.

NEPR hosts an annual celebration of our cultural community with its Arts & Humanities Awards.
The community is invited to nominate their choice for the awards each year, and recipients are chosen by the New England Public Radio Foundation, Inc. Board and celebrated by the community at a special gala event in May. In 2019, we celebrated the avant-garde Double Edge Theatre based in rural Ashfield, Mass., Happier Valley Comedy, Inc., a nonprofit organization offering improvisation training center, shows, and professional/personal development programs; Olivia Ilano Davis, the founder and artistic director of Spectrum in Motion Dance Theater of Hartford, Conn., and Alice Parker, an internationally renowned composer, conductor, and teacher who just happens to live in our corner of the world.

NEPR’s Media Lab is an after school program for young people, ages 14 to 18. Through basic journalism and audio production, participants learn to tell stories with sound. The curriculum includes learning how to interview, write and produce commentaries and features for radio and podcast. Fundamentally, it’s about providing opportunities to young people and encouraging their expression and exploration of issues that are important to them.

Media Lab has established several partnerships in the community including The Care Center in Holyoke, Massachusetts, which works with teen mothers and their families as they continue their education; the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Springfield High School of Commerce’s Community Journalism Project, Gardening the Community, WGBY-Public Television, Baystate Health and UMass Amherst’s Upward Bound Summer Institute.

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.

The NEPR news department is a member of the New England News Network Exchange, where material from public radio stations in the six New England states is shared through Public Radio Exchange (PRX). This partnership allows NEPR to broadcast more news relevant to our audience, and to share our content with other stations in the region. NEPR also shares stories with WBUR in Boston, WNPR in Hartford, and WSHU in Fairfield, Connecticut. Partnerships with local newspapers, The Springfield Republican and The Daily Hampshire Gazette, have allowed NEPR access to the papers' photo archives and encouraged their reporters to talk about their stories on the air. These partnerships allow the papers to share NEPR’s audio content on their websites, connecting our reporting to a new audience.

NEPR is also a founding member of the CPB-funded New England News Collaborative that shares multimedia coverage focusing on the region’s energy usage, climate, transportation infrastructure, and its people and immigration issues among its nice member stations. This robust partnership produces dynamic reporting projects for on-air broadcast, digital and web presentations, and a series of public Town Hall-style meetings centered on issues facing New England and its residents. We also air Next, the program which features work from the collaborative on the NEPR News Network; and host the podcast on our website.

NEPR continued its partnerships with Amherst College and American International College which have had a major impact on the station’s ability to serve our region with news and talk
programming. In 2015, NEPR began a partnership with Amherst College that allows NEPR to program the college’s WAMH with its NEPR News Network programming from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, providing Hampshire County with access to NPR programs like On Point, The Takeaway, Here & Now and much more on the FM dial. In 2016, WAIC 91.9 FM joined The NEPR News Network, providing Hampden County with a 24-hour public radio news service on the FM dial, thanks to a partnership between NEPR and American International College (AIC) which owns the frequency. The NEPR News Network can now be heard on seven stations throughout the region including 91.9 FM in Hampden County, 89.3 FM in Hampshire County, 91.7 FM in Franklin County, 89.5 FM and 98.9 FM in Berkshire County, 88.5 FM HD-3 in Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden Counties, and on AM 640 across western New England and into New York State. Listeners can also stream the station at nepr.net and through NEPR’s app.

NEPR brought our listeners coverage of major international, national and regional stories. Our newsroom closely tracked the state’s political scene, with major coverage of the issues facing our region. In addition, we continued our coverage of the opioid abuse epidemic in New England, airing stories that explored both the people affected by the crisis and the official response to it. We brought listeners extensive coverage of the impact of the region’s first casino opening in downtown Springfield, and the legalization of marijuana in the state. Nearly every week, we aired conversations with a State House reporter about legislation under consideration on Beacon Hill in a segment by our Morning Edition host called Beacon Hill in 5. The Short List, our weekly round-table segment, in which a panel of journalists discusses the major regional news stories of the week, helped listeners explore key issues.

In FY’19, New England Public Radio’s newsroom picked up two PRNDI Awards from Public Radio News Directors Inc., an Edward R. Murrow Award for continuing coverage of the legalization of marijuana in Massachusetts, and NEPR reporter Karen Brown received a 2019 Webby Award for best podcast mini-series for The Great God of Depression - a first for NEPR.

In addition, the station supports the work of more than 20 regional institutions through media partnerships. In 2019 NEPR was a media sponsor for the following organizations: 1794 Meetinghouse, Amherst Ballet, Amherst Leisure Services Community Theater, Arcadia Players, Berkshire Bach Society, Berkshire Film & Media Collaborative, Bing Arts Center, Celebrate Holyoke, Celtic Heels School of Irish Dance, Close Encounters with Music, Community Music School of Springfield, Double Edge Theatre, Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Jacob’s Pillow, Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts, Ko Festival of Performance, Mass Audubon’s Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries, Mass MoCA, Mohawk Trail Concerts, Mount Holyoke Jazz Ensembles, Music Worcester, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Northampton Arts Council, Northampton Jazz Festival, Panopera, Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra, Springfield Jazz & Roots Festival, Springfield Museums, Springfield Public Forum, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, UMass Department of Music and Dance, UMass Fine Arts Center, Valley Classical Concerts, Valley Light Opera, Vermont Jazz Center, WAM Theatre, Yellow Barn Music Festival, Young at Heart Chorus and YWCA.

NEPR partners with several organizations each year on special events that seek to engage the community. NEPR’s launch of The Great God of Depression produced by reporter Karen Brown with Radiotopia included our first ever podcast listening event. About 100 people turned out to listen to the first episode of the five part series together, and hear from a panel made up of the
producers, NEPR senior reporter Karen Brown, New York Times journalist Pagan Kennedy and Radiotopia’s Julie Shapiro, as well as the subject of the story: Alice Flaherty, a Boston neurologist. The panel discussed themes brought up by the series: stigma, depression, creativity, literature, and more.

We continued our partnership with the Berkshire Bach Society to bring their annual new year’s celebration, *Bach at New Year’s*, to a packed house at Northampton’s Academy of Music Theater, as well as *Valley Voices*, our live *Story Slam* event produced in partnership with the Academy of Music Theatre. Five sold-out slams were held over the course of the year at various locations in our region, capped off by the Best of Valley Voices which drew over 800 attendees at the historic Academy of Music Theatre in Northampton, MA. The five-minute stories were recorded live and posted on our website and featured in a new Valley Voices Podcast.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, NEPR’s Media Lab program has enabled the station to expand its reach in the underserved high schools in our community. Media Lab has also engaged in partnerships with organizations as diverse as a program for teenage parents in Holyoke, Mass. to a lively community garden program in Springfield, in addition to more traditional partnerships within the various high schools Media Lab serves.

**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.**

Each week over 186,500 listeners tune to NEPR as a trusted source for local, national and international news, as an oasis of beautiful music during the day, for the latest author or artist interview, or to learn more about what’s happening in their community.

In FY 19, 587,578 unique visitors came to nepr.net 1,462,260 times to stream our three services, listen to archived programs, follow up on a story they heard on the air, or get information about an upcoming event. We are particularly proud of our improved website statistics. Receiving the most “hits” these days is, not surprisingly, our “listen now” page, which gives listeners access to our live streams, to blogs written by our music hosts like Tom Reney, who is garnering national acclaim for his Jazz blog; and to our local news stories. Our social media presence continues to grow, and our digital news editor is making an impact on our website and on social, expanding audio stories for web. To date, NEPR has 5,750 Facebook followers, 5,657 Twitter followers and over 1,500 NEPR app users - up substantially from the previous year.

Our many event partnerships and media sponsorships allow NEPR to have an impact on the cultural community. Happily, these partnerships are mutually beneficial, and our partners are thrilled to have the backing of their local public radio station in their endeavors. We are able to offer underwriting and off-air promotion that has increased awareness about events and increased ticket sales for our partners.

Our internship program has graduated a number of individuals who have gone on to successful
careers in public broadcasting, including Audie Cornish, now co-host of *All Things Considered*, Aaron Schachter, assignment editor and occasional fill-in host at *The World*, and Tina Antolini, who now works as a senior producer for Pop Up Magazine. Over the years our paid internship program has continued to grow. Twenty-eight students participated in the program in 2019. Our internships offer experience for students interested in journalism, working alongside NEPR's news team; in production, recording and producing on-air testimonials and writing fund drive scripts; in non-profit and public media marketing, and in content creation, production, audio recording and more.

Ellery Berrenger, an intern from Mount Holyoke College, broke one of NEPR's biggest news stories of the year with their enterprise reporting on the employment practices of one of the region's famed music venues.

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 2019, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2020. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

*The Short List*, NEPR's week in review, aims to serve diverse audiences by connecting listeners to reporters and editors of local news sources, *El Sol Latino* and *African American Point of View*. Listeners can hear *The Short List* every Friday afternoon on *All Things Considered* and it is available as a weekly podcast.

For four decades, NEPR has produced *Tertulia*, a program broadcast in both Spanish and English that features Latin and world music, and addresses important issues to the region's Latino communities. *Tertulia*’s host, Raquel Obregon, has incorporated more interviews of late to better serve Latino audiences. *Latino USA*, *Jazz a la Mode* (aired Monday through Friday), and *Jazz Safari* (aired Saturday) serve audiences of diverse composition throughout our signal area.

In 2020, NEPR will begin airing several new programs on the NEPR News Network, including NPR’s popular *Hidden Brain* and *Reveal*, produced by the Center for Investigative Journalism and hosted by Al Letson, as well as an updated version of *The Speaker’s Forum* to be called *The Forum*, and which will allow us a flexible block of programming to add special programming when it arises. On the digital side, local music programs including our daily classical music shows, *Tertulia*, *Jazz a la Mode* and *Jazz Safari* are now available on demand, a significant development allowing listeners to hear programs again or for the first time.

NEPR’s Media Lab, which is mentioned elsewhere in this report directly engages high school students from underserved populations in Springfield and Holyoke, Massachusetts.

In 2019, NEPR and The Academy of Music Theatre, our partner in presenting Valley Voices Story Slam, formed two new partnerships with local organizations in an effort to engage new storytellers from more diverse communities. With Nueva Esperanza, a non-profit organization based in Holyoke, Massachusetts that serves as a hub for community, creation, and culture for the Puerto Rican/Afro-Caribbean community, we hosted a storytelling workshop at the Holyoke Public Library featuring a Holyoke resident as the facilitator, along with a translator. We will continue to build our relationship with Nueva Esperanza in 2020 by offering another set of workshops followed by a slam at El Mercado, the organization’s event space.
Valley Voices also partnered with EmbraceRace, a multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges that race poses to our children, families, and communities. While the organization has national reach, its founders live here in western Massachusetts. We worked directly with EmbraceRace to help launch a new storytelling event in our region called On the Flip. As the project’s website says, “we’re working towards building a culture of live storytelling that features those whose perspectives rarely appear in the public square, and supporting them to tell the stories they want to tell, rather than the stories we think we want to hear. Those may be stories of racism and oppression, bias and hardship; they may also be stories of joy, family, friendship and community, resilience, and laugh-out-loud humor.” The theme for the first event to be held on February 13, 2020 is “I See Color”, and features approximately eight storytellers in a non-competitive, community-building environment.

In 2020, NEPR will become the New England “home base” for Listening to America – a collaborative election project based at KCUR in Kansas City and funded by CPB. John Dankosky will be working as the New England Engagement Editor out of our Springfield studios. According to CPB’s press release, “public radio stations will collaborate to gather data and engage communities through listening events, public forums and outreach, and through engagement tools on social media platforms. The stations will produce multimedia election reporting on specific issues that offer contrasts in community perspectives. The stations will share insights, stories, and content with national broadcast collaborators such as NPR, PBS and podcast producers.” It’s an exciting opportunity to ensure that the voices of our communities are heard, both here at home and on the national stage in this important election year.

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?

NEPR’s CPB funding has a direct impact on what we are able to accomplish in local programming in any given year. There is no question that a cut in this funding would have a dramatic effect on our listeners. Currently, NEPR uses its CPB grant to pay for NPR programs like Morning Edition and All Things Considered. If funding were cut, we’d be forced to pay for our most listened to programs with other funds at the expense of local programming and community outreach, two crucial tenets of our mission. We would of course make every effort to make up the difference through our own fundraising, but we rely on that grant annually as an important piece of our budget.