

## Iowa Public Radio Strategic Plan 2017-2022

### **Mission:**

Iowa Public Radio enriches the civic and cultural life in Iowa through high quality news and cultural programming.

### **Introduction**

In 1922, Iowa State University and the University of Iowa were granted radio licenses by the FCC, making them the first fully-licensed public educational radio stations to broadcast in Iowa. In the intervening century, the state's three public universities have invested in public radio – in a shared belief of the power of radio for promoting lifelong learning. This early and ongoing investment has resulted in an expansive reach of informative, enriching, and engaging programming; programming which is found nowhere else on the radio dial; programming that is valued and cherished by more than 240,000 weekly listeners living around the world. Today, the universities' investments remain strong in the unified operations of Iowa Public Radio.

Iowa Public Radio looks forward to the next century of service – to the next century of programming, broadcasting, and listening. The media environment has changed dramatically in the past twenty years, and media companies have had to adapt to remain relevant. We expect those changes to continue, offering IPR opportunities to serve our audience in new and innovative ways and to meet our listeners where they are, with the relevant, high quality content they need.

IPR kicked off its strategic planning process with a joint board all-staff meeting on May 19, 2016. And over the spring and summer of 2016, IPR surveyed its members and held a series of cross-functional and departmental conversations about key issues facing our enterprise. We also invited, and heard from, a series of public radio leaders on issues facing public radio generally. Brown bag series speakers included NPR President Jarl Mohn, *This American Life* host Ira Glass, *The Moth* producer Jay Allison, several innovative public radio station managers, technology expert Paul Jacobs, NPR Digital Services and more. These external speakers and the internal staff and department discussions provided a stimulating environment for conversations about IPR's future. Through these sessions, five major themes emerged:

- Delivering programming excellence – statewide and beyond
- Innovating in a changing media environment
- Building a financially stable and well-respected statewide institution
- Growing audience and building community
- Maintaining excellence in technology and audio delivery.

## **IPR's Vision 2017-2022**

### **Delivering programming excellence – statewide and beyond.**

Iowa Public Radio aspires to be seen as a local, regional, and national producer of excellent programming content. In our five-and-a-half year vision, we will deliver the very best in public radio programming to our listeners. IPR correspondents and reporters will be regularly heard on NPR and APM newsmagazines, and our local reporting will cover the state. Studio One will be seen as one of the leading stations in Adult Album Alternative (AAA) music nationally, and our Classical service will contribute to statewide and national classical conversations. IPR will have a growing audience, with a unique mix of local and national programming that defines and expresses the IPR brand. We will be a go-to and ready partner in programming collaborations across the region and nation. Our Studio One, Classical and Talk programs will be marketed to stations outside of our current network, and our programming will represent the complexity and diversity of our state.

### **Innovating in a changing media environment.**

Innovation has been the key to broadcasting since before the FCC granted its first licenses in 1922, and is as important today as it was when the first transmitter was assembled and powered on. Today, our listeners increasingly seek content via websites, podcasts, cell phone apps, and more. Iowa Public Radio must continue to expand across platforms and find new ways to innovate in order to build audience and stay relevant in this ever-changing media world. In our vision, IPR will develop and implement an on-line digital strategy across all content, marketing and fundraising areas. We will extend our reach through social media. Our listeners will be able to find our programming on the latest digital platforms. We will invest in new delivery methods and add staff to help us excel in the digital environment. Our fundraising team will find ways to monetize the digital delivery as it gains audience.

### **Building a financially stable and well-respected statewide institution.**

The history of public radio in Iowa began with each university radio group living on its own, followed by creation of Iowa Public Radio to manage all three radio groups for the universities, and finally to unifying the network with one automation system and creation of centers of excellence at each university and a headquarters in Des Moines. The next phase will be further development of IPR's financial and organizational model, allowing IPR to serve our university partners and listeners with excellence and efficiency, and establishing IPR as a successful statewide organization, enriching the civic and cultural life of the state. We will continue to grow our fundraising efforts. In 2022, we will celebrate 100 years of public radio service in the state of Iowa.

### **Growing audience and building community.**

As our services grow, so will IPR's audience – on our broadcast signals, through podcasts and on-demand audio, on our website streaming services, on the IPR app and more. In our vision, IPR will provide meaningful ways for our listeners to connect with public radio personalities and services, and for IPR to connect with our listeners and the communities we serve. We will develop specialized newsletters and create opportunities for community through social media. Our events and engagement efforts will be statewide, with an emphasis on developing deeper relationships with, and greater visibility in, the university communities where we have operations. We will extend the reach of our programming using new technologies and partnerships. We will also pursue purchase of broadcast

signals, when available and affordable, to reach unserved areas of the state and to meet key strategic objectives in the Studio One, Classical and News areas.

**Maintaining excellence in technology and audio delivery.**

Iowa Public Radio's stations have been leaders in efficiency and quality of audio (and other content) delivery since 1922. In our vision, that will continue. IPR will manage the replacement of aging equipment and invest in new technology to best serve our listeners. We will plan for the next generation automation system, will improve broadcasting back-up systems, and will oversee replacement of aging equipment within our 24-station network, including major projects at our flagship stations in Ames/Des Moines and Iowa City: WOI-AM/FM, WSUI-AM/KSUI-FM. We will unify our IT systems to create seamless collaboration across our four locations and to improve data security, and we will update our facilities to create a vibrant and efficient work environment across our network.

## PRIORITIES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **Priority 1: Delivering programming excellence – statewide and beyond.**

Goal: We will be the leading source for statewide radio news and expanded conversations about important issues and trends in Iowa, increasing AQH\* by 25%.

Objectives:

- Develop a statewide presence and a 7 day/week local News reporting enterprise.
  - Add three reporters to expand geographic diversity and investigative/data reporting capability.
  - Develop system for training interns/students as the public radio “bench,” for filling gaps in full-time positions, and for diversifying our team.
  - Adjust staffing strategy to allow for reporting 7 days/week.
  - Pursue reporting partnerships and collaborations within Iowa and the public radio system.
- Expand News offerings on-air, digitally, and on other platforms.
  - Create new content for distribution, including special interest/topic podcasts and long-form documentaries and creating effective marketing efforts that support these efforts.
  - Complete two expanded joint news/talk projects per year.
  - Complete one large-scale piece/year from each reporter, which includes unique digital content.
  - Complete one collaboration/year with another department within IPR, NPR, or other newsroom outside IPR.
  - Increase our news presence and engagement across multiple digital platforms.
  - Implement on-air and marketing strategies to achieve annual listening goals around specific dayparts and promote coverage of breaking news.
  - Implement focused social media efforts on reaching new/younger audiences.
- Improve and expand reporting on specific content areas and underserved communities.
  - Build capacity to provide live coverage of events and speeches, when desired.
  - Improve and expand reporting on specific content areas and underserved communities.
  - Assign reporters “beats,” as areas to follow and cultivate stories and sources.
  - Establish reporting expectations for hosts.
  - Provide ongoing training, including professional development conferences and news training courses, for news staff to inspire new thinking, sharpen skills and foster collaboration with other news organizations.
- Air the best and most innovative and compelling national programs in our broadcast schedule.

Goal: We will be the leading source for Adult Album Alternative (AAA) music in Iowa, curating and presenting the best in alternative music and serving as the region's daily soundtrack.

Objectives:

- Grow Studio One AQH\* by 50% across all platforms
  - Continually review content to guarantee the best programming is airing in the appropriate slot in the program schedule.
  - Review all shows against their return on investment as it relates to time and resources devoted to the show.
  - Review all shows against how they contribute to the effort to be the region's daily soundtrack.
  - Implement on-air promotion and marketing strategies to grow audience around specific shows, day parts and the stream generally.
- Grow IPR's presence and capabilities in Des Moines.
  - Add a full time Studio One position in Des Moines
  - Add Studio One studio space in Des Moines
- Establish Studio One as a "must" stop for a live performance as bands travel through Iowa.
- Collaborate with the IPR Classical and News teams to expand the Studio One presence.
- Build a Studio One web presence that serves as the "magazine," interview site and go-to source for information, audio and video on new music and the music scene in Iowa.
- Sustain and build partnerships with organizations and festivals, expanding the Studio One presence by hosting performance stages and presence at venues including the Des Moines Social Club, Hinterland Music Festival, Des Moines Music Coalition, 80/35 Music Festival, Legion Arts, Mission Creek Festival, etc. Establish a strong Studio One brand.

Goal: We will be a leader in the classical music community in Iowa, serving as a convener and educator of this important art form.

Objectives:

- Expand the impact of Classical, resulting in a 25% increase in AQH\*.
  - Effectively promote Classical on-air, digitally, and via social media.
  - Develop a regularly scheduled show that furthers our efforts to partner with and enhance the work of arts organizations and presenters in our region.
  - Produce local shows and coverage that establishes IPR as the go-to source for classical music news and coverage of Iowa's arts and culture events.
- Provide the best programming for listeners.
  - Continually review content to guarantee the best programming is airing in the appropriate slot in the program schedule.
  - Review all shows against current best practices, the most recent national data and content studies, Nielsen Audio data, and digital analytics.
  - Review all shows against their return on investment as it relates to time and resources devoted to the show.
- Collaborate with the Studio One and IPR News teams.
- Sustain and build partnerships with music and cultural organizations, including the Des Moines Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre, Des Moines Metro Opera, Ames Town and Gown, and other choral, band and music organizations.

- Convene regular conversations with the broader classical community in Iowa, focused on outreach for new listeners and ways to elevate the profile of classical music in Iowa.
- Seek and secure opportunities for IPR Classical staff to serve as educators and ambassadors about Classical music in Iowa.

Goal: We will expand IPR's reach, distributing our programming to stations outside the current IPR network, both regionally and nationally.

Objectives:

- Increase participation in, and perhaps lead, editorial partnerships with NPR and others.
- Market IPR talk shows and existing Classical and Studio One programming to stations beyond IPR.
- Create new content for distribution, including special interest/topic podcasts, other digital content, and long-form documentaries, creating effective marketing efforts that support these efforts.
- Explore opportunities for IPR Classical to collaborate with other classical radio services regionally and nationally to increase the range and caliber of program offerings.
- Focus on news coverage and conversation that puts what's happening in Iowa into broader context and encourages listening beyond the state's borders.
- Develop new Studio One and Classical programming with the goal of distributing the content to the public radio network.
- Develop content that furthers our outreach efforts and provides effective programming.
- Participate in national AAA content sharing opportunities, including VuHaus and NPR Music.

Goal: We will ensure that IPR's overall sound is excellent across all three programming streams.

Objectives:

- Implement regular conversations between News/Talk and Music team leadership to refine IPR's overall programming strategy, promote collaboration among IPR locations and program services, and maximize IPR's programming resources to best serve our listeners.
- Document and implement a standardized air check program.
- Provide ongoing training for on-air hosts to encourage best practices.
- Continue the on-air sound task group, promoting increased collaboration among all departments that have an impact on IPR's sound, including News/Talk, Music, Traffic, Operations, and Development.
- Continually refine processes to ensure traffic and automation systems provide excellent service to all departments that have an impact on IPR's sound.

\* AQH is the average number of people listening for at least 5 minutes in a fifteen minute period.

## **Priority 2: Innovating in a changing media environment.**

Goal: We will deliver high-quality online digital news and cultural content to our audience and we will have the staffing resources necessary to successfully carry out that strategy.

### Objectives:

- Increase our digital audience 20% annually across our current and any future digital platforms, measuring growth in: website users, session and pageviews; social media likes, followers and exposure; active app downloads.
- Develop and implement an organization-wide strategy for online digital content, social media, NPR One, and other digital distribution channels.
- Create and hire a new full-time position to develop strategy and manage Iowa Public Radio's digital efforts.
- Increase digital production staff, hiring two digital producers, one serving the News/Talk area, the other in the Classical/Studio One area.
  - Seek opportunities to work within and across formats for fresh digital content
  - Develop and package content for podcasts and extended web content
  - Utilize archival Studio One, Classical and News/Talk material, capitalizing on the ability to reach digital and social media audiences with on-demand content
  - Increase and improve web content for all streams
  - Implement strategies that target and increase younger digital audience
- Create a new technology working group that will help prioritize digital technology investment, including reviewing software platforms, new technology to replace aging technology, and generally ensuring Iowa Public Radio stays current in the media environment.
  - Discuss and prioritize new technology projects that might include: customer relationship management software, traffic and membership systems, AoIP investment, the next generation automation system, website re-design and apps.
- Create a digital innovation pool that will provide resources for technology investment identified by the new technology working group, and for pursuing digital programming projects.
  - Develop processes, guidelines and a system for approving and supporting projects while ensuring current content production continues without interruption.

### **Priority 3: Building a financially stable and well-respected statewide institution.**

Goal: Our fundraising model will be sustainable and will include growing membership and underwriting revenue, predictable contributions from our university partners, new revenue streams developed from our program distribution and programming innovations, and an endowment, with sufficient reserves to provide a funding buffer should tough economic conditions arise.

Objectives:

- Grow number of members and member revenue by over 50%, to 37,500 members, and approaching \$5 million in revenue.
  - Increase overall retention to 80%, through frequent contact and increased stewardship.
  - Increase sustainer retention to 94% through robust retention plan.
  - Convert 'single-gift' donors to sustaining donors.
  - Acquire new members through on-air campaigns, social media and direct mail.
  - Increase number of Leadership Circle donors and move gifts upward in size.
- Grow underwriting and corporate sponsorship to at least \$2.3 million.
  - Evaluate broadcast underwriting rates every six months and consistently increase rates over time.
  - Use inventory data to better forecast inventory shortages and surpluses; raise rates in advance of projected shortages and develop packages to sell surpluses.
  - Invest in market-based audience data services to help account executives and clients better understand the IPR audience.
  - Use data to develop new sales materials tailored to specific audiences.
  - Use sponsor newsletter and social media to engage with sponsors.
  - Develop programs to better recognize sponsor loyalty.
  - Work with account executives to set monthly sales and activity goals and invest in systems that allow account execs to better keep track of sales activity and prospect/revenue pipelines.
  - Take advantage of IPR's growing digital audience by offering new and unique digital sponsorship packages.
  - Work with other departments to look for creative ways to generate revenue and allow sponsors new ways to reach Iowa Public Radio listeners.
- Create and implement a campaign to raise \$5-7.5 million for major projects from foundations and major donors.
  - Conduct feasibility study for campaign.
  - Develop campaign case statement and pitch book with name, goals, and fundable projects, highlighting major strategic initiatives.
  - Create campaign steering committee and develop board and staff roles.
  - Conduct donor prospect research.
  - Engage key staff, board and steering committee in fundraising effort.
- Secure understanding with universities on stable operating support and replacement of university-owned broadcast tower and transmission equipment.
- Seek new funding streams associated with program distribution, partnerships and digital program delivery.
- Continue to develop a board that can support IPR's role as a fundraising organization.

Goal: We will deliver excellent management services to our license-holders – Iowa’s public universities.

Objectives:

- Provide accurate, timely and relevant financial reporting.
  - Manage audits for Iowa Public Radio and the ISU, U of I and UNI radio groups.
  - Enhance the use of existing software, including investigating use of the budget module in QuickBooks.
- Provide regular and relevant updates to the Board of Regents and universities on goals, activities and challenges, including IPR’s efforts to support each university’s outreach mission.
- Increase outreach to university communities on each campus.
- Continue efforts to harmonize personnel policy and benefit differences amongst the university and IPR employees.
- Develop the next generation of public radio professionals.
  - Develop a system for training interns/students across the IPR organization, particularly in IPR’s campus locations.
  - Employ students on each campus, and deepen relationships with the departments who provide student employees and interns, including Journalism, Business, Music, and Engineering.
- Implement document retention and destruction plan.
  - Create a schedule for archiving historical documents, working towards real-time archiving on a daily, monthly, quarterly and / or annual basis.
  - Work with University personnel to ensure proper indexing and retention of historical documents of the radio groups.
- Provide legal & compliance support.
  - Ensure excellence in Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Federal Communications Commission compliance for all three station groups.
  - Ensure excellence in compliance with open meeting requirements.
  - Communicate policy-related information to board and staff on a regular basis.

Goal: We will cultivate a vibrant IPR culture and work environment that values good work and promotes creativity and collaboration.

Objectives:

- Create a user-friendly, easily accessible online version of the employee handbook and update as needed.
- Communicate human resources-related information to employees on a regular basis.
- Hire an HR professional to coordinate with university and personnel partners and to be the first call for human resource questions for all IPR employees.
- Improve the facilities at IPR locations, consolidating all Des Moines employees at 2111 Grand and improving the work spaces at the Ames and Iowa City locations.
- Explore investing in software that allows employees in different locations to better interact and collaborate.
- Provide professional development opportunities for all employees.
- Hold regular all-staff events and meetings that bring staff from all locations together.
- Create program-related initiatives that promote collaboration across streams.

Goal: We will celebrate, in 2022, 100 years of public service in Iowa with the 100 year anniversaries of FCC licenses for the University of Iowa and Iowa State University station licenses.

Objectives:

- Work with the universities to create a celebration plan.
- Use leading into the 100-year mark as an opportunity to launch a fundraising campaign for a second century of service.

#### **Priority 4: Growing audience and building community.**

Goal: Iowa Public Radio will build community and loyal listeners to our services, providing meaningful ways for our listeners to connect with Iowa Public Radio and for IPR to connect with our listeners and the communities we serve.

Objectives:

- Develop deeper relationships with, and greater visibility in, the university communities where we have operations.
  - Provide opportunities for listeners to connect with public radio personalities and services, and moving those events around the state.
  - Be the leading sponsor/facilitator of Iowa events and learning opportunities around story-telling, journalism and elections, AAA music, and classical music.
  - Increase station and IPR visibility on our campuses, including partnering on speakers, signage on station buildings, open houses, etc.
- Provide digital content that encourages conversation and builds digital communities, utilizing social media, the website, and other determined platforms.
- Conduct at least one focused community engagement project each year, starting with StoryCorps in fall 2017.
- Engage in local and statewide conversations about the arts, music, and community initiatives.

Goal: We will market ourselves effectively and broadly in Iowa, focusing on Iowa's major cities and Iowa's many college and university communities.

Objectives:

- Add a marketing and public relations professional to market IPR generally, and manage marketing for all three public radio streams, including IPR's digital marketing effort.
- Create and implement a marketing plan that helps grow audience on all streams.
  - Review branding for IPR, our three programming services, and our digital offerings.
  - Develop specialized newsletters and create opportunities for community through social media.
  - Use advertising budget strategically, focused on college and university communities and targeted digital audiences.
  - Strategically increase and enhance outreach and partnership opportunities for all streams.
  - Effectively promote News, Studio One and Classical programming on-air, digitally, and through social media.
  - Develop a distinct brand identity for Studio One.
- Create and implement a marketing plan that supports IPR's fundraising efforts.

Goal: IPR will extend the reach of its programming to parts of the state where we do not currently have signals, pursuing the purchase of broadcast signals when available and affordable, but also promoting listening through new technologies like web-streaming and the IPR app and creating program collaborations with stations outside of the current IPR network.

Objectives:

- Market IPR programming to stations outside of the current IPR network.
- Establish a 24-hour Studio One presence on an IPR terrestrial frequency in at least 1 of Iowa's major markets.

- Improve Classical coverage in central Iowa with stronger terrestrial signals in the Ames and Des Moines markets.
- Pursue options for purchasing stations in unserved portions of the state, including western Iowa.

**Priority 5: Maintaining excellence in technology and audio delivery.**

Goal: We will manage the maintenance and replacement of aging equipment in a strategic manner, ensuring that our systems remain current and reliable and we are able to produce, deliver, compile and package high quality audio content in an effective and efficient manner.

Objectives:

- Create and implement a capital and non-capital equipment plan that identifies major and planned equipment replacement.
  - Work with the universities and Board of Regents to create a funding plan for capital needs.
- Improve asset identification and tracking systems.
  - Complete a schedule of capital assets by purchasing entity, location, funding source, account and tag number.
  - Provide complete schedules to Broadcast Operations, IT and Engineering Services on a quarterly basis.
  - Create a system to communicate disposal information to Accounting.
- Research and deploy technology most suited for IPR based on needs identification, with focus on equipment and process uniformity, staying current to technology, and industry standards.
  - Establish and implement uniform hardware and software purchase, replacement, and upgrade standards.
  - Streamline network transmitting site standards across all tower and transmitter sites, ensuring redundancy and the highest quality broadcast audio.
  - Research and create timeline for implementing the next generation automation system.
  - Address changing technology standards, including upgrading T1-style interconnections, and centralized audio archival storage and retrieval systems.
  - Research and stay up to date on new technology, including testing and reviewing products and software.
  - Work regularly and collaboratively around technology needs, providing tailored and efficient systems solutions.
- Maintain organizational resiliency against security breaches, equipment failure, and other catastrophic failures.
  - Create and implement disaster recovery plan in collaboration with other department managers, including resiliency against data loss or/and system failure recovery time, redundancy of audio paths, back-up power, and other methods.
  - Reduce down time due to equipment failure and repair, including completing preventive maintenance at tower sites and improved monitoring processes with Broadcast Operations.
  - Conduct regular failover tests of back-up systems to ensure they work and provide continuity in times of disaster.
  - Maintain ongoing training for staff against external threats and intrusion attempts.

**Approved by IPR Board of Directors 10-06-16**