

**Michigan Radio  
University of Michigan**

**Station Activities Survey (SAS), Section 6  
A report required by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting  
For the FY17 period (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017)**

**6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story**

*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 the public radio station licensed to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Our mission is to produce and distribute trusted content that informs, educates, entertains, and engages people who care about the state of Michigan and the world around them. You can find us on our three broadcast radio stations (WUOM 91.7 FM Ann Arbor and Detroit, WFUM 91.1 FM Flint, and WVGR 104.1 FM West Michigan), on our news website ([www.michiganradio.org](http://www.michiganradio.org)), on social media (Facebook and Twitter), and in community spaces.

**LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVES**

In addition to offering daily news programming from national and international public radio outlets, such as National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Media (APM), and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Michigan Radio produces and distributes its own quality, local journalism. We employ 30 full time staff dedicated to journalism content, including reporters, producers, and editors who work at our headquarters in Ann Arbor and at bureaus in Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids.

Michigan Radio is working toward a vision to be the most trusted, respected, and influential news and information provider to people in Michigan, one that cannot be ignored. As such, our team of award-winning journalists works diligently to bring breaking news stories, enterprise and investigative reporting, and in-depth interviews to a broad audience across the state. The following list highlights a sample of the local journalism initiatives produced by Michigan Radio in the 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017):

(1) Stateside. *Stateside* is a local, hour-long newsmagazine program airing each weekday that creates a space for civilized dialogue about issues that matter in Michigan. Our Emmy-award-winning host, Cynthia Canty, conducts interviews and roundtables with politicians, policy

experts, community doers, and more. *Stateside* staff also contribute feature reports to the program.

(2) The Environment Report. *The Environment Report* is a four-minute segment hosted by Rebecca Williams that airs every Tuesday and Thursday. The feature report explores the natural world and Michigan residents' relationship with it. Some of the topics covered in FY17 include the Great Lakes, a changing climate, environmental laws in congress, and urban sustainability.

(3) State of Opportunity. Michigan Radio's *State of Opportunity* initiative, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, concluded its fifth and final year of longitudinal reporting in April 2017. In all, Michigan Radio journalists produced approximately 60 hours of public radio programming and 31 in-person events about topics related to childhood poverty in Michigan.

(4) Detroit after bankruptcy. In FY17, Michigan Radio entered its fourth year as a partner of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative, a multi-media, nonprofit collaboration that provides critical public service journalism in the wake of the historic Detroit bankruptcy. The DJC is funded by the Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

(5) Coverage of Larry Nassar sexual abuse case. Michigan Radio first began investigating allegations against the former MSU and Team USA doctor, Larry Nassar, in early FY17. In the coming months, we produced enterprise reporting surrounding Nassar's indictment on child pornography, his suspension, the MSU third-party investigation, and further sexual abuse claims.

(6) Coverage of Flint water crisis. Michigan Radio has been on the frontlines of the Flint Water Crisis since its break in 2015, and FY17 was no exception. Over the course of this year Michigan Radio produced continued coverage of legislation, lawsuits, research, and resident's experiences in Flint in regards to the water crisis.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Michigan Radio is a participating station in the Emergency Alert System (EAS). As such, we disseminate critical information about national and state emergencies to the public via our three FM signals. Michigan Radio also provides severe weather alerts based on notifications from the National Weather Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

## ENGAGEMENT

At Michigan Radio, we aim to meaningfully engage with members of the local community in order to facilitate civilized conversations and the respectful exchange of ideas. In FY17, we implemented several initiatives that helped us to engage with the public, both in the digital space and in the community:

(1) MI Curious. MI Curious uses a public-powered journalism process to engage Michigan residents in developing news stories from start to finish. In FY17, local community members submitted 153 questions about things they wanted to know about Michigan and its people. Over 1,400 people voted for their favorite questions online in five public voting rounds, which resulted in the production of eight stories by Michigan Radio journalists.

(2) Digital platforms. Michigan Radio's most successful digital engagement efforts are happening on Facebook, where individuals interact with one another and with our journalists about news and events they care about. We ended FY17 with over 46k FB followers and an average daily reach of 29k. Twitter is also becoming an increasingly successful way to connect with the public. We ended FY17 with over 37k Twitter followers and an average monthly engagement of 4k.

(3) In-person events. Michigan Radio regularly engages with members of the community at special station events. For example, in FY17 more than 1,750 people attended the station's 12 Issues and Ale conversations, nearly 200 people attended the station's two *Stateside* Live programs, and more than 2,800 people attended 25 Moth storytelling events. An additional five community events were held as part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative.

*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 takes pride in being a valuable, contributing member of its local community, both within and outside of the media ecosystem. One important way we do this is to engage in productive partnerships with community organizations and other news outlets. Here are highlights of our FY17 partnerships:

## MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

(1) Detroit Journalism Cooperative (DJC). In FY17, Michigan Radio entered its fourth year as a member of the DJC, a cohort of five non-profit media outlets working together to document life in the city of Detroit after its historic 2013 bankruptcy. Our DJC media partners include "Bridge Magazine," Detroit Public Television, WDET 101.9 FM, and New Michigan Media.

(2) Interlochen Public Radio (IPR). Michigan Radio has a content sharing partnership with IPR, which is located in the northwestern part of the state. IPR broadcasts two of Michigan Radio's local programs, *The Environment Report* and *Stateside*. IPR journalists also regularly contribute content for our production of *The Environment Report* and other programs.

(3) **Michigan Public Radio Network (MPRN)**. Michigan Radio is an active member of MPRN, a consortium of 10 public broadcasters that supports a shared Capitol news bureau in Lansing. We also partner with MPRN to produce *It's Just Politics*, a weekly radio segment about politics in Michigan.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

(1) **Michigan's Children**. Michigan Radio partnered with Michigan's Children of Lansing to implement a Kidspeak event as part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative. One of our journalists moderated the event, during which eight, court-ordered youth stood before political candidates and pressed for remedies to keep other kids out of trouble.

(2) **Judson Center**. As part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative, we partnered with the Judson Center of southeastern Michigan and Reel Clever Films to develop a guide for parents involved in Michigan's child welfare system. The online resource includes a written guide, infographics, and three informational videos.

(3) **Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion**. As part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative, we teamed up with the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion to host an evening of stories and conversation about peace in Detroit.

(4) **Cook Library Center**. As part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative, we partnered with the Cook Library Center of Grand Rapids to host a bilingual event that explored what life is like for undocumented immigrants in Michigan. The event featured personal stories from undocumented individuals and a panel discussion about the most pressing issues for this vulnerable group.

(5) **Gompers Elementary-Middle School**. As part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative, we partnered with Detroit's Gompers Elementary-Middle School and local artist Yvette Rock to explore the connections between home, school, and neighborhood through photography, poetry, and mosaic art. The students' artwork will be installed permanently at the school.

(6) **Community organization sponsorships**. Michigan Radio regularly partners with local community organizations in order to help increase the visibility of their services and events. In FY17, we partnered with 30 organizations for a total of 37 different sponsorships.

*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.*

At Michigan Radio, we pride ourselves in providing quality, community service journalism to the people of Michigan. We have built a station-wide culture in which hard work, respect, and integrity are expected and valued, and we believe this enables us to make the greatest possible impact in our community.

One way we measure our impact and effectiveness is by participating in local audience research. In the 2017 Public Radio Tech Survey conducted by Jacobs Media, for example, hundreds of Michigan Radio listeners indicated why they listen to public radio. The top five reason include: (1) being informed about the news, (2) more credible and objective programming, (3) deeper news perspective, (4) enjoy learning new things, and (5) balanced perspectives.

We also monitor a variety of metrics in order to measure the effectiveness of our work. At the close of FY17, for instance, Michigan Radio achieved a record high audience and member base, with over 525,000 weekly listeners, 565,250 monthly unique website pageviews, and a contributing membership exceeding 36,000 people. In addition, Spring 2017 Nielsen ratings show that Michigan Radio is the top public radio station in five of the state's top six markets, including Ann Arbor, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo.

In addition, we frequently find indicators of success as we implement key initiatives and partnerships throughout the year. Here are just of few of those FY17 successes:

(1) *State of Opportunity*. In FY17, our *State of Opportunity* coverage explored the lives of undocumented immigrant families, violent crime in Detroit, school closures and mergers, an affordable housing crisis in Grand Rapids, and much more. According to both audience research about the project and countless anecdotes, we know *State of Opportunity* not only increased awareness, but inspired people to step-up and help others, caused improvements to be made to assistance programs for low-income families, and helped inform important policy decisions.

A final research survey conducted by Jacobs Media found that 86% of Michigan Radio listeners/readers who had consumed *State of Opportunity* content felt they had a “much better” or “somewhat better” understanding of childhood poverty as a result of the project. And, nearly 70% of *State of Opportunity* listeners/readers indicated that they took action as a result of the project, including discussing issues with family or friends, contributing to a charity, or contributing money during an election.

(2) Detroit Journalism Cooperative (DJC). During our fourth year as a DJC partner, much of our journalism content focused on Detroit's MorningSide neighborhood. Reporter/Producer Lester Graham spent lots of time there exploring local issues, like blight, crime, illegal dumping, senior care, and the neighborhood's relationship with city hall. A nonprofit organization in the community reprinted our reports and distributed them to local community members, which seems to indicate that that Graham's efforts to develop relationships and trust among community members were successful.

The journalism has helped increase awareness and understanding of Detroiters' successes and challenges. In recent listener interviews conducted by media research firm Jacobs Media, listeners expressed their appreciation for Michigan Radio's in-depth Detroit coverage and for the resulting increase in understanding about the city among citizens residing outside of Southeast Michigan. For example, a listener in Grand Rapids said, "Detroit is an important component of Michigan's economy. We like to denigrate it, but for the whole system to work, Detroit needs to work." Another West Michigan listener commented that "the bankruptcy doesn't affect day-to-day life, but it is an important blueprint for what could happen elsewhere..."

(3) Stateside. *Stateside* is Michigan Radio's third most-listened-to weekday program, with a weekly cumulative broadcast audience of over 130k people. Because of its significant following, the daily, locally-produced program provides an important space to hold conversations about local news and events, policy issues, and culture and lifestyle stories. Here are highlights of our most impactful stories in FY17:

In December 2016, *Stateside* produced and aired a series of interviews about Michigan's so-called juvenile lifers after a US Supreme Court ruled that mandatory sentences of life without parole for juveniles are unconstitutional. The series profiled some of the more than 360 juvenile lifers in Michigan and examined how the state is handling the re-sentencing of these individuals. One of the state's juvenile lifers, Efren Paredes, Jr., listened to the series and responded with a blog post, in which he analyzes the coverage and adds his own perspective as a prison inmate. In the post, he says, "The Michigan Radio juvenile lifer series is doing a great job exploring the subject. I am hopeful the public will become more educated about all the facets of this important issue." Michigan Radio's "Juvenile Lifer" series won a 2017 Wade H. McCree Award for the Advancement of Justice by the Michigan Press Association Foundation.

In May 2017, *Stateside* produced and aired a piece about abortion, a highly contentious political issue in Michigan and nationwide. Host Cynthia Carty interviewed Rachel Redmond, a woman who made the difficult choice to have a late-term abortion after learning her baby had a rare condition called Dandy-Walker malformation. A few months later, Rachel sent us an email to report that, because of her appearance on *Stateside*, she was asked to do two other radio interviews and that her story had been shared as far away as Australia. She added that her

participation in the interview with Cynthia Canty “was a turning point in my healing journey and has opened many doors for me.”

(4) Coverage of the Flint water crisis. In FY17, Michigan Radio continued its public service journalism about the Flint water crisis, helping to give Flint residents a voice and to provide critical information about the situation to the Michigan public. Our coverage chronicled the events that took place after the crisis reached its peak the previous year. For example, our journalists reported on numerous legal charges, including involuntary manslaughter, and ensuing court cases. We also followed the city’s progress toward securing a safe drinking water source for its residents and efforts to replace its lead water pipes. And, coverage highlighted community initiatives designed to help reduce the impact of lead exposure among children and warnings by local health providers to be on guard for Legionnaire’s disease. Our continuing coverage of the Flint Water Crisis in FY17 earned several journalism awards, including a Scripps Howard Award and Regional Edward R. Murrow Award in addition to first place awards from the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated and the Michigan Associated Press.

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

One of Michigan Radio’s strategic goals is to be more reflective of the state and to better relate to more diverse audiences. We are striving to accomplish this in several ways. First, we are making strides to increase cultural, racial, and gender diversity among our staff through broad recruitment efforts, targeted professional development opportunities, and the expansion of our internship program. With the establishment of an internship fund in 2016, we are able to provide paid, on-the-job learning opportunities for young people from all backgrounds, including those who may not be in a position to otherwise accept an unpaid position.

Second, we are making concerted efforts to increase cultural, racial and gender diversity among the news sources used in our reporting through extensive networking and research efforts. We are also pursuing the development of a minority and diversity source database, which will help inform our journalism coverage with a greater variety of perspectives and experiences.

Third, we are thoughtful and intentional about producing local content that increases cross-group understanding and strengthens conversational ties between diverse communities. In FY17, for example, Detroit Journalism Cooperative Reporter Lester Graham helped elevate traditionally

underrepresented voices through a reporting series from Detroit's MorningSide neighborhood, an economically disadvantaged community of color. We plan to continue our work in the MorningSide neighborhood in FY18 with a resident podcast project. A team of three Michigan Radio reporters also continued a longitudinal reporting initiative in FY17 as part of *State of Opportunity* about childhood poverty in Michigan. Our FY17 coverage explored the lives of undocumented immigrant families, violent crime in Detroit, school closures and mergers, an affordable housing crisis in Grand Rapids, and much more.

And, finally, Michigan Radio's efforts to meet the needs of diverse audiences include implementing community engagement events and building relationships with key community partners. In FY17, for instance, we held a series of events as part of our *State of Opportunity* initiative. Examples include a community conversation about peace in Detroit, in partnership with the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, and a bilingual event that explored what life is like for undocumented immigrants in Michigan, in partnership with the Cook Library Center in Grand Rapids.

*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 approximately 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 for the investment of other financial resources into important local news and information priorities. For example, it extends our ability to hire and retain a statewide news staff, grow and expand our flagship program, *Stateside*, and enables us to host community outreach forums.

We also recognize that indirect support from CPB includes payment of various music licensing fees for broadcast programming, which benefits all of public media. In effect, the value and impact of CPB support, both direct cash through the CSG, and the offsets of services that a station does not have to pay directly, make CPB participation in a successful public media operation crucial to our success.

*\*For more information about the contents of this report, contact Ellen Han, Associate Director of Development, Grants and Communications, at [erinck@umich.edu](mailto:erinck@umich.edu) and/or 734-764-9210.*