

CPB Station Activity Survey Local Content and Services Report – FY2015

- 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.**

Vermont Public Radio’s mission is to provide an essential and trusted independent voice for news, information, music and cultural exploration for listeners and readers in the geographic region and beyond. The organization’s purpose is to inspire an informed public and engaged community.

VPR is dedicated to fulfilling this role in broadcast and digital formats so that listeners and users may connect with VPR wherever, whenever and however they wish to.

VPR is dedicated to public service, which takes many forms, including original locally generated programming, curated programming from trusted sources, partnerships with other news organizations and nonprofits, and national programming from NPR and other public media outlets. This public service includes 13 local newscasts each day, the locally produced weekday newsmagazine Vermont Edition, social media news feeds, a daily news email, a community news project which aggregates local government documents, a dynamic website, news blogs, videos, a growing number of podcasts, live audio from the Vermont State Legislature, a music discovery project highlighting regional musicians, a student composer project, a young writers project, a commentary series of more than 50 essayists, and locally produced weather reports all day.

In-depth public service reporting included a variety of projects in FY15. One of these projects highlighted “Vermont’s Shadow Budget.” The project examined a \$100 million budget gap for fiscal year 2016, and one of its largest fiscal liabilities that remained outside the reach of the annual budget bill. The state gives up about \$1 billion in tax breaks annually through policies that have remained largely unchanged. The data journalism project proceeded to examine at least seven key areas of tax expenditures that are not collected.

A multi-part project on declining enrollment in Vermont’s schools examined the issue from a variety of perspectives. In an eight-part series, VPR examined the declining student population, the number of teachers and schools in the state, the question of property taxes to pay for school expenses, and the quality of education.

In another example of statewide community engagement, VPR collaborates with the Vermont Humanities Council for "Vermont Reads," a statewide reading program. In this year, people around Vermont read and discussed *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by acclaimed author Salman Rushdie. The week-long project included interviews and stories on the topic and the enduring value of storytelling.

VPR addressed one of the region's most significant pollution issues with a comprehensive examination of the sources of pollution in a project called "Downstream."

A data project brought detail on the phosphorous problem in Lake Champlain to digital readers with charts, graphs, analysis and even a glossary on the sources of phosphorous and problems with wastewater. The unique project even included a "bot" to reveal to everyone when sewage discharges occurred into public waterways.

VPR also keeps Vermonters close to government with live coverage of statewide elections, the state of the state address, daily reports from the Vermont State House and a live audio stream from the statehouse, which allows people anywhere to tap into a stream of the action in the Vermont House and Senate. VPR provides breaking news coverage of state government and political events as well, as it did when Governor Shumlin made the surprise announcement that he would not run for another term.

VPR continues to keep government close to the people through its comprehensive coverage of the March Town Meeting. This "first Tuesday" event is grassroots democracy in action and VPR provides live coverage of the results over the air and online. Citizens and town clerks all over the state report the results of their town meetings to VPR in this participatory day.

VPR also goes out into the field to find the Vermont story. One example of this reporting was Jane Lindholm's sound-rich field work on the Deerfield Wind Black Bear Study in which Jane shared her experience with the biologists as they examined the effect of ridgeline development on the bears.

Reflecting the Vermont character and holding a mirror to Vermont Life brings communities together. Reporter Angela Evancie did this when she went on a search to find the story of Vermont auctioneer Willis Hicks, who was featured in a photographic exhibit. What she found and the audio she posted online brought the Vermont spirit to life.

This steady stream of essential and in-depth news and feature stories is complimented by something Vermonters always want to know about... the weather. Through its special partnership with the Fairbanks Museum, VPR provides listeners and readers with over the air and on-demand weather forecasts and background information that enriches our understanding of the weather around us.

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.

VPR continues to engage in and develop new partnerships with organizations whose missions complement VPR's. This year's continuing and new collaborations include the following:

Podcast Partnerships

VPR, with its deep experience in audio production, has begun connecting with new audiences through the development and sharing of podcasts. One example is the new Wintry Mix podcast that examines the important snow industry economy through the upbeat conversations of host Alex Kaufmann. A podcast directory leads people to VPR-produced podcasts and some favorites of the staff.

Awesome Etiquette

Awesome Etiquette, the podcast by Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning of the Emily Post Institute on etiquette in the 21st century, is recorded at VPR and as a result a partnership has developed and a broadcast segment now airs on Sundays. Awesome Etiquette guides listeners through everything from traditional etiquette quandaries to newly emerging issues in the modern world.

Outdoor Radio

In partnership with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, VPR produces a monthly feature called "Outdoor Radio," which explores the natural world with biologists Kent McFarland and Sara Zahendra. Produced by VPR's Chris Albertine, the program airs every third Thursday at 8:50 a.m.

Live from the Fort

VPR has deepened a partnership with local musicians with the music discovery video series *Live from the Fort*. This project has expanded into a monthly video of short interviews and song set with local musicians. In partnership with the Radiator, the studio sets are now broadcast on this non-profit music channel in Burlington, Vt.

Vermont Reads – Haroun and the Sea of Stories

Each year, VPR collaborates with the Vermont Humanities Council for "Vermont Reads," a statewide reading program. This year, people around Vermont are reading and discussing *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by acclaimed author Salman Rushdie. The fable centers around a young boy, Haroun, and his father, the famed story-teller Rashid. The two embark on a fantastical journey when Rashid loses his gift for gab. The series included interviews, excerpts from the

book, commentary and online discussion. The online package included an interview with the author himself.

Dorothy's List

Each school year, thousands of Vermont students read the books nominated for the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award. Thirty books make the annual list, and fourth- through eighth-graders vote for their favorite title in the spring. Each month, Vermont Edition highlights a book nominated for award. We visit schools and libraries where the book is being read, check out how young readers are interacting with the book and relay students' questions to the author.

VSO on VPR

VPR continues its partnership with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, which makes it possible to produce for listeners a weekly concert broadcast. This program includes current and archival performances. It is hosted by longtime VPR Host Walter Parker and airs on Wednesday nights at 8. Parker also is a regular speaker at the beginning of VSO performances.

Student Composer Showcase

Each month, VPR Classical features the musical work of a young musician in Vermont in collaboration with Music-COMP, the online mentoring program that connects students with professional composer mentors in an online discussion forum, and organizes live performances of student work.

VPR Café

The VPR Café is a weekly feature that's all about Vermont food and the people who grow it, prepare it and love it. VPR's Ric Cengeri talks with Burlington Free Press food writers who share stories from the farms, kitchens and eateries of Vermont that connect our communities.

Young Writers Project

VPR partners with the Young Writers Project to present selections of the work of young writers in Vermont. Each week, VPR features on VPR.net a submission from the Young Writers Project. The work may be an essay, it may be non-fiction or fiction, or it may be poetry. The weekly selection might be a student blog post or it might be a video. The idea is to provide another avenue to hear the voice of the people of Vermont, in this case, the young people of Vermont.

Newspaper Collaborations

VPR collaborates with regional newspapers each week with a Regional Report in Morning Edition in which VPR explores the work of the states print journalists. In addition, VPR partners with the Rutland Herald and the Times Argus newspapers to share news stories about government and policy issues.

Eye on the Sky

Through a continuing partnership with the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium, VPR brings Vermonters a unique view of the weather through daily forecasts as

well as unique features such as the Eye on the Night Sky. The partnership includes detailed information through social media outlets.

Art Hounds

Each week, producer Mary Williams curates listener recommended arts and cultural events around the region in a segment called ArtHounds. The program is adapted from Minnesota Public Radio News and is powered by the Public Insight Network.

- 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.**

VPR receives regular listener feedback each day through online comments, emails, social media and phone calls. With each Vermont Edition program, VPR connects with listeners for additional discussion. This provides Vermonters an opportunity to increase their awareness about hundreds of topics each year and to share their views and to engage in a statewide conversation. Here is a small sampling of the impact of the programming.

Vermont Edition Lyme Disease Program

Sample comment: *There is no reason for the debate to continue. There is already an enormous amount of research that explains that Chronic Lyme disease is very real and that there are treatments that help relieve suffering. Instead of arguing about it any longer, physicians and researchers should focus their energies on prevention, diagnosis and cure.*

Sample comment: *God bless anyone who contracts Lyme or any of the tick-Bourne diseases. I awoke one morning in MD with an imbedded tick, nice and plump from feeding all night. No rash appeared, but within 10 days, my complete life changed. My diagnosis was Lyme, Bartonella & Babesia. I was so desperately ill. Spent the next few years in bed, cut my job hours back to 1/4 of what I was doing, and prepared to die. That's really what I expected. It is now 9 years later, and I spent 8 of the 9 taking Penicillin injections. Today, I am functioning normally, working full time, have energy and praising God for healing me.*

Sample comment: *Just a shout out to those poor souls with chronic Lyme that are frustrated to hear folks belittle their "symptoms", especially the "debilitating fatigue". I have had Lyme disease and at least 2 co-infections for decades. Before I suddenly became very ill in my mid 30's I could only have been described as a type A alpha dog. Ran my own company, never stopped and played even harder. It ended like a clap of thunder. The long term every day fatigue that I have experienced is indescribable other than to say it will drop you to your knees and make a grown man want to cry. I have plenty of other disturbing neurological and joint pain type issues but the chronic fatigue causes*

social isolation and makes any type of work impossible. This disease is no joke and the suffers are involved in a real battle. I hope you never get it.

Vermont Edition Junk Ordinance Program

Sample comment: Many people have excess items that do need to be cleaned up, and some actually admit that they need some help, but for a town to claim that it is all "Junk", without any attempts to refer the residents to resources to get them some help to actually help separate the real junk, and trash, from items that are in fact useful. I can see it from both sides,

Sample comment: Simple solution; stop using so much road salt, then the cars would stay on the road longer and not be abandoned.

Sample comment: I am aware of instances where public tax dollars pay the bill for clean-up of "junk" and hazardous materials on privately held land when local ordinances are not written or enforced--that is my biggest problem with it. I think we need to at least enforce regulations to protect the environment and tax payers from the negligence of others . . .

On Declining Enrollment Special Series

Sample comment: Consolidating power in the hands of bureaucrats, superintendents, and minions operating ever farther from the schools and classrooms they govern doesn't foster equity or quality. All it promotes is inappropriately uniform, one-size-fits-all regulations and policies...

Sample comment: Why do we have declining student enrollment in Vermont? People of child bearing age can no longer afford to live here. Out of control tax and spend economic policies are driving out business and have created a crisis of affordability for working Vermonters.

On "Live from the Fort" Music Discovery Project

Sample comment: I've been keeping up with the Live From The Fort video series and I'm really

enjoying it. Better Things - a touring punk / emo band from Burlington would be very

interested in being a part of the series, and we hope you'd enjoy having us.

I've included a few links below and hope to hear from you either way!

On "Timeline" Classical Music History Series

Sample comment: I've been enjoying the "Timeline" series very much. One of the best series

I've ever heard on radio.

On "Student Composer Showcase"

Sample comment: I'm so very impressed with how you are able to draw students out and allow them to show their musical and personal selves in just a short time.

Anna came across as bright and articulate, as of course she is, but much of that is due to your simple yet evocative questions. Brava! May this wonderful collaboration continue on its way through 2015.

Sample comment: *Thanks for all the shout outs to Music-COMP. I appreciate this and the series. It thrills our students, their families and communities. I hope your general listening public is thrilled as well. Each and every one of the students is so different and you have brought out captivating conversations with each of them.*

On Vermont Reads and Harwood Union High School

Sample Comment: *I am so proud of my school - Harwood Union, as it continues to uphold its mission; that is in which every person is valued as an individual. The students of QSA are courageous. Their contributions to our learning community including promoting diversity, advocacy of self and others and acceptance, has been significant. Thank You!!*

- 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 2014, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2015. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.**

Vermont Reads – Haroun and the Sea of Stories

When, VPR collaborated with the Vermont Humanities Council for "Vermont Reads," a statewide reading program, the project this year touched diverse communities. The book was *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie. The fable centers around a young boy, Haroun, and his father, the famed storyteller Rashid. The two embark on a fantastical journey when Rashid loses his gift for gab. The series included interviews, excerpts from the book, commentary and online discussion. The online package included an interview with the author himself. This fantasy can be read as an allegory about censorship, because the hero rescues tales from a planned oblivion. But there are also real, everyday battlegrounds for free speech —at libraries and schools. VPR looked in on Harry Potter Day at the Harwood Union Middle and High School just outside of Moretown, where kids swooped into the library wearing borrowed black robes and brandishing hand-made wands like their hero, Harry. Because it celebrates witchcraft, the Potter series has been banned in some schools. But not in this state. In fact, many Vermont schools celebrate books that are banned or challenged elsewhere. For example, prominently displayed on a table at the entrance of Harwood's library are coming-of-age books that are also about coming out. They were all selected by members of a new student club, the Queer-Straight Alliance, who gathered to admire their handiwork on Harry Potter Day. For one transgendered high school student, the table of books sent an important message about tolerance.

Court Interpreters

VPR looked in to the special need for interpreters in the courtroom this year and found that it's one of the toughest translation jobs, so much so that the Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Judiciary offer a special training focused on court interpreting. But through the course, interpreters learn more about the ethics of translating exactly what is said.

Teaching Diversity in A Unique Way

Many have had to sit through diversity training when starting a new job or participating in school orientation. Last year at Lyndon State College students were treated to a unique diversity program. The headliner was Lyndon State College's president, Joe Bertolino. He and his partner, Dr. Bill Leipold, have traveled the country giving talks on diversity and tolerance. They joined VPR to talk about the program- When The Gays Move Into Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.

Commentary Series Address Diversity

Among the commentaries addressing diversity last year was one by Evangelina Holvino on her firsthand knowledge that Dr. Martin Luther King's vision is still an everyday matter and everyone's business.

Women's History Month

As part of Women's History Month, VPR's Commentary Series presented a six-episode series on various points of view on the topic. In one example, Holly Allen wrote: In her Oscar acceptance speech, Patricia Arquette declared, "It's (women's) time to have wage equality once and for all." While her statement drew applause, Arquette faced criticism when, backstage, she added, "it's time for (other groups, including) all the gay people, and all the people of color that we've all fought for to fight for us now." By highlighting the gender wage gap and suggesting that women have earned the support of "gay people... and... people of color," Arquette stirred controversies that have long animated U.S. women's history. The commentary concluded that "we continue to need women's history and gender studies because they force us to account for race, sexual orientation, and other factors – and because the struggle for gender equality continues."

Islam in Vermont

World events, like the shootings at the offices of French satire magazine Charlie Hebdo and the bombing at the 2013 Boston Marathon, have had a negative effect on the opinions held about followers of Islam. But in Vermont, almost 4,000 Muslims have easily integrated into the community. Imam Islam Hassan of the Islamic Society of Vermont discussed the growth and outlook of the Muslim community in the state on VPR's statewide news magazine Vermont Edition.

Special Program: King's Last March:

On April 4th, 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a landmark speech from the pulpit of Riverside Church in New York. He called for an end to the Vietnam War. Exactly one year later, King was assassinated in Memphis. He was 39 years old. King's speech in New York set the tone for the last year of his life. Inside the

church, he was hailed for his brave, outspoken stance against the war. Outside the church, he was roundly condemned – by the mainstream press, by other civil rights activists and, most decidedly, by President Lyndon Johnson. This documentary, broadcast on VPR, traced the final year of King's life.

Special Program: Leadership from the Bottom Up

Usually during Black History Month, we remember Civil Rights icons and reflect on their legacy. But over the past couple of years, State of the Reunion met a new generation of African American leaders. VPR broadcast this program that introduces listeners to this group of leaders and what they're accomplishing in their various corners of America.

Special Program: Who Is This Man

MLK Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech has become the shorthand of the Civil Rights Movement - but we might never have heard it, if it were not for another man, who's largely been forgotten by history: Bayard Rustin. VPR broadcast this program to explore the life and legacy of Rustin, a black, gay, Quaker who brought Gandhian non-violent protest to the Civil Rights movement in America.

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?

The CPB funding constitutes approximately 9 percent of VPR's budget and helps VPR to contribute to its growing role as a news organization and its importance to the public not only as a broadcast organization but as a multi-platform news source for listeners and digital users.

The CPB grant continues to support in-part the 13 daily newscasts which are broadcast each weekday. The grant also helps to support the statewide conversation that occurs in the weekday news magazine Vermont Edition.

As VPR receives no funds from state government, the grant is an important source of funding and support as the demands by the public for digital news and podcasting increases.

The grant helps to make it possible to purchase national programming from NPR, which costs VPR in excess of \$650,000 each year.

Finally, the CPB funding has helped to make possible the network of transmitters and translators that connect Vermont into a statewide community. The mountain ranges of a rural state make it particularly difficult to serve the geographic area with news and music formats, and the grants help to make that possible as well.