

# CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

## LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT FY 2014

### **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.**

The overall goal of WAMC/Northeast Public Radio is to provide programming as varied as the human experience. Our mission is to serve the public by preparing and presenting not-for-profit and non-commercial educational, instructional and cultural radio and live programs that celebrate the diversity of our broadcast and live audience. Our two discrete program schedules and Internet streams provide a unique blend of national and regional news and information, opinion and commentary, artistic, cultural, and musical programming. Twenty-seven translators and transmitters serve listeners in portions of seven northeastern states.

Recognizing the reality of media consolidation, the scarcity of substantive local radio news services, the dearth of opportunities for cultural venues to promote the work they do, and the fundamental necessity of having an informed citizenry, we are committed not only to our cities of licensure but to the broader, regional community we serve. With a large news staff, six regional news bureaus, between fifteen and eighteen daily local newscasts, many hours of locally originating long-form programming each day, and a constantly updated web presence, WAMC continues to engage an ever-growing radio audience.

One way in which WAMC determines the issues most vital to our listeners is through our annual Ascertainment Survey, which helps to guide our news coverage over the coming year. This long-standing survey examines organizational leaders' opinions on a set of pre-selected issues. The top five issues across counties for FY 2014 were the quality of schools, the environment and climate change, affordable health care, the economy, and retirement and Social Security.

We invite listener participation in our Community Advisory Board, which reviews our programming and makes recommendations to our Board of Trustees. We offer ample opportunity for listener engagement through a twenty-four hour Listener Comment Line, encouraging reaction to any of our programs. Comments that are appropriate for broadcast are aired weekly, including comments that may be critical of the station. The panel discussion on the first hour of *The Roundtable* encourages robust discussion via e-mail and social media and our afternoon call-in program, *Vox Pop*, sparks listener interest on a variety of subjects, through

social media as well as on-air conversation. Open forums result in wide-ranging discussions and Monday's *Medical Monday Vox Pop* enables listeners to speak directly to physicians in any number of specialties. WAMC has an extensive web presence at <http://www.wamc.org>, providing Internet streaming of WAMC and WAMC-HD 2, offering podcasts or on-demand listening for many of our programs and integrating our on-air and on-line communities through social media. Our iPhone App allows listeners to stay with us even when they're on the go.

We have developed numerous media, educational, performance venue and community partnerships, some of which will be detailed below. These offer everything from free housing for our news bureaus to valuable music programming to free or greatly reduced rents for station-related events. We broadcast our flagship *Roundtable* program regularly from the Boston Symphony Orchestra's summer home at Tanglewood and at other venues across our listening area. Several of our colleagues in the broadcast and print media are regular panelists on a number of WAMC programs and several staff members teach college level courses at local colleges and universities. We also encourage local organizations to become more involved with the station by inviting them to volunteer during our fund drives.

In addition to the over 2000 hours of locally produced programming WAMC broadcast during FY 2014, The Linda (WAMC's Performing Arts Studio) offered live events, concerts, films and more, much of which was broadcast regionally. Programming included world, folk and popular music, jazz, films, lectures, forums and debates. We continued to partner with a number of local, neighborhood arts and community organizations to bring special events to the community.

**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.**

WAMC's partnerships with community collaborators have been crucial to the success of our work. Among our key initiatives are:

**\* Arts, Culture, Politics and more on *The Roundtable*:**

WAMC's morning program, *The Roundtable*, is a daily 3 hour live program committed not only to strong and in-depth coverage of world affairs but also to keeping listeners informed about what's going on in their communities. The show's hallmark is thoughtful interviews with A-list newsmakers, authors, artists, sports figures, actors, and people with interesting stories to tell.

The program begins with a panel discussion touching upon the news of the day, with a regional slant provided by host Joe Donahue and WAMC President Alan Chartock and one or more guests to round out the panel. Representatives of the educational community, the LGBTQ community, and local newspaper and television reporters have been on hand to participate and listeners weigh in on the topics through e-mail, social media and, on occasion, live call-ins.

Each day on *The Roundtable*, WAMC features a *Congressional Corner* segment affording listeners an opportunity to hear directly from their representative about issues that are of most concern to them. Every Member of Congress and/or United States Senator who represents any geographical area within WAMC's broadcast range is invited to appear and almost always does. During an election season, we invite all candidates to appear. During 2014 we heard from: Bill Owens, NY-D; Paul Tonko, NY-D; Chris Gibson, NY-R; Chuck Schumer, NY-D; Kirsten Gillibrand, NY-D; Peter Welch, VT-D; Bernie Sanders, VT-D; Richard Neal, MA-D; Jim McGovern, MA-D; Sean Patrick Maloney, NY-D; Nan Hayworth, NY-R; Nita Lowey, NY-D; Chris Day, NY-R; Jim Fischer, NY-R; Elise Stefanik, NY-R; Aaron Woolf, D; Matt Funiciello, G; and Sean Eldridge, D.

The program invites listener essays, which are read by their authors, and local booksellers offer weekly book picks. The local arts reporter from our weekly arts newspaper, *Metroland*, appears every Thursday with arts recommendations and conversations with presenting organizations, filmmakers, musicians, public policy makers, museums, and other regional organizations round out the mix.

Our partnership with the Albany Symphony Orchestra provides valuable content on *The Roundtable* as well as music programming broadcast monthly on the station.

*Ideas Matter: Checking in with the Public Humanities* is a non-funded partnership with the state humanities councils in our seven state listening area. Each Friday, we welcome representatives from the humanities councils or council-supported projects to discuss varying topics in the humanities.

#### **\* Outstanding Regional News Programming**

In order to serve our large broadcast area, WAMC has established satellite news bureaus in various locations. These are, in most cases, housed free of charge thanks to the generosity of organizations with whom we partner. They include:

Southern Adirondack Bureau at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY

North Country Bureau in Plattsburgh, NY

Hudson Valley Bureau at SUNY New Paltz, NY

Berkshire Bureau at the Berkshire Eagle newspaper in Pittsfield, MA

Pioneer Valley Bureau at Western New England University in Springfield, MA

Capital District Bureau in Albany

News from the State Capitol, in partnership with New York State Public Radio

WAMC employs 16 full-time, 2 part-time, and 4 contract journalists, making our newsroom the largest radio news service in the region. Our colleagues in broadcasting have lauded us for our news gathering efforts and, during our fund drives, literally thousands of listeners comment on the excellence of our programming when they phone in their pledges.

Because our reporters and Bureau Chiefs are out and about in their communities, attending events and functions and keeping their ears to the ground, we are able to provide a unique perspective on regional news while operating efficiently and cost-effectively through our Albany-based hub.

In addition to our hundreds of hours of regular programming, we aired a special eight part series on *The Student Loan Crisis*. We looked at how legislative efforts might impact the cost of college; what schools are doing to accommodate adult learners; the future of debt repayment; the trend in hiring educational consultants; a campaign underway to forgive the student loans of young farmers; father and son professors comparing their generations' student debts; the "sticker shock" accompanying student loan repayments; and how new parents are coping with saving for their kids' educations while dealing with their own debt.

As a run-up to Election Day, WAMC news presented a seven part series on *The Vote*, focusing on politics and voting in the Berkshires; getting young voters to the polls in an off-year election; a charter change in Saratoga Springs; the state of the absentee ballot; low voter turnout in New York State; the shifting dynamics in New York's northernmost Congressional district; and how laws, administrative procedures, and campaign dirty tricks have been used to try to influence the outcome of elections by means of voter suppression.

#### **\* Event Partnerships during FY 2014**

-- WAMC maintains a vital presence in our community and reaches out to new listeners by being a media sponsor for various events, including First Nights, Pride events, community festivals, and musical performances, a number of which are detailed below in Section 4.

-- We enjoy valuable partnerships with both the Albany Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

-- WAMC was a co-sponsor of FUSION, an evening of urban art, music, architecture, food, and fashion, inspired by the evolution of our urban neighborhood. Proceeds from FUSION benefited the Albany Barn, the once abandoned St. Joseph's Academy building in the City of Albany's Arbor Hill neighborhood where WAMC is located. St. Joseph's will be home to 22 low cost live-work apartments for artists and 15,000 square feet of creative enterprise and community art space called "The Barn."

#### **\* Educational Partnerships**

WAMC's daily module, *The Academic Minute*, features researchers from colleges and universities around the world, keeping listeners abreast of what's new and exciting in the academy. Hosted by Dr. Lynn Pasquerella, President of Mount Holyoke College, *The Academic Minute* features a different professor each day, drawing experts from top institutions.

WAMC maintains an active internship program offering both part-time and full-time internships to area college students interested in journalism, radio production, communications, administration, and media sales. Students spend their internships receiving hands on training at the station and have become an integral part of our operation.

WAMC has solid relationships with regional colleges and universities, featuring professors as experts on our local and national programs. We partner with Western New England College to offer journalism students hands-on training in news gathering in their own region and we work with *Legislative Gazette* students from SUNY New Paltz, teaching them how to write and edit for radio and create on-air stories.

Three of WAMC's senior staff members teach university-level courses in Communications and Journalism at local colleges and universities.

**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.**

The impact of our initiatives can be gauged by the unprecedented success of our fund-raising, the scores of awards we have received, and the measurable growth in our online community as evidenced by increases across the board in page views, visitors to live audio and video streams, Twitter and Facebook followers, online contributions, and users of our mobile applications. Anecdotal evidence also comes from specific feedback from listeners, both throughout the year via their online e-mails and comments, and during our on-air fund-raising campaigns when they are invited to comment on our programming. We can also point to a verifiable increase in the number of listeners commenting on the *Roundtable's* first hour and the fact we field far more requests for community organizations to appear on the program than we can possibly accommodate. Those we cannot feature are invited to post to our online community calendar.

**Awards:**

During FY 2014, Joe Donahue won a Communicator Award of Excellence in the Host category and Allison Dunne received an Award of Distinction for News.

The New York State Broadcasters recognized WAMC with awards for Best Coverage of Local Sporting Event and Best Feature Story.

The Associated Press awarded WAMC "Best Interview" for *Alan Chartock in Conversation with Bishop Howard Hubbard*; "Best News Story" for *The Vote*; "Best Feature" for *In New York, More Local Ingredients Mean Better Beer*; "Best Sports Coverage" for *Just Before New Season, Yankees Renew Series with Army*; and "General Excellence in Use of Medium" for *The Day Apartheid Came to Albany*,

**Fund Raising:**

WAMC's three annual fund drives bear witness to the station's success – listeners contributed over \$3 million dollars during FY 2014 in support of the station's work. During pledge drives, listeners have the opportunity to tell us exactly what they like – and what they don't like – about WAMC. All of their comments are read on-air. During FY 2014, numerous groups invested their time in the station by volunteering to answer phones during the Fund Drives. They include the Appalachian Mountain Club, Mohawk Hudson Chapter; Bank of America/Merrill Lynch; Beta Alpha Psi (U Albany); Cohoes Music Hall; College of St Rose Communications students; Coxsackie Athens High School; Field Goods; GE Global Research; Helderberg Community Energy; the Capital District Humanist Society; IHS Global Spec; Lexington Vacuum; New Visions Law & Government Program; Old Lesbians Organizing for Change; Proctors Theatre; Scenic Hudson; Whiskers Benevolent League for Animals; and the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

**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.**

WAMC's daily locally produced news magazines and call-in programs regularly cover issues of relevance to minority groups including people of color, women, children, and people with disabilities and our subject-specific public affairs programs which are distributed nationally to other public radio stations free-of-charge also address minority and diverse audience needs.

The Linda (WAMC's Performing Arts Studio) offers live lectures concerts films and more, much of which is broadcast regionally. Programming includes world folk and popular music, jazz, films, lectures forums and debates.

This past year we started supporting a program (through discounted rental fees) called Women With Voices. WWV features original staged plays dealing with issues confronting African American Women. Antoinette Lawson writes, produces and directs these performance pieces and is now receiving direct support from the University at Albany.

Our collaboration with other individuals and organizations of color has helped The Linda to produce new and diverse programming.

We are now in our second year working as an incubator and Fiscal Sponsor for the Capital Cinema Cultural Exchange filmmakers lab that brings foreign filmmakers into the region and highlights cultural exchange and appreciation through film screenings and other events.

Our work continues with the International Center of the Capital Region and now includes a new project starting in April 2015, ICCR will be teaming up with the Linda, to hold ethnic evenings each quarter celebrating the world around us. The first is scheduled for Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> and will focus on Japan in honor of Washington DC's annual cherry blossom festival. Four events will be held in 2015, each with a distinctive theme and will highlight the history, art, food and music of a particular country/culture. Event Passports will be distributed to those in attendance. The small booklet will contain a page for each participating entity (artists, restaurants and ethnic organizations), with a photo and a question having to do with the evening's theme. Attendees will be able to go to the different booths where they will find or be told the answer to the question and have their "passport" stamped providing them with a unique social learning experience. Those who answer all the questions can have their names entered into a drawing for prizes donated by the ethnic organizations and Passport sponsors.

Since making a concerted outreach effort to our diverse local community we have helped bring a wide variety of new programming to the Linda. Through affordable rentals, partnerships and grants we have provided access to a high quality performance venue. Individual producers and organizations have included United Sisters of New York, Black Women's Association of Albany, The Wolf Pack, Brighter Choice Charter School, Amnesty International, International Center of the Capital Region, Economic Development Forum, The Book Club, Albany Poets, Jennifer McMullen Presents, Boys and Girls Clubs, Focus Churches and Capital Pride Center. Utilizing our services, these organizations and others have presented quality programming for a broader and more diverse clientele with events such as inner-city youth theater performances, gospel comedy nights, community concern meetings, fundraisers, CD release parties, spoken word events, fundraisers, awards ceremonies, youth and adult talent competitions, social networking events and more.

**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?**

Since our grant is used to purchase national programming, any decrease in the amount of that grant would either necessitate our seeking other funding to purchase such programming or would result in our cutting back in the usage of such programming.

