

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT FY 2015

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 non-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-eight translators and transmitters serve listeners in portions of seven northeastern states serving over 400,000 monthly listeners.

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. In 2015, WAMC launched a campaign to attract younger audiences, ramping up its social media presence and increasing the number of available podcasts.

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 2015 were the environment (including climate change), the quality of schools, race relations, affordable health care, and the economy.

We also 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, inviting reaction to any of our programs. All comments that are appropriate for broadcast are aired weekly, including comments that may be critical of the station. Our afternoon phone-in program, *Vox Pop*, sparks listener discussion 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. Our morning *Roundtable* panel discussion invites listener feedback via e-mail, much of which is read on-air. 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.

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, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center 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.

In addition to the over 2000 hours of locally produced programming WAMC broadcast during FY 2015, The Linda (WAMC's Performing Arts Studio) offered live lectures, concerts films and more, many of which were broadcast regionally. Programming included world, folk and popular music, jazz, films, comedy, lectures, forums and debates. We continue to establish partnerships with a growing 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:

*** Our Unique Fund Drive Partnerships**

Over the years, like many other public broadcasters, WAMC has offered thank-you gifts to our donors for specific pledge amounts. In an effort to help other community organizations and offer a different kind of "thank you" to our donors, we have begun partnering with various local and national organizations. When listeners call in with their pledge, instead of offering them a CD, coffee mug or tote bag, we are able to give them the opportunity to help someone else. For example, during the February 2015 fund drive, WAMC partnered with an organization called *Reach Out & Read* and a publishing company. For each \$100.00 pledge the station received during a pre-determined period of time, instead of receiving a typical thank you gift, Charlesbridge Publishing donated three doctor-recommended books to a *Reach Out & Read* early literacy program in our area in the donor's name. These books are the essential element of a program that enables families to make reading aloud together a daily activity. Through this partnership, our listeners committed 2,556 books to an underserved population. The partnership was applauded not only by the partnering organizations, but by the listeners

who participated and area physicians who lauded the benefits of the program.

In June of 2015, WAMC partnered with *Waka Waka*, a Dutch NGO, to provide light to those affected by the earthquake in Nepal. *Waka Waka* (“Shine bright” in Swahili) uses the latest patented solar technology to provide safe, sustainable light harnessed from the sun. For each \$100.00 pledge to WAMC, *Waka Waka* sent a solar light to aid relief efforts in Nepal and more than 1100 solar lights were sent to Nepal in the name of WAMC donors.

Also in June, WAMC joined with New York State United Teachers (“NYSUT”) to facilitate the donation of backpacks filled with essential school supplies from *Kids in Need* plus an age-appropriate book from *First Book* to a disadvantaged child. For each \$100 pledge to WAMC, our partners at NYSUT and *Kids in Need* provided books and backpacks to community children. The *Kids In Need Foundation* is a national nonprofit whose mission is to ensure that every child is prepared to learn and succeed by providing free school supplies nationally to students most in need. Through their generosity, WAMC members triggered the donations of over 1000 backpacks during the June 2015 fund drive.

Other organizations with whom we partnered in FY2015 include the Agricultural Stewardship Association, Soldier On, and the Adirondack Council. By offering listeners these opportunities to leverage their pledge dollars and help not only their public radio station but people in need, we have facilitated vital connections between various organizations, to the mutual good of all.

We also reach out to area organizations and invite them to send representatives to answer phones during our three annual fund drives. These organizations 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; Humanist Society; New Visions Law & Government; Old Lesbians Organizing for Change; Proctors Theatre; Scenic Hudson; Whiskers Benevolent League for Animals and the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

*** Events**

In FY 2015, WAMC’s membership and fund drive department established the WAMC Volunteer Ambassador program. Volunteer Ambassadors attend community events with WAMC staff members to promote WAMC. The Ambassadors provide information about the station, encourage new membership, engage guests by talking about the station, answering questions, collecting feedback and generally create a welcoming presence at a booth at festivals and seasonal events.

During FY 2015, WAMC Volunteer Ambassadors and WAMC staff had booths at two events: the Tulip Festival at Washington Park in Albany, NY on May 9th & 10th and the Capital Pride Festival in Washington Park on June 13th. We plan to continue the program into FY 2016.

WAMC also acted as media sponsor and had a presence at a number of arts and cultural events across our region.

*** 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 about 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 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. Here is the current list: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY); Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT); Rep. Elizabeth Esty (D-CT 5th District); Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY 18th District); Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY 12th District); Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY 20th District); Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT 2nd District); Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA 1st District); Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA 2nd District); Rep. Chris Gibson (R-NY 19th District); Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY 21st District); Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT At-large District).

In addition to live and pre-recorded interviews, the program invites listener essays which are read by their authors, and local booksellers offer weekly book picks. Daily conversations with presenting organizations, filmmakers, musicians, public policy makers, museums, and other regional organizations round out the mix.

*** 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

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.

WAMC's newsroom is 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. A few highlights of FY 2015 include:

- Live election night coverage of the midterms and state elections featured a two-hour studio special including live remote reports from New York's 18th, 19th and 21st Congressional district races, the gubernatorial races in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont (three of which were too close to call that night), some key state Senate races in New York, and Springfield, where MGM officials celebrated a victory in a ballot question race that could have nullified Massachusetts' casino gambling law.
- Special coverage including live broadcasts upon the death of former New York Governor Mario Cuomo and winter weather studio updates. The station also broadcast special coverage the day after Cuomo's death, including audio from the vast archives
- WAMC News had six news bureaus in operation over the past year, bolstering a robust news gathering operation headquartered in Albany with reporters based in the Capital Region, Southern Adirondacks, North Country, Berkshires, Pioneer Valley and Hudson Valley.
- In addition to several other mini-series reports, WAMC News embarked on three department-wide special series over the past year, including an eight-part investigation of the student loan crisis in December, a lighter six-part series on spring traditions the first full week of April, and a six-part examination of crime in our communities and some novel tactics being used to counter it.

* 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 academia. Hosted by Dr. Lynn Pasquerella, President of Mount Holyoke College, *The Academic Minute* features a different professor each day, drawing experts from top national and international 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, frequently featuring professors as commentators and experts on our local and national programs. We partner with several colleges to offer journalism students hands-on training in news gathering in their own region. 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 seen in the unprecedented success of our fund-raising, the measurable success of our fund-drive partnerships, the scores of awards we have received, and the 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 but those we can feature often write in, telling us how much their appearance on *The Roundtable* contributed toward the success of their event. By way of illustration, recently, WAM, a local presenting organization, asked if it would be possible to feature them on an upcoming segment:

WAM is co-producing a play in development ... that Jayne Atkinson is directing and a local Berkshire professional, Rachel Siegel, is writing and performing. See the info below- any chance of a slot the week of March 7?

After the appearance, we received the following note:

Thanks so much for having Gwendolyn and I on for 'Facing Our Truth'- over 400 people came to the event!!!

Kristen

Awards:

During FY 2015 WAMC received awards from:

Massachusetts Broadcasters Association Sound Bites

Sports Feature

Yankees Renew Rivalry With Army

Best Spot News Story

Paul Tuthill "Markey Wins Senate Seat"

New York State Broadcasters Association in the 49th Annual Awards for Excellent

in Broadcasting:

Best public affairs program or series: The Capitol Connection

Best spot news: "Maloney Declares Victory; Hayworth Does Not Concede"

Best feature story: "Preserving The Story of the American Juke Box"

Best local sporting event: "UMass Basketball Player Joins Growing List of Openly Gay Athletes"

New York State Associated Press Awards

Best News Special/Documentary

WAMC, Albany, "WAMC's Alan Chartock In Conversation with Infectious Disease Doctor John Bennett Robbins," Alan Chartock, David Guistina

WAMC, Albany, "Joan Rivers: In Memoriam," Joe Donahue, Sarah LaDuke

Best News Series

WAMC, Albany, "WAMC News Student Loan Series," Staff

Best Continuing News Coverage

WAMC, Albany, "Jim Levulis - North Adams Regional Hospital Closes,"

WAMC, Albany, "Dave Lucas - Oil Trains Threaten Albany, Depending Who You Ask,"

Best Feature – First Place Award

WAMC, Albany, "Preserving The Story Of The American Jukebox," Lucas Willard

Best Sports Coverage – First Place Award

WAMC, Albany, "Say It Ain't So, Jeter," Ian Pickus

Art Athens General Excellence of Individual Reporting

WAMC, Albany, Allison Dunne

General Excellence in Use of Medium – First Place Award

WAMC, Albany, "Preserving the Story of the American Jukebox," Lucas Willard

WAMC, Albany, "North Adams Goes Unsilent: Electronic Audio Experience Fills Streets," Jim Levulis

Fund Raising:

WAMC's three annual fund drives bear witness to the station's success – listeners contributed over \$3 million dollars during FY 2015 in support of the station's work and underwriting by area businesses and organizations also exceeded \$3 million. 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.

Fund Drive Partnerships:

Our cause-driven fund drive partnerships have, in particular, drawn an incredible response from both our partners and from our listeners who are enthusiastic in their response. Hundreds of callers made it a point to tell their volunteer that they thought the partnerships were the best kind of fund raising and the best "premiums" we ever offered.

The partnering organizations also saw quantifiable results. One example involved the *Reach Out & Read* program described above. Maddy Conway, Annual Fund Manager for *Reach Out & Read* noted, “We are thrilled with the outcome of this promotion, and really enjoyed all of the comments as well. Some of them were really nice words of support from *Reach Out and Read* providers and families.” She added, “I looked through our Google analytics, and it appears that we did have a small increase in web traffic during the fund drive! I also spoke with our National Book Manager, who works with Charlesbridge, and she told me that they were very pleased because they saw a noticeable increase in web traffic that week. Mostly, we are just incredibly thrilled to have been able to partner with you all. Having our mission and model broadcast on air is extremely helpful in building awareness of our program, educating about the great need, and sharing the incredible impact of every book. Most importantly, your listeners are our target audience of supporters—they are engaged, and care about the welfare of their local communities. Along these lines, we really benefit from the support and endorsement of WAMC. Public radio is a very respected source of information for many of our supporters. They trust and listen to you, and having your support builds our credibility and highlights the true value of our intervention. WAMC is a great organization for us to partner with!”

We’ve had the same kind of enthusiastic support from other organizations with whom we have partnered and plan to reach out to more new organizations in future.

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 2015, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2016. 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. A new addition to our support of diversity and culture is our relationship with **Women with Voices**. In 2006, Women with Voices was create as an organization dedicated to speaking to today’s women by addressing their issues and concerns through theatrical productions and literary works.

We are working on projects with International Center of the Capital Region and Capital Cinema Cultural Exchange that will bring foreign filmmakers into the region and highlight

cultural exchange and appreciation through film screenings and other events.

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 included, The L.O.W. Foundation, The Schuyler Flatts Burial Project, Capitol Region National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms, International Center of the Capital Region, Capital Region Chamber Tech Valley Leadership, Central Avenue Business Improvement District Neighborhood Capitalize Albany Workshop, New York For Democracy, Song Writing With Soldiers, Pride Center, Columbia Arts Team, The Option Institute, The University Of Albany Foundation for the benefit of the Cross Charity, and Boys and Girls Club of Albany.

They have utilized our services to present 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 the bulk of 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.