

# CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

## LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT FY 2016

### **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 430,000 monthly listeners, as reported by the Spring, 2016 Neilson Audio Survey.

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. WAMC continues to add younger audiences, having ramped up its social media presence and added more 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 2016 were (1) The Environment (including climate change); (2) Health Care; (3) Quality of Education; (4) Race Relations/The Economy (tied).

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 has been extended to 90 minutes. This discussion of the events in the news 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 2016, 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 October 2016 fund drive, WAMC partnered with the Food Pantries of the Capital District. During a pre-determined period of time, each \$100.00 pledge the station received triggered a donation of 125 pounds of food to the regional food pantry by MVP, a local health care provider. Thanks to the generosity of MVP, an

anonymous donor, and WAMC listeners, we provided 93,750 pounds of food, or 78,125 meals, to the food insecure in our region.

In October of 2016, WAMC also partnered with *Waka Waka*, a Dutch NGO, to provide light to those affected by the civil war in Syria. *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 Syria and more than 1500 solar lights were sent to Syria in the wake of the violence there in the name of WAMC donors.

In February of 2016, WAMC joined with the Seymour Fox Foundation to provide necessary services to the homeless through Joseph's House and Shelter. Each \$100 pledge to WAMC triggered a donation from Seymour Fox Memorial Foundation which made it possible for three homeless people to stay at Joseph's House emergency shelter for one night. The services included a warm and safe place to sleep, three meals, access to personal care, access to medical and dental care, legal services and other support services to help them stay off the street.

In June of 2016, WAMC and the Seymour Fox Foundation partnered with the Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley and Our Ability. In this case, each \$100 pledge to WAMC, triggered a donation from Seymour Fox Memorial Foundation which made it possible for a young disabled person to be identified by The Independent Living Center and have the opportunity to participate in peer support and career exploration activities and then to work with Our Ability to secure permanent employment.

Other organizations with which we partnered with during our Fund Drives in FY2016 include the Adirondack Council, Reach Out and Read, and the Kids in Need Foundation. 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**

Volunteer Ambassadors attended community events with WAMC staff members to promote WAMC. The Ambassadors provided information about the station, encouraged new membership, engaged guests by talking about the station, answered questions, collected feedback and generally created a welcoming presence at a booth at festivals and seasonal events.

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 90 minute panel discussion about the news of the day with a regional slant provided by host Joe Donahue and WAMC President and CEO Alan Chartock, and one or more guests to round out the panel. Representatives of the educational community, the LGBTQ community, the African American community and local newspaper and television reporters have been on hand to participate and listeners weigh in on the topics through e-mail.

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 5<sup>th</sup> District); Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY 18<sup>th</sup> District); Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY 12<sup>th</sup> District); Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY 20<sup>th</sup> District); Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT 2<sup>nd</sup> District); Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA 1<sup>st</sup> District); Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA 2<sup>nd</sup> District); Rep. John Faso (R-NY 19<sup>th</sup> District); Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY 21<sup>st</sup> District); Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT At-large District). Because it was an election year, we also spoke with other candidates including Zephyr Teachout, Claudia Tenney, Matt Funiciello, Joe Vitollo, Mike Derrick, Martin Babinec, John Faso, Thomas Sullivan, Phil Oliva, and Kim Myers.

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 and Vassar College, 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 2016 include:

- Live election night coverage of the 2015 municipal elections featured a three-hour studio special including live remote reports from Chicopee, Pittsfield, Plattsburgh, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, Troy, Hartford, Utica and the Hudson Valley.
- Special coverage during the 2016 presidential primaries included coverage of the races in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont and other key races, with contributions from NPR and WAMC inserts.
- 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.
- WAMC, in partnership with four good-government groups, carried a special hour program at 4 p.m. on Feb. 8, 2016 featuring a rare visit to Albany by U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara of New York's Southern District. The address and interview with WAMC's Dr. Alan Chartock was co-sponsored by four good-government groups: Citizens Union, Common Cause New York, the League of Women Voters and the New York Public Interest Research Group. Bharara spearheaded the convictions of former state Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos on federal corruption charges.

#### \* 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. *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.

The interest in the panel discussion that comprised the first hour of *The Roundtable* was so great during this recent election year that we extended the conversation by another thirty minutes. 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 2015 WAMC received awards from:*

**MASSACHUSETTS BROADCASTER ASSOCIATION SOUNDBITES**

Unsung Heroes Series: Keeping Pittsfield Moving

**NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATED PRESS AWARDS**

**Best Newscast**

Finalist for Midday Magazine, May 2015

**Digital Presence**

Finalist

**Best Feature**

Finalist, "for "Café for Kids Aims To Fight Food Insecurity" by Jessica Bloustein Marshall

**Best Continuing Coverage**

WAMC was a finalist for Pat Bradley's coverage of Escape from Clinton Correctional Facility.

**Best Public Service**

Pat Bradley's coverage of Plattsburgh's charter review process – First Place

**Best Sports Feature**

For best sports feature, WAMC was a finalist for "It's 'Turn 2' For Jeter In Capital Region, Where He Played In 1994" by Ian Pickus. – First Place

**Best News Special/Documentary**

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

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

**Best News Series**

"WAMC News Student Loan Series," Staff

**Best Continuing News Coverage**

"Jim Levulis - North Adams Regional Hospital Closes"

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

**Best Feature**

"Preserving the Story of The American Jukebox," Lucas Willard

**Best Sports Coverage**

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

**General Excellence of Individual Reporting**

Art Athens, Allison Dunne

**General Excellence in Use of Medium**

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

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

**NEW YORK STATE BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION AWARDS**

**Outstanding Local Sporting Event**

"Hooley's Heroics Lift U-Albany to NCAA's: Oklahoma

**Outstanding Spot News**

"Escape from Clinton Correctional Facility"

**COMMUNICATOR AWARDS**

**Award of Excellence for on-air talent:** Joe Donahue

**Production/Sound Design:** "Preserving the Story of the American Juke Box," Lucas Willard

**Production/Sound Design:** "North Adams Goes Unsilent," Jim Levulis

**MIRROR AWARDS**

Finalist in the category: Best Single Story - Radio, Television, Cable or Online Broadcast Media for the story "Local Media Question Pittsfield's Press Protocol," 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 2016 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. We continue to reach out to other organizations for fund drive partnerships and are able to feature two or three during each drive.

**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 2016, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2017. 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

As part of ongoing events in conjunction with the *A City of Immigrants* celebration in Albany, WAMC Northeast Public Radio and the Albany *Times Union* partnered for a live panel from The Linda in March of 2016. The live broadcast was free and open to the public. Hosted by WAMC's Dr. Alan Chartock, the panel included Paul Grondahl of the *Times Union* - who published a series on Albany and immigration in the newspaper - Maseeh Mukhtar, an immigrant from Afghanistan and a Ph.D. student in nanotechnology at SUNY Polytechnic, and Uzma Popal, an immigrant from Pakistan and director of the Muslim Soup Kitchen project.

"It has been a staple of American democracy that we are a nation of immigrants, and certainly, Albany is a city of immigrants," Chartock said. "We hope to explore our common perspective as immigrants, and we love the fact that we continue our very close relationship with the Albany Times Union in making this happen."

"One of the key roles of the leading news organizations in a community must be to encourage dialogue on the important issues of the day," *Times Union* publisher Rex Smith said. "And if we better understand our immigrant heritage, we can better explore the contemporary challenges presented by immigration."

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.