

## SAS RADIO REPORT

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.

WKSU continues to initiate, conduct and be involved with successful initiatives that connect with underserved audiences. WKSU is Ohio's largest public radio outlet. Station programming is broadcast from a main tower near Akron, four regional towers and two translator transmitters. The combined coverage area reaches listeners in 22 counties in Northeast and North Central Ohio, as well as parts of Western Pennsylvania – home to nearly four million people living in large urban cities, smaller towns and rolling rural farmland. The towers broadcast four HD Radio digital channels (primary broadcast, classical music, Folk Alley and all news). This content is also available streaming online.

WKSU began a new initiative for FY16 that brought together members of the news and programming staff with the general public in a series of open discussions in the communities served by WKSU. Community Conversations invited listeners and others who were interested in learning more about the WKSU newsroom and giving voice to issues that concerned them. The events are unique opportunities to have one on one dialogues and discover more about all of the communities in WKSU's coverage area. Because the station has the largest radio footprint in Ohio, covering part of 22 counties, the reporting focus is often on the bigger cities – Cleveland, Akron and Canton. Community Conversations (which were free and held primarily at Kent State University regional campuses) took WKSU to listeners in urban, suburban and rural areas.

All comments made during the Community Conversations events were transcribed and publically posted on Facebook. The newsroom took note of new ideas, or frequently recurring topics, for future reporting (including an extensive series on the Opioid epidemic – a topic raised in all of the discussions).

Other community outreach included an event featuring local Morning Edition host Amanda Rabinowitz and sports columnist Terry Pluto (who have an ongoing conversation each Wednesday) and an on-campus listening party for the new season of NPR's *Invisibilia*. The success of the listening party, which was heavily promoted via social media, created a conversation about a series of similar events keyed to younger listeners.

WKSU sponsors many arts and culture events, making an effort to attend in person and make personal contact and share station information with diverse audiences. One such event is the Tremont Arts and Cultural Festival, a two-day event featuring fine art and crafts, community outreach organizations, music and a mix of food reflecting the different ethnic heritages of those living in the neighborhood. WKSU also has a long-standing relationship with the Cleveland International Film Festival. Recognized for its inclusion of foreign language, LGBTQ and urban films, CIFF is truly one of the region's most-diverse cultural institutions.

WKSU's news coverage in FY16 focused on local government, politics, ongoing police reform, fracking, the integration of Bhutanese refugees in Akron, local elections throughout the region, healthcare, and infrastructure although other dominant themes included education, science and the arts. Standout stories examining diversity included a report on Cleveland students building partnerships with prisoners and features in WKSU's Quick Bites series on urban and rural food deserts and a program that teaches incarcerated felons fine French cooking skills and the chef who puts them in restaurants after their release.

A summary of WKSU's news coverage this year:

- The impact of oil and gas drilling on the economic, environmental and social fabric of our region.
- The intersection of innovation, research and business in Northeast Ohio.
- The faces and the sounds of the arts including musicians, public art and the food scene in the towns and cities of our region.
- Social justice issues throughout our region, including race relations, police/community relations and police reforms.
- Race relations in our region including follow-up coverage of the police officer charged with shooting two unarmed motorists after a police car chase through Cleveland and the fallout from the eventual consent decree.
- Cleveland's preparations for the Republican National Convention.
- Local election primaries throughout our 22 counties.
- The business of healthcare, looking at the economic impact of biomed on the region.
- Infrastructure focusing on air travel and the fallout from the loss of airport hubs in Ohio.
- An in-depth examination of the Bhutanese community in Akron focusing on what this new and growing community means to the future of the city.

In the coming year, we plan to continue and to explore further the following topics:

- Republican National Convention in Cleveland.
- Political campaigns driven by what people believe are the most important issues as opposed to what the candidates are saying we should care about.
- Local and national 2016 general elections.
- Follow-up on the election's results and what it means for our listeners.
- Opioid Crisis.
- Infrastructure.
- Economy.

All stories from the WKSU newsroom are available online, often with informational links and additional story background. Stand-alone web areas were created for Namaste: A Past in Bhutan, a Future in Akron and political reporting. There are also web areas for the Exploradio series on science and innovation in Northeast Ohio and Quick Bites. The new WKSU.org website allows reporters to assign categories to their posts and make them easier to find and share through social media. Community events are searchable from their own calendar and from web features for sponsored organizations. The station continues to send a free, twice-monthly e-newsletter with news, programming and event information to all community members who are interested.

Web-only initiatives for FY16 included participation in StoryCorps' Great Thanksgiving Listen, a project that encouraged people across the county to share family stories during the Thanksgiving holiday. The stories were captured on cell phones via an app and copied to the StoryCorps archives at the Library of Congress.

Along with WKSU.org, station content can be streamed via free mobile apps. Folk Alley has its own distinct free app, which includes access to streaming audio and Folk Alley Sessions video performances. A new WKSU mobile app is currently in beta testing and will offer enhanced news content, access to public radio podcasts and increased visibility for the station's social media outlets.

In February 2016, WKSU relaunched the station's website to respond to the general increase in online viewing from mobile devices. WKSU.org is now responsive, allowing the layout to instantly adapt to screen sizes ranging from desktop and laptop to smartphone and tablet. The prime focus of the site continues to be the stories created by the WKSU news team and content partners such as the Ohio Public Radio Statehouse News Bureau, Great Lakes Today, and StateImpact Ohio.

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.

The News Department, in cooperation with WCPN (public radio affiliate in Cleveland, Ohio), and WOSU (public radio affiliate in Columbus, Ohio), continued a joint project called "StateImpact Ohio: Eye on Education." This was the first of eight collaborative stations with NPR to be approved and up-and-running. The on-line and on-air reporting has been picked up by local newspapers, the entire public radio network in Ohio, public radio stations in surrounding states and NPR as well. Although, NPR wound down its support of StateImpact, three Ohio stations, including WKSU chose to maintain it at full strength. It remains a key source of education reporting in our state.

WKSU has an ongoing commitment to working with WCPN, our public radio colleagues in Cleveland to insure the broadest coverage for our listeners. This includes StateImpact mentioned above, and the Statehouse News Bureau bringing WKSU listeners news from our capitol in Columbus, OH. We also collaborate with WVIZ public television station in Cleveland as our reporter ML Schultze participates in a public affairs panel broadcast on radio and television.

This year WKSU collaborated with radio, television and newspapers through the state in "Your Vote Ohio", an initiative designed to cover political topics that voters are interested in rather than what the politicians want us to cover. This lays the groundwork for collaboration through this partnership on additional projects in the coming year. Possible new topics include but are not limited to immigration and healthcare, but are not firmly agreed upon at this writing.

WKSU prides itself on being an integral part of Northeast Ohio. The station provides a public radio and media service, as well as taking pride in being a visible force in the

community. WKSU staff members participate in various community-related activities. Our senior reporter/digital editor is past-president of the Akron Press Club and past-president of the Ohio Associate Press Media Editors. Staff regularly speak to community groups, ranging from the Akron Women's Club to the Canton Early College Program, and speak with groups of high school and college students. In February 2016, 70 middle school students who were part of the Tom Tod Ideas program in Canton learned more about journalism in a day of activities coordinated by WKSU in collaboration with the Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

WKSU staff members – including reporters, on-air hosts, External Relations and administrative staff – supported cultural and arts organizations by serving as WKSU representatives and building community engagement at regional events such as EarthFest (an environmental education event held at the Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds near Cleveland), Canton First Friday at the Canton Museum of Art and Art in the Park in Kent. On an ongoing basis, WKSU staff also provide personal tours for service organizations including the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Leadership Portage County, various homeschool groups, etc.

WKSU continues to be a strong supporter of arts and cultural organizations and events throughout the region by offering promotional assistance for institutions including The Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Apollo's Fire, the Akron Art Museum, the Canton Museum of Art, Magical Theatre Company (a theatre group for young audiences), Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the National First Ladies' Library and Museum and many others. WKSU has sponsored and hosted events for the Cleveland International Film Festival, Tremont Arts & Cultural Festival and Downtown@Dusk (a free concert series in Akron). Attendance at these activities in communities throughout WKSU's 22-county listening area is a strong reinforcement for the positive work being created by organizations throughout Northeast Ohio.

WKSU is also the producing home of FolkAlley.com, a streaming music service featuring folk, Americana and roots artists. Folk Alley offers hosted 24-hour streaming audio on its website, along with a two-hour weekly program that is syndicated nationally. Because of the reach of the Internet, Folk Alley is a global force for the preservation and promotion of tradition-based music, finding the service a worldwide audience made up of multiple generations, ethnic heritages and nations of origin. NPR often uses Folk Alley hosts as genre experts. Folk Alley's stream can be accessed from FolkAlley.com, NPR.org, iTunes, TunedIn, Live365 and other streaming sites.

Along with Folk Alley audio content, the site features music reviews, previews and artist profiles in the InFolkUs blog and exclusive Folk Alley Sessions performance videos produced by Folk Alley in Kent, Ohio, and Saranac Lake, New York, as well as remote recordings from festivals across North America. Folk Alley also posts regularly on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, sharing performance content, folk music news and links to InFolkUs blog posts. Content from Folk Alley is often shared with NPR for the NPR Music website.

Since 1996, the annual Hunger Challenge has been an opportunity for WKSU to help address an important social need. This very special fundraiser helps regional foodbanks raise needed funds and, most-importantly, brings attention to the good and very

necessary work these organizations do in the communities served by WKSU. Because the FCC does not permit WKSU to interrupt programming to raise funds for another non-profit agency, all money raised during the fund drive goes to the station's operating costs. However, a separate group of donors matches the contributions to WKSU with donations to help the hungry with a goal of \$200,000.

Representatives from the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio are guests in the studio during the two-day fundraiser, allowing them to better tell their stories and share background on the functions of foodbanks. Information and links for the organizations are included on the WKSU website.

WKSU's mission statement says that "WKSU creates a shared civic and cultural life that connects communities through a diverse mix of media that extends the heritage of Kent State University." Based on the above criterion, it is evident that reaching 22 Ohio counties and parts of Western Pennsylvania; WKSU truly connects and reaches out to constituents in the Northeast Ohio region.

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.

As an active part of the Kent State University community, the station has long-played a role as a real-world educational experience. WKSU recruits Kent State journalism and communication students to work at WKSU while completing their degrees, this gives students the chance to develop real and marketable skills – such as gathering and producing news reports – while working alongside station professionals. These jobs at WKSU create a solid building block for the next generation to learn in a setting that enhances their education and can be used as a catalyst for their careers. This association with students also gives staff members a glimpse into rising trends and the minds of younger consumers.

While most of the KSU students work in the award-winning WKSU newsroom, there are also interns learning about public relations, communications and music radio production in their positions. WKSU encourages hands-on learning and often has student interns participate in the day-to-day functions of the station.

The station also hosts a graduate student who is paid through the Walton D. Clarke Fellowship. This scholarship is a partnership with the Kent State School of Journalism to give a graduate student a two-year experience with hands-learning at the radio station.

Guests with a connection to NPR and public radio are often retained for public speaking engagements at the Akron Press Club and the Akron Roundtable through the efforts of WKSU. Because WKSU encourages learning, giving journalism students access to NPR professionals is one way that the station strives to bring the experienced world of

journalism and radio to local young people in our community. Station reporters and professional staff speak with high school and college classes, such as Canton's Tom Tod Ideas, which brought three buses of middle school students to Kent State University for an immersive experience.

As part of community educational outreach, WKSU also hosts dozens of tour groups each year, guiding school children, college students, Cub Scouts and others through the broadcast center and studios. WKSU's offices are ADA compliant and easily accommodate people with disabilities.

Consistently, WKSU hears from partner arts and culture organizations that attendance rates are positively impacted through promotional partnerships and station sponsorship, as well as editorial content featuring community projects. With the growth in WKSU's social media presence, this "halo" effect can be somewhat tracked by marking response and share rates of stories on the station's Facebook and Twitter feeds – which applies to stories on any topic. Along with the primary Twitter account @WKSU, the station also maintains @WKSUHotPicks, solely focused on events throughout Northeast Ohio.

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 broadcast.

WKSU's programming and news coverage is intended to reach to all Northeast Ohio communities. Reports focused on the immigrant experience – including a multi-part series on Akron's large Bhutanese population – touch those involved while telling an important story to the full listening audience. WKSU also reported on LGBTQ and gender issues, the business of healthcare and a variety of voting rights topics in time for election season. WKSU's Quick Bites series on food and farming featured several stories on food deserts (areas without adequate access to fresh and healthy food).

Folk Alley makes a conscious effort to honor diversity with its programming. The music stream and syndicated show attempts to add diverse artists in each hour, including African American, LGBTQ, and World (Latin/Hispanic, Cajun, Celtic and African) music artists. The roots-based music that makes up the Folk Alley stream is also rich with songs from Appalachia and historical social issue folk music.

The station works to partner with arts and cultural events with a connection to diverse audiences. Notable efforts include hosting a free Akron Preview Party for the Cleveland International Film Festival (as well as sponsoring two festival films), sponsoring Cleveland's EarthFest and Kent's Art in the Park, promoting the Akron Symphony Orchestra's Gospel Meets Symphony and sponsoring the Tremont Arts & Cultural Festival, a two-day community event celebrating one of Cleveland's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods.



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?

Support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting via this grant enables WKSU to reach a 22-county area in Northeast and North Central Ohio and parts of Western Pennsylvania, allowing our station to access and provide public radio service to communities and regions that extend far beyond our main broadcast facility in Kent, Ohio. Without CPB funding, WKSU would not have such a broad reach. Without the CPB grant, WKSU could not purchase high-quality programming from National Public Radio, Public Radio International, and American Public Media. In addition, without the CPB grant, WKSU would not have been able to bring additional HD channels to our community, providing 24-7 folk and classical services on yet another platform within our region.

The CPB grant also helps WKSU extend its reach through the news. Northeast Ohio is a diverse region, and although that diversity is a strength in our region, it can also be perceived as a weakness as disparate communities struggle to connect with each other. Many times, WKSU is the glue among those communities because our station and its news service helps people recognize their connection to each other. It is a point of pride for WKSU that our station takes a regional approach to covering the news – an approach that no other Northeast Ohio media can claim. In addition to WKSU's main news bureau at the Kent broadcast facility, our station has news studios and reporters in the three major cities in Northeast Ohio (Akron, Canton, and Cleveland).

CPB funding helps Folk Alley fulfill its goal of providing listeners with access to a musical art form that would otherwise be limited or non-existent. This is accomplished through our 24-7 hosted stream; our 'Live from Folk Alley' online concert series, our in-studio interviews and performances, specialty side streams, and more. Our goal is to provide quality folk music to listeners who have no listening options, and to enhance the listening options to people with limited opportunities to hear this music.

Many other organizations have recognized WKSU's accomplishments, particularly as related to the news and to reaching into communities to cover important community issues. WKSU's journalistic excellence is demonstrated by the countless awards presented to the station and staff by local regional and national organizations. Fiscal Year 2016 WKSU Awards include:

## 2015

### **National Association of Black Journalists—*Salute to Excellence Awards***

- Finalist-*Feature, Market 16+*, Jeff St. Clair—"Avoiding the 'Talking White' Trap"

### **National Federation of Press Women—*Communications Contest***

- First Place-*Prepared Report, Radio*, M.L. Schultze—"Goodyear Christens Its Next Generation of Airships"
- First Place-*Special Programming, Radio*, Amanda Rabinowitz—"Heroin: Big Trouble in a Small Town"
- First Place-*Feature Writing, Collegiate*, Lyndsey Schley—"Goodyear Recruits Thousands of Vets"

**Society of Professional Journalists-Ohio Chapter—SPJ Awards**

- Best in Show-*Best Reporter*, Tim Rudell
- First Place-*Best Environment Reporting*, Tim Rudell—“Will the Ohio River Carry Fracking Wastewater?”
- First Place-*Best Medical/Science Reporting*, Jeff St. Clair—“Exploradio: Sports Training and Knee Injuries in Girls”
- First Place-*Best Enterprise Reporting*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Heroin: Big Trouble in a Small Town”
- First Place-*Best Sports Reporting*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Gay Games 9”
- First Place-*Best Consumer Reporting*, Kevin Niedermier—“Historic Ohio Hotel Looks at Change”
- First Place-*Best General Assignment Reporting*, Kabir Bhatia—“United Hub Closure in Cleveland Could Have Silver Lining”
- Second Place-*Best Spot News*, Tim Rudell—“Utica Fractionator Eases Propane Shortage”
- Second Place-*Best Minority Issues Reporting*, Jeff St. Clair—“Avoiding the ‘Talking White’ Trap”
- Second Place-*Best General Assignment Reporting*, Kevin Niedermier—“Cleveland Lands the 2016 GOP Convention”
- Second Place-*Best Criminal Justice Reporting*, WKSU Staff—“Tamir Rice Shooting”
- Second Place-*Best Website*, Chuck Poulton—“WKSU.org”

**2016**

**Radio-Television News Directors Association—Regional Murrow Awards**

- *Best Writing*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Revisiting Racinos”

**Press Club of Atlantic City—National Headliner Award**

- Third Place-*News Series*, M.L. Schultze—“Namaste: A past in Bhutan, a future in Akron”

**Ohio Associated Press—Ohio APME Awards**

- *Best Feature Reporting*, Vivian Goodman—“School Children produce a seed-to-table garlic feast”
- *Best Broadcast Writing*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Revisiting Racinos”
- *Best Sportscast*, Amanda Rabinowitz and Terry Pluto—“Cavs lose two starters but still have their star”
- *Best Sports Feature*, M.L. Schultze—“Whipsawed from Canton to Cleveland”
- *Best Series*, WKSU Staff—“Remembering Vietnam”
- *Best Coverage of a Scheduled Event*, WKSU Staff—“Michael Brelo Verdict”
- *Best Continuing Coverage*, WKSU Staff—“Cleveland Police Consent Decree”

**Press Club of Cleveland—Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards**

- *Radio News*, WKSU Staff—“Michael Brelo Verdict”
- *Radio News*, Kevin Niedermier—“Gay Games Economics”
- *On-going Coverage*, WKSU Staff—“Mayor Don Plusquellic Resigns”
- *Public Service*, M.L. Schultze and Amanda Rabinowitz—“Namaste: A past in Bhutan, a future in Akron”
- *In-Depth Coverage*, WKSU Staff —“Remembering Vietnam”



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- *Use of Social Media*, WKSU Staff—“WKSU.org”
- *Use of Sound*, Vivian Goodman—“Free range hogs”
- *Human Interest*, Kabir Bhatia—“College students and their prison pals”
- *Human Interest*, Tim Rudell—“Historic housing gets a new purpose for vets”
- *News Writing*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Revisiting Racinos”