

## 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 actively shares news stories and other reporting via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

WKSU continued its Community Conversations initiative for FY17. The events 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 were 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. A shorter collection of reports on probate judges and their relationship to area park management also grew out of the Community Conversations events.

Regional outreach also included presentations of commentator and author David Sedaris, NPR All Things Considered host Robert Siegel and NPR commentator Eric Deggans. WKSU produced live broadcasts of national NPR programs *Wait Wait Don't Tell Me!* (Co-produced with WCPN ideastream) and *On Point* which focused on students and the election. WKSU invited the public to an open panel discussion tied to proposed changes to the Gorge Dam (presented under the banner of the station's *Exploradio* series) and opened its studios for an Election Night watch party.

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

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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 also has a presence at the Cleveland Orchestra's Blossom Festival, the free Downtown@Dusk concert series at the Akron Art Museum and EarthFest – the region's largest environmental education event.

WKSU's news coverage in FY17 focused on the region's exploding opioid epidemic, immigration reform and how it affected local refugees, and national and state elections. WKSU found itself at the center of the Presidential political firestorm as candidates rushed to "swing state" Ohio and the movement surrounding Donald Trump's campaign emerged. The station was also on the ground at both Presidential conventions, producing expanded coverage of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. Plus, there were generational events: the return of the 17-year cicadas and the Indians surprise trip to the World Series.

Other stand-out themes in ongoing features included education (StateImpact), food and farming (Quick Bites), science and innovation (Exploradio), sports (The View from Pluto) and the arts (State of the Arts) – including the launch of Shuffle, a weekly feature on music in Northeast Ohio, and Elevations, a segment focused on Kent State University accomplishments.

A summary of WKSU's news coverage this year:

- The impact of the Opioid epidemic, the personal losses and medical and judicial attempts to address addiction and the rise in overdoses.
- 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, food insecurity and LGBTQ issues.
- National, state and local elections, including ballot issues, throughout WKSU's coverage area.
- The Republican National Convention in Cleveland – the event itself along with preparations and aftermath.
- Proposed immigration reform and the area's refugee community.
- Medical research being conducted by regional hospitals and universities.
- Environmental reporting, including the emergence of the 17-year cicadas and the many ways the insects intersected with modern life.

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

- Gerrymandering
- Local and national 2018 midterm elections
- Mental Health
- Opioid Crisis
- Economy

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- Entrepreneurship in Ohio
- Music throughout our listening region
- Science and innovation
- Arts
- Ohio's Supreme Court
- Immigrations issues

All stories from the WKSU newsroom are available online, often with informational links and additional story background. Stand-alone web areas were created for Opioids: Turning the Tide in the Crisis and political reporting – including coverage around the RNC in Cleveland. There are also web areas for the Exploradio series on science and innovation in Northeast Ohio, sports commentary on the View from Pluto, the music-based Shuffle and Quick Bites.

The WKSU.org website allows reporters to assign categories to their posts and make them easier to search 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 programming and event information to all community members who are interested.

Web-only initiatives for FY17 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. The station's coverage of the opioid epidemic had online-only components, such as an interactive timeline.

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. The WKSU mobile app connects listeners to all four of WKSU's content streams (on-air, Folk Alley, classical music and all news) and provides links for news reports from WKSU and NPR, and information on community events. This year, WKSU also began a focus on promoting listening through smart speakers through TuneIn.

WKSU's website, WKSU.org, is 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 StatImpact Ohio, along with station information and upcoming events.

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.

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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 the 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 and OPR – Ohio Public Radio, designed to facilitate and coordinate reporting efforts by Ohio’s Public Radio news rooms and bring coverage from each newsroom to the other stations in the state. 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.

In FY17, WKSU continued its collaboration 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 news outlets to cover. This project laid the groundwork for collaboration through this partnership on additional topics as the collaboration moved to “Your Voice Ohio.”

WKSU also collaborates with our license holder, Kent State University. In January of 2017 we started a five-minute module featuring a student, staff or faculty member of Kent State by showcasing their work at Kent State for our listening area. We engage journalism and communications students in our news room as interns, and we have started engaging student media in partnerships to create content for our website including graphics and maps using data journalism. The newsroom participated in a capstone experience two-week immersion project for an Akron high school senior. For FY17, WKSU’s *Morning Edition* Host was the advisor to Kent State University’s student media internet radio station, Black Squirrel Radio.

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. The news director was on the board of the Akron Press Club and the newsroom’s 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 March 2017, a group of middle school students who were part of the Tom Tod Ideas program in Canton learned more about journalism with a visit to WKSU. The station also gave tours to interested community members and special needs students interested in broadcasting. 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.

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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, TuneIn, 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, such as the 30A Songwriters Festival in Florida. 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 provides an opportunity for WKSU to address a community need: hunger. This two-day on-air drive helps regional foodbanks raise needed funds and bring attention to their work in the communities WKSU broadcasts. As the FCC does not allow WKSU to raise funds for another non-profit agency, all donations raised during the drive go to the station's operating costs. However, a separate group of donors matches the contributions to WKSU with donations to the foodbanks.

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 their time on-air the representatives offer information and details about hunger in the community and how the agencies operate.

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. Station staff attended a recruitment event created by the Kent State University College of Communication and Information to meet interested students and introduce the station's internship program.

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 College of Communication and Information 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 middle school students to Kent State University two years in a row.

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 (WKSU.FM), Twitter (@WKSU) and Instagram (wksu897) feeds – which applies to stories on any topic.

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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 2017, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2018. 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 coverage of possible reforms under the Trump administration – touch those involved while telling an important story to the full listening audience. WKSU also reported on LGBTQ and gender issues, voting rights issues and the widespread and ongoing effects of the growing opioid epidemic. 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 sponsoring two films at the Cleveland International Film Festival, acting as media partner for EarthFest, 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. WKSU also records and broadcasts monthly Akron Roundtable addresses on a variety of topics of community interest.

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 2017 WKSU Awards include:

## 2016

### **Society of Professional Journalists-Ohio Chapters—Ohio’s Best Journalism Awards**

- Best in Show-*Best Anchor*, Amanda Rabinowitz
- First Place-*Best Environment Reporting*, Jeff St. Clair—“Exploradio: From factory to fish farm at the Foundry Project”
- First Place-*General Assignment*, M.L. Schultze—“Another blending of public art and football passion in Canton”
- First Place-*Best Health Care Feature Reporting*, WKSU Staff—“The Business of Health”
- Second Place-*Best Reporter in Ohio*, M.L. Schultze
- Second Place-*Best Consumer Reporting*, Kevin Niedermier—“Heinen’s is betting on a continued rebirth of downtown Cleveland”
- Second Place-*Best Criminal Justice Reporting*, WKSU Staff—“Michael Brelo Verdict”
- Second Place-*Best Government Reporting*, WKSU Staff—“ Cleveland Police Consent Decree”
- Second Place-*Best Medical/Health Reporting*, Jeff St. Clair—“Exploradio”
- Second Place-*Best Sports Reporting*, Amanda Rabinowitz and Terry Pluto—“Pluto on Sports”

## 2017

### **Ohio Associated Press—Ohio APME Awards**

- *Journalism Hall of Fame*, Vivian Goodman
- Best in Show-*General Excellence (tie)*, WKSU News
- First Place-*Best Anchor*, Amanda Rabinowitz
- First Place-*Best Newscast*, Jeff St. Clair—“All Things Considered”
- First Place-*Best Sports Feature*, Kabir Bhatia—“The Cleveland Cavaliers are NBA Champs, and LeBron James' Akron Alma Mater is Celebrating”



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- Second Place-*Best Broadcast Writing*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“The New Sound of the Old Goodyear Theater Could Transform East Akron”
- Second Place-*Best Sportscast*, Amanda Rabinowitz and Terry Pluto—“The View from Pluto”
- Second Place-*Best Use of Sound*, M.L. Schultze—“Akron Works to Bring Joy to Voting”
- Second Place-*Best Coverage of a Scheduled Event*, WKSU Staff—“The Republican Party Comes to Cleveland”
- Second Place-*Best Enterprise Reporting*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“The New Sound of the Old Goodyear Theater Could Transform East Akron”
- Second Place-*Best Newscast*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Morning Edition”

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

- Best in Show-*Best Radio Newscast*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“Morning Edition”
- First Place-*Use of Social Media*, WKSU Staff—“Election Night Facebook Live”
- First Place-*News Writing*, Jeff St. Clair—“Kestrel Boxes Provide Homes For Pint-Sized Predators”
- First Place-*Election 2016 Coverage*, M.L. Schultze—“WKSU Election Coverage 2016”
- First Place-*Human Interest*, Vivian Goodman—“A Delicious Way to Silence Those Noisy Little Cicadas”
- Second Place-*Use of Sound*, Kabir Bhatia —“During the RNC, a Political Rainbow Forms in Cleveland's New, \$50 Million Public Square”
- Second Place-*Radio News*, M.L. Schultze—“Is Donald Trump Channeling Jim Trafficant”
- Second Place-*In-Depth Coverage*, Kevin Niedermier, Tim Rudell and Kabir Bhatia—“Grounded: The Dehubbing of the Region's Airports”
- Second Place-*Human Interest*, Amanda Rabinowitz—“The New Sound of the Old Goodyear Theater Could Transform East Akron”
- Second Place-*On-Going Coverage*, WKSU Staff—“The RNC in Cleveland”