6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

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.

WUWM ascertains issues that are important to the community through a variety of means. In a normal year, members of the station’s advisory board are surveyed on at least an annual basis. This year, however, due to Covid 19 restrictions, the advisory board met electronically and did not conduct an annual programming survey. We plan on resuming this practice in 2021. The lack of in-person meeting of the advisory board did not preclude the board from passing along their thoughts on the stations local and national content. Time was allotted in each advisory board meeting to illicit feedback from the board on current and proposed programming that aired on WUWM. We do plan on continuing the practice of polling the board to share ideas and looking for trends of community interest. It is then up to WUWM’s journalists to develop programming around these and other issues. The station also seeks input from our listeners through surveys via electronic newsletters and our social media channels.

Not only do WUWM journalists focus on the issues of the day, but they also explore many other topics in-depth. This reporting is aired during NPR’s Morning Edition and the station’s daily news magazine, Lake Effect. It is also available on the station’s website, our WUWM App and other digital platforms.

Thanks to special funding WUWM now has four special reporting initiatives. Reporters focus on environmental, education, race/ethnicity, health and innovation beats. Each of these topic areas focuses on important issues facing our broadcast community.

This year was a unique one for our WUWM journalists. Once again, due to Covid-19 restrictions, all of our content creators, journalists and producers moved into home studios. This limitation didn’t hinder the output of stories from our journalists. They covered a vast range of topics, led by coverage of the Corona Virus and its impact on Milwaukee and black and brown neighborhoods. We also covered the Black Lives Matter movement with protests in Milwaukee and through the country and finally, politics and the pivotal role that Wisconsin served in the 2020 election. Each one of these topics on its own would have been a challenge to cover, but our local reporters faced this challenge three-fold, covering each topic with in-depth stories that not only provided facts and insight, but told the human side of these issues in a manner that is unique to public radio.
As part of our on-going coverage of the Corona Virus, WUWM Education Reporter Emily Files produced a series where she visited virtual classrooms through Southeastern Wisconsin. She found that online school requires teachers to be intentional about how they deliver instruction, but also about how they connect with students.

WUWM also seeks input from members of the community who suggest story ideas for follow-up. The station’s beat reporters answer one question from a listener each month in the “Beats Me” segment broadcast during Morning Edition and Lake Effect. And “Bubbler Talk” invites questions about the community that are answered weekly.

As noted in WUWM’s code of ethics, it is our goal to ‘contribute to the community’s civic, educational, and cultural life by presenting a range of ideas and cultures and offering a robust forum for discussion and debate.’

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.

WUWM maintains relationships with other journalistic outlets as well as other community groups. As noted in the station’s ethics code, it is a goal of the organization to “seek editorial partnerships and collaborations to enhance capacity, perspective, timeliness, and relevance and apply public media standards to these arrangements.”


In 2020 WUWM entered into an ongoing community listening project, Listen MKE, created by WUWM 89.7 FM — Milwaukee’s NPR, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee PBS and the Milwaukee Public Library, https://www.wuwm.com/term/listen-mke#stream/0 The goal of this initiative is to help north side residents get the information they want and need. More specifically, the project wanted to understand what’s most important to people who live in these Milwaukee neighborhoods and help fill information gaps. In early 2020, the partnership conducted in-person events and coffee chats and then switched over to a virtual series when the coronavirus quarantine began.

Conversations took place on Facebook Live, and then aired on Milwaukee PBS, on WUWM’s Lake Effect program, and are posted on the Journal Sentinel’s website.
Conversations focused on Juneteenth celebrations, youth protest organizers, visions for Milwaukee’s future, the unrest in Kenosha, information on how to vote, the importance of mentorship. All of the conversations feature people who live and work in Milwaukee’s north side.

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.

WUWM primarily measures its impact on the community through audience data and anecdotal reports. According to the Nielson Audio, a national ratings company, there were more than 135,800 weekly listeners to WUWM. The weekly cume is estimated by determining how many different people listen to a radio station for a minimum of five minutes in a quarter-hour within a daypart. That equates to satisfaction and impact.

WUWM’s average market share is 4.3%. That means that 4.3% of all radio listening was to WUWM. That was up from 3.6% one year ago.

WUWM continues to provide content to NPR’s curated web app, “NPR One,” and regional users of NPR’s Facebook site.

The station continues to work with NPR’s Digital Services to upgrade the technology and user experience.

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 xxxx, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

WUWM’s Listen MKE series is conceived and designed to respond to the concerns of Milwaukee’s North side communities of color. WUWM also has a Race and Ethnicity reporter beat focusing on issues relating to diversity.

While WUWM continues many journalistic and marketing partnerships, the station also benefited from an alliance with Hearken. This online module allows WUWM to collect ideas for future stories from our listeners. This service powers the station’s Bubbler Talk series in which listeners ask questions about Milwaukee and Beats Me which funnels story ideas to each of the station’s beat reporters.
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?

WUWM has the largest radio-only team of journalists in Southeastern Wisconsin. They report on the issues and ideas that are important to our listeners in the region.

WUWM’s news staff, LAKE EFFECT program, and website received 40 awards this year. Including four regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, https://www.wuwm.com/post/wuwm-wins-four-regional-edward-r-murrow-awards#stream/0.

WUWM’s vision statement indicates that the station and its producers will be active contributors to National Public Radio’s news programs. During this year, WUWM’s staff has been heard regularly on more than 450 affiliates of National Public Radio. The news staff is also a contributing station to NPR’s Here and Now program.

Without federal funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, WUWM’s ability to sustain the staff and existing local programming would be impossible.