

Grantee Information

ID	1669
Grantee Name	WERN-FM
City	Madison
State	WI
Licensee Type	State

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: [6.1](#)

The purpose of this section is to give you an opportunity to tell us and your community about the activities you have engaged in to address community needs by outlining key services provided, and the local value and impact of those services. Please report on activities that occurred in Fiscal Year 2022. Responses may be shared with Congress or the public. Grantees are required to post a copy of this report (Section 6 only) to their website no later than ten (10) days after the submission of the report to CPB. CPB recommends placing the report in an "About" or similar section on your website. **This section had previously been optional. Response to this section of the SAS is now mandatory.**

Joint licensee Grantees that have filed a 2022 Local Content and Services Report as part of meeting the requirement for TV CSG funding may state they have done so in the corresponding questions below, so long as all of the questions below were addressed as they relate to radio operations in such report. You must include the date the report was submitted to CPB along with the TV Grantee ID under which it was submitted.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: [6.1](#)

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.

Wisconsin Public Radio's (WPR) WERN is committed to community service through news, information, music and entertainment content on air, online and in communities across the state. All of the station's content is produced with the highest standards of ethics and audience service. WPR strives to serve Wisconsin's diverse communities and perspectives with content that is trustworthy, informative, useful, civil and inspiring. WPR regularly gathers input on community issues, programming decisions and other concerns of our listeners and the broader public. Station reporters, producers and hosts rely on state and national survey results, including regular Marquette Law School polls in Wisconsin, to help guide production of news content heard within newscasts and special segments during WPR's broadcasts of NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered." In FY2022, results of surveys were the focus of stand-alone news stories, but the surveys also influenced story selection throughout the year. WPR continues to provide timely, relevant and trustworthy news and public affairs programming. During FY2022, the public relied on WPR for accurate, unbiased news about personal and public health, the environment, policing, politics, education, sports and everyday life in Wisconsin. WPR reporters across the state continued to keep Wisconsinites informed on COVID-19, including the Omicron variant and changes to public health policies as guidelines changed and our educational institutions and students at all levels adjusted. WPR's coverage of the Kyle Rittenhouse trial and verdict in Racine, Wisconsin and the on-going public conversation around racial justice and equity reached local, state and national audiences. WPR's journalists brought home the impact of the war in Ukraine with stories of local protests and vigils, the effects on Wisconsin residents of Ukrainian descent, and the resettlement of refugees. WPR's reporters examined water quality extensively over the reporting period as the state grappled with PFAS contamination in many communities. A special series interviewed new graduates at many educational levels in June 2022, and looked back at how these students dealt with the disruptions of the pandemic. WPR's reporters and digital team provided an in-depth look at Wisconsin politics and the state's redistricting process in the multi-part podcast "Mapped Out." The podcast looked back at Wisconsin's redistricting process in 2010 in order to shed light on redistricting decisions being made during FY2022. And in collaboration with the nonprofit newsroom Wisconsin Watch, WPR brought listeners the podcast "Open and Shut," which investigated the power of the prosecutor and what can happen if that power goes unchecked. The WPR news team and digital content received numerous awards during the reporting period including multiple Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards for digital and broadcast work and multiple awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association among others. Overall, WPR's news, digital, music and regional teams received more than 30 state, regional and national awards for their reporting, music hosting, podcasts and online work. As part of WPR's continuing commitment to training the next generation of journalists with public media's high standards of ethics and integrity, the station has three fellowship programs for early-career journalists. Two of these fellowships—the Lee Ester News Fellowship and the Second Century Fellowship—had been paused during the pandemic. These were resumed during the reporting period. WERN and its affiliates' news and cultural stories are also featured in articles at wpr.org where audiences can post comments, ask questions and connect with other listeners through our online forums. During the reporting period, the site received millions of pageviews and delivered thousands of articles and live-streamed and archive audio. WPR also uses Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to distribute content, engage audiences on and off air, and for promotion. During the reporting period, WERN and its affiliates invited listeners to post questions, share information and engage with our hosts and guests on social media. WPR's main Facebook page had over 59,000 followers, as users turned to WPR's social media to stay up to date on everything from breaking news to job openings and community events. The Ideas Network Facebook page also had more than 29,000 followers over the reporting period, and WPR's Twitter feed had more than 32,000 followers. WPR's Instagram, launched during FY2021, had approximately 1600 followers during FY2022. WPR engaged with communities and audiences across the state with in-person and online events in FY2022. Each event was an opportunity for participants to ask questions and meet WPR staff. These included a live virtual discussion with author and plant ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer and hosts

and producers of WPR's "To The Best Of Our Knowledge," that included nearly 2,000 participants from around Wisconsin, the U.S. and several countries. Audiences got a behind-the-scenes look at WPR's new podcast "Open and Shut" at a virtual discussion with the reporter and host. During the reporting period WPR also provided opportunities for participants to engage and ask questions of WPR staff at live outdoor Meet Up events in the spring and to enjoy live music at the Simply Folk Shindig. In total WPR connected with audiences at six live and virtual events over the reporting period, with more than 5000 total registrants. WPR's reporters and talk show hosts also facilitated community conversations at live and virtual events put on by partner organizations, including the Wisconsin Book Festival and the Wisconsin Science Festival. In addition to community engagement events, web discussions, and social media, WPR collaborates with PBS Wisconsin to offer a toll-free phone number and email account for public feedback. Each year this in-house audience services team answers tens of thousands of requests from Wisconsinites eager to learn more about the news and information they hear on air or see online. These public comments are compiled and shared with the entire WPR staff on a regular basis. WERN and its affiliates are also dedicated to providing a cultural resource to its listeners, with curated classical, folk and jazz music and other related programming. Concert recordings from venues around the state, interviews, and performances ranging from small student ensembles to professional symphony orchestras are part of WPR's "Wisconsin Classical" program. Music is an important part of WPR's mission, and programs like "The Middy" have regularly featured live performances from some of the best state, national and international talents available. "Simply Folk" features traditional music of people the world over. "The Road to Higher Ground with Jonathan Øverby" features "world music with African roots and more" each Saturday night. WERN's "The Odyssey Series" explores many types of music and its power to create greater understanding of those near and far. WERN's licensee, the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board, partners with the University of Wisconsin to produce and distribute programming under the banner Wisconsin Public Radio. According to Nielsen, the partnership reached an average of 367,100 listeners in spring 2022. WPR's websites – including WisconsinLife.org and TTBOOK.org—had more than 13.9 million page views.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question:

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.

WPR's WERN and affiliates provide extensive election coverage and collaborate with PBS Wisconsin to broadcast important events, including the annual governor's State of the State address, budget address, and state celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. WPR encourages its listeners to experience the state from diverse perspectives. "Wisconsin Life," WPR's state culture collaboration with PBS Wisconsin, continues this commitment by featuring stories of unexpected Wisconsin people and places on WPR, PBS Wisconsin and online at wisconsinlife.org. As noted in the response to question one above, WPR partnered with the nonprofit newsroom Wisconsin Watch in FY2022 to produce the multi-part podcast "Open and Shut" investigating the power of prosecutors in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name is a traveling exhibit that features a photo for each of the 1,163 Wisconsinites officially listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. This poignant display was created in 2016 by WPR in partnership with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and PBS Wisconsin. Wisconsin Remembers appeared in Neillsville, Oxford, Menomonie, McFarland, UW-La Crosse, Wisconsin Dells, Ellsworth, Fennimore and Madison in FY2022. Each year, WPR and PBS Wisconsin also collaborate on culture and entertainment programs, including Final Forte, an annual classical music competition for young performers managed by the Madison Symphony Orchestra. The final competition features four young soloists performing live on stage with the orchestra. It is a free public event and is broadcast statewide live on WERN and its affiliates and by PBS Wisconsin. WPR also has ongoing partnerships with the Wisconsin School Music Association, Madison Opera and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra to broadcast live and recorded concerts statewide. As noted above, WERN and its affiliates also continued their commitment to educating the next generation of reporters with the Mike Simonson Fellowship for Investigative Journalism, which is a partnership with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism. The fellowship helps attract some of the brightest young minds in journalism to public broadcasting and supports a shared commitment to in-depth reporting on issues important to all Wisconsinites. WPR hosts regularly make special appearances at events around the state that encourage cultural diversity, music education, the arts and more. And, each month, WPR sponsors dozens of community events around the state to help local nonprofits in the arts, science, business and more connect with our listeners. WPR amplified the messages of many community, government and nonprofit organizations that provided vital services to listeners around the state during the reporting period. In FY 2022, WPR offered listeners information on how to register to vote, where to vote, and how to vote in person or absentee in advance of state and local elections held on April 5, 2022. This was accomplished through on-air promotion of the voting information site of the State of Wisconsin Elections Commission, MyVote.WI.gov. WPR also partnered with state and regional nonprofits to air messages that directed listeners to providers of free over-the-phone crisis mental health counseling and gave information on accessing emergency rental assistance. In the last quarter of FY2021, WPR partnered with PBS Wisconsin, the Public Service Commission and the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit Initiative and support access to this essential service throughout the state. When new legislation extended the program under a new name, the Affordable Connectivity Program, WPR continued the promotional partnership beyond the end of the current reporting period, helping even more people get access to affordable high speed internet service. As of June 30, 2022, 225,000 households in Wisconsin were enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program. Wisconsin has remained above the national average in enrollment in the affordable broadband program and has continued to lead enrollment among surrounding states. WERN and its affiliates have partnerships with a number of non-profit arts and community organizations, including: African Heritage Inc., Appleton Boychoir, Barlow Planetarium, Diverse & Resilient, Fox Cities Magazine, Fox Cities Multi-Cultural Center, Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Fox Valley Symphony, Grand Opera House, Green Bay Antiquarian Society, Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, Green Bay Botanical Gardens, History Museum at the Castle, Homeless Connections, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Northern Sky Theater, Oneida Tribe, Oshkosh Public Museum, Paine Art Center, Peninsula Music Festival, St. Norbert College, Shawano Folk Festival, Third Avenue Playhouse, Trout Museum, UntitledTown Book and Author Festival, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, UW Oshkosh Theatre Dept., We All Rise African American Resource Center, Weidner Center, YWCA; University of Wisconsin, YWCA of Dane County, Wisconsin School Music Association, Overture Center for the Arts, Madison Opera, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Bach Around the Clock, Wisconsin Book Festival, Wisconsin Science Festival, Madison Public Library Foundation, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Ice Age Trail Alliance, Janesville Performing Arts Center, Literacy Network of Dane County, Madison Black Chamber of Commerce, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, Rainbow Project, Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, Cambridge Arts Council, Arts for All Wisconsin, Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce, Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra, Eau Claire Male Chorus, Eau Claire Children's Theatre, Pablo Center at the Confluence, Fresh Art Tour, Literacy Chippewa Valley, Mabel Tainter Memorial Theatre, The Master Singers, Menomonie Singers, Beaver Creek Reserve, Chippewa Valley American Guild of Organists, Chippewa Valley Jazz Orchestra, Chippewa Valley Symphony Orchestra, Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild, Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation, Eau Claire Jazz Fest, Midwest Championship Sheepdog Trials, UW-Eau Claire Forum and Artist Series; Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua, Lake Superior Dragonboat Festival and Bayfield Applefest; Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Marathon County Public Library, Midwest Renewable Energy Association Monteverdi Chorale, North Central WI Master Gardeners, Wausau Conservatory of Music, Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy & Service, Center for Visual Arts, Central WI Symphony Orchestra, The Neighbors Place, Farmshed, Gathering Waters, Logjam Festival, North Central CAP, Pastime Club, Stevens Point Convention & Visitors Bureau, Wausau Festival of Arts, Wausau Lyric Choir, Wausau Pro Musica, Wausau Symphony & Band, Winchester Academy of Waupaca, Wisconsin Rapids Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: [6.1](#)

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.

WERN and its affiliates provide the largest network of news bureaus of any media in the state, providing in-depth explorations of Wisconsin's public affairs issues and ideas. Every day WPR broadcasts and online resources help people across the state connect with elected officials and public servants at all levels of local, state and national government. WPR's audience engagement project WHYsconsin invites anyone to submit questions or experiences on any Wisconsin topic through an online portal. During FY2022, the WHYsconsin project fielded 701 questions. WPR reporters filed 37 stories as the result of these questions, and audience comments and opinions helped shape many other stories. WERN and its affiliated stations also work to promote awareness of issues through its annual fundraising efforts. During the year-end 2021 fundraising drive, contributors were given the option of foregoing a traditional membership thank you gift and instead support Wisconsin-based food pantries. WPR Partnered with Alliant Energy, who matched a total of 8,325 meals. Altogether, WPR members and Alliant Energy contributed 16,650 meals to Second Harvest in 2021. Since 2010, WPR has provided more than 415,000 meals via food bank thank-you gifts. As noted above, the Wisconsin Remembers exhibit, which features a photo for each of the 1,163 Wisconsinites listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., has been requested by community groups and displayed in dozens of locations throughout the state. In FY2022, the exhibit toured the state and was seen at The Highground Memorial in Neillsville, Oxford VFW Post 6003 in Oxford, Dunn County Historical Society in Menomonie, American Legion Post 534 in McFarland, at UW-La Crosse, Wisconsin Dells High School, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services in Ellsworth, the Fennimore VFW, and at Brat Fest in Madison. WPR also promoted the virtual Wisconsin Remembers experience. WERN and its statewide affiliates support music education through partnerships with the Wisconsin School Music Association, the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Madison Symphony Orchestra, the University of Wisconsin School of Music, Viterbo University, Lawrence University and other programs around the state. In FY2022, WPR sponsored community performances, competitions and educational conferences. WPR's commitment to celebrating young talent over the reporting period included the statewide broadcast of selections from the annual Wisconsin School Music Association Honors Concerts and the Madison Symphony Orchestra's "Final Forte" Bolz Young Artist Competition. These concerts had been paused or altered due to pandemic restrictions in the previous two years and returned to live performance in FY2022. As noted above, WPR hosts regularly make special appearances at events around the state that encourage literacy, music education, cultural diversity and more. Staff regularly engage with community members to ensure programs are addressing issues that affect real people in Wisconsin. WPR helps local nonprofits promote community events that celebrate nature, agriculture, science, performing arts, families and just plain fun. These promotional partners often report back that WPR's broadcast announcements had a significant impact on their event attendance and success of their programs.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: [6.1](#)

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 2022, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2023. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

WPR, including WERN and its affiliates, is committed to serving all Wisconsinites and to reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of our state in its programs and staffing. During the reporting period, new hires brought new voices and experiences to the station's broadcast programs and work behind the scenes. WPR continues its work to improve diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) throughout the organization. WPR promotes a culture where employees take responsibility for their own growth and learning in support of DEI, managers are responsible for supporting and encouraging work in DEI, and leadership is responsible for championing DEI initiatives. WPR's DEI vision and goals has focused on four main areas: culture and retention, accessibility, content, and recruitment. One example of this approach was included in last year's report and continued this fiscal year: WPR's work to reflect Wisconsin's diversity on air. WPR's journalists and producers rely heavily on sources like guest experts, authors, scientists, elected officials and business owners to provide context, perspective and experience. In a typical year, more than 3,500 individuals may appear on WPR airwaves. In August of 2020, WPR released its first report on the demographics of its on-air sources. Like others in public media, the station was concerned that its sources were white and male at levels that far outweighed their representation in the population as a whole. And, also like others, the initial data WPR collected showed that was at least partially true. As a second year of data collection began, WPR made plans to improve representation of historically excluded groups in the organization's sourcing. The station appointed a source librarian to work with reporters and producers to find new voices for stories and expand the list of potential guest experts from underrepresented groups. WPR also revised the survey sent to sources to ask about their age range in addition to the previous questions about race and/or ethnicity, gender and geographic location. In February 2022, the station's news and talk teams publicly released the results of its second annual study of the demographic diversity of sources. The data, which included FY2021 and the current SAS reporting period, FY2022, showed that WPR improved representation in the race and/or ethnicity category. In 2020, 85.49 percent of sources were white. In 2021, that share dropped to 80.92 percent. As the share of white sources on WPR shrunk, every other category of race and/or ethnicity reported in the survey grew. While WPR believes there is more to be done, the organization was pleased to report progress in the effort to have more diverse voices on its airways. The report was shared on wpr.org, as part of station communications to supporters and through a media release. WPR's classical music staff continues their work to diversify the music they play. WPR's music database includes information on the race and gender of composers and musicians. This allows music staff to more easily identify music from artists considered underrepresented, and thus to play more music by women and by Black, Asian, Indigenous and Latin American artists. This effort began before the current reporting period and is an ongoing project. This work has increased the diversity of artists represented on WPR's classical music shows. On air and online during this reporting period, WERN and its affiliate reporters covered a significant number of stories that explored issues of diversity, including education, the environment, sports, entrepreneurship, immigration, music and Wisconsin history, among other topics. In FY2023, WPR will launch a new in-depth podcast called "WPR Reports: Uprooted." It looks at the lives of Cuban refugees who settled in Wisconsin after the Mariel Boatlift in 1980. The project is co-produced and co-hosted by UW-La Crosse professor Omar Granados. In addition to the podcast, a special web section will include articles available in both English and Spanish. This will be the first time WPR has produced Spanish-language web content. In addition to exploring issues of diversity through its news coverage, WPR's cultural coverage regularly features people and places that reflect Wisconsin's diverse population. "Wisconsin Life," a collaboration with PBS Wisconsin, has featured stories by and about immigration, religion, community and important figures and events of Wisconsin's past and present. Through community partnerships, the station regularly features and promotes events and educational activities that embrace diversity and inclusion. Each January, the station broadcasts the official state ceremony honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., produced and hosted by WPR's Dr. Jonathan Øverby. WPR's music programming also reflects the diversity of musical traditions around the world, including "The Road to Higher Ground" and "The Odyssey Series," which focus on music from around the world and its power to create a greater understanding of those near and far. WERN and its affiliates also live broadcast the annual State of the Tribes Address from the State Capitol. It is live streamed on wpr.org. During the reporting period, a committee of WPR, PBS Wisconsin and Educational Communications Board employees was formed to learn about and to craft a land acknowledgment statement, in collaboration with consultants. The work is part of a stationwide commitment to collaborating with, and learning from, First Nations in our service area. In addition to its compliance with all state and federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission requirements, WPR works closely with its human resource offices at the University of

Wisconsin to manage recruitment and hiring practices in an equitable and inclusive manner. On the recruitment side, the station promotes job openings through mainstream employment listings and paid, targeted promotion through social media and professional networks such as the National Black Journalists Association. In hiring, WPR requires all members of the hiring committee to abide by EEOC standards, UW-Madison and State of Wisconsin standards and to understand the role that unconscious and implicit bias can play in the review of applicants and interviewees. The station has also made adjustments to many position descriptions over the years to ensure that essential job functions reflect the reality of the work and do not unnecessarily include requirements that might privilege one group of people over another. As noted previously in this report, WPR offers three different journalism fellowships primarily focused on early-career journalists. While one of those fellowships, the Second Century Fellowship, is exclusively available to people of color and others underrepresented in the field, each of the fellowships has attracted a more racially diverse applicant pool.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: 6.1

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?

WPR shares and preserves the stories of Wisconsin's people. Its programs celebrate Wisconsin's way of life. WPR reaches out beyond broadcasts to serve Wisconsin online and in the community. Without CPB funding, all of these things would be affected. WERN is the flagship for the largest and only statewide radio news organization in Wisconsin. Because of strong funding support, WPR continues to attract and keep the best available broadcast journalists, including two full-time reporters at the Capitol. Federal support, in addition to state, business and individual support, is critical to WPR's balanced, sustainable and responsible approach to funding its essential services. During the pandemic, WPR saw a significant decline in support from business sponsors. The reliable support of CPB funding allows WPR to maintain services during critical news events, such as the COVID-19 public health emergency. The scope of national programs broadcast on WERN and its affiliates would be greatly diminished without CPB's support. Programs like NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" help keep listeners connected to the world and help WPR put local and statewide content in a national or even international context. CPB funding helps ensure that WPR's cultural programming—including the presentation of local, national and internationally respected classical musicians—is available for tens of thousands of listeners every week. And, of course, CPB funding contributes to WPR's ability to reach audiences beyond broadcast with online streaming, news and cultural content, mobile apps, community events and more.

Comments

Question

Comment

No Comments for this section