



WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO

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WLSU: Telling Public Radio's Story 2017-2018

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.*

WLSU's overall goal is to position public radio locally in the communities we serve; to make *local* what is typically heard as national or statewide public radio; and to address local news, culture, and music in the "public radio" style being sought out by our audiences. This is realized in the way we cover and present news and current affairs content with the depth and breadth typical of NPR and Wisconsin Public Radio; by the choices we make in presenting music, arts and culture that isn't otherwise available locally; and by engaging in community partnerships when our participation can further the reach of events and activities that better inform, educate and entertain their intended audiences, as well as extending our goal of positioning public radio locally.

As a "content" provider, our primary service is realized through producing radio and online programming that addresses the issues, needs and interests of our local communities. We do so in conjunction with Wisconsin Public Radio, which provides coverage of statewide news, and NPR, which provides national and international news, all of which impacts the lives of our local audiences. The news we cover locally ranges from stories unique to the greater La Crosse and Eau Claire communities served by our primary and affiliate stations, to *local perspectives* on state, national and international news that better frame these stories and their effect on the people who live here.

FY 2018's primary news/public affairs shows include **News-makers**, WLSU's series of weekly one-on-one in-depth conversations with those making local news in and around the immediate La Crosse area; a weekly program about western Wisconsin arts and culture – **Spectrum West** – that airs on affiliate station WUEC and includes in-depth behind-the-scenes interviews and stories about area writers, musicians, theater, visual arts, and the humanities; and student-produced **Blugold Radio Sunday**, also on our WUEC affiliate, that addresses news, arts, culture and more happening in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

In addition to being broadcast, our talk programs are available via Internet downloads, including text stories, photos, and occasion extended interview material created specifically for the web. Of particular note in FY 2018, *Newsmakers* wrapped up a year-long series exploring the growing issue of identifying and addressing community infrastructure needs – from maintaining public and private water/sewer systems, to commercial and personal transportation needs, to flood control and dam replacement, to how our educational institutions are preparing the next generation of infrastructure planners and designers. We also partnered with our WPR colleagues to address topics related to a year-long series called *State of Change* reporting on the future of land, food and water in Wisconsin – *Newsmakers* presented several shows on this topic related to our local region.

FY 2018's original programming efforts were also acknowledge by several Wisconsin Broadcasters Association awards, including a "News/talk Best Radio Show" award for *Newsmakers'* investigation of how the federal government's proposal to end DACA would impact local 'dreamers'; and our *Blugold Radio Sunday* series received awards in the categories of "Newscast," "Public Affairs/Talk Show," "Website" and "General Entertainment Program."

We're also committed to creating awareness of local talent by producing and distributing original shows to others through the Wisconsin Public Radio statewide network: in FY 2018 we produced and distributed three episodes in the ongoing series, *Big River Radio Wave*, a variety show featuring regional musicians, storytellers and comedians; additionally, we produced/distributed an hour-long holiday special featuring music performances from a nearby college.

Additionally, WLSU/WUEC staff reaches out to the community through our involvement as a partner or sponsor for community discussions and forums, performances and educational programs. We do this in multiple ways, from on-air interviews and announcements that promote events, to offering our services as moderators or emceeing, to serving as advisors/board members with local organizations to help inform them on current affairs topics and potential speakers, to helping our partners organize their specific activities.

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.*

Community engagement initiatives include partnerships with several local arts and cultural organizations, working with them to present a wide range of national and international musicians and artists to local audiences. In FY 2018 we sponsored performances, exhibitions, and educational events featuring chamber music, Americana, original music by local musicians, the King's Singers, oral history, African-American dance, Nordic music, touring theater, exhibitions about Eagles, the Mississippi River and the Driftless area, and

community theater productions. We also partnered to present folk and arts festivals that highlight visual arts and crafts created by local artisans, including members of several ethnic communities in the region.

A sampling of partners during this year include: The Temple Theatre, Mid-West Music Fest, Pump House Regional Arts Center, Heider Center for the Arts, the Great River Folk Festival, Driftless Area Art Festival, International Owl Center, National Eagle Center, Lanesboro Arts, La Crosse Community Theatre, Commonweal Theatre, UW-La Crosse Theater Arts, Viterbo University, University of Dubuque, St. Mary's University, Dubuque Museum of Art and the Minnesota Marine Art Museum; among those partnering with our affiliate station in Eau Claire were the Mabel Tainter Theatre, Wisconsin Early Voices, Eau Claire Children's Theatre, Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra, Chippewa Valley Book Fest, Chippewa Valley Writers Guild, Literacy Chippewa Valley, and Chippewa Valley Cultural Center, among others. We also regularly partner with Wisconsin Public Television on special community events, presentations and conversations about topics of regional interest.

We continued to work closely with our local University of Wisconsin campuses during the 2017-18 academic year by involving students in local operations and programming, mentoring of journalism students, and offering special-emphasis internships; we work with UW campuses in La Crosse and Eau Claire in developing programming content relating to special topics, issues and events; members of our staff regularly present lectures and lead conversations in broadcast management, journalism, communications and marketing classes, and attend campus-based job fairs to counsel students on media career opportunities.

One major new initiative in FY 2018 was our partnering with the La Crosse Hmong cultural agency, Cia Siab, Inc. on a student-produced podcast project. This collaboration included instructing the students about podcasts, guiding them through their interviews and production work, and in FY2019 hosting the podcast episodes on our regional website. (Additional details below.)

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 successes of our community partnerships help local partners reach thousands of participants each year. This success is typically gauged in terms of attendance and balanced event budgets. To that end, all of the events we participated in during FY 2018 were successful and we'll continue to expand on them in FY 2019. As a partner with these organizations, we're able to provide special opportunities for our listeners/supporters to

learn about or participate in music, theater, and other cultural events they might not otherwise be aware of or can afford:

"Thank you for (supporting) Cabaret at the La Crosse Community Theatre. . . I invited a friend who actually had been a refugee in the early 1950's from Croatia. She and I enjoyed the show very much." (Ardelle/La Crosse)

"Thank you for the opportunity to attend the first Chamber Music Series (concert). . . My friend and I found this to be a very enjoyable evening, listening to not only good music but a good speaker, inspirational to students and senior citizens alike. Meeting the young people during intermission was a special treat. They represent the future and that future is in good hands." (Lyda/La Crosse)

"Thanks so much for giving us air time on WLSU. We had good attendance at our Pump House show, and I know a lot of them heard about the event because of your coverage - because I asked for a show of hands!" (Larry/Onalaska)

Our partnering with UW-La Crosse students and community volunteers allows us uniquely to share performances, history and stories about jazz, produced for airing on WLSU:

"I listened to WLSU FM Jazz this afternoon and it was terrific. I didn't get the name of the disc jockey, but he played great stuff all the way. At this level of programming and quality WLSU is way ahead of other FM radio stations." (Paul/La Crosse)

"I really got hooked on public radio back in the late 1970's and early 80's by listening to jazz programs from WLSU. . . The one program that caught my ear was called "JAZZ DECADES" . . . (and the) people in public radio with jazz knowledge. . . especially those people at WLSU La Crosse station." (Jack/ Sparta)

"...just wanted to let you know, early in the morning on the jazz show, that I appreciate the more modern music rather than something that's 400 years old; doing a very good job...appreciate the early morning 'juice', as it might be ...thank you very much! (Louis/La Crosse)

We collaborate with many community organizations and UW-Extension as a source for regional information and services to rural listeners:

"Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the WPR Newsmakers program and for your continued interest in the topic of farm succession. . . I have heard from a number of farmers who listened to the program and thought it was very good. . . You did a great job moderating and facilitating the discussion with a diverse group of speakers." (Trish/Jackson County)

"I have an outside antenna on my receiver in my house and speakers wired into the kitchen and my home office. My house is on a ridge top. I tend to listen in the early morning and late afternoon to news programs along with occasional classics during the day depending on my schedule on the farm." (Jim/Vernon County)

Additionally, our commitment to airing our partners' Public Service Announcements and events promotion direct listeners to community resources to learn more about the arts, culture, literacy, and education, including the Hmong podcast project we embarked on in 2018:

"Thank you and WPR so much for supporting the Hmong community and the podcast project. But particularly, I personally want to thank (staff) for all of your hours helping us make the podcast happen!" (Ponyu/La Crosse)

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 2018, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2019. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.*

WLSU/WUEC's ongoing coverage of news and current affairs routinely include topics about and/or for audiences that would include our communities' general and minority populations. Our region's diversity includes ethnic diversity – Hmong, Hispanic, Native American and African-American families – but even greater diversity in age and income; to that end, we cover general topics of health care, housing, poverty, the economy, education, social services, local government, neighborhoods and urban development, the environment, and so on. Partnering with local organizers during the 2017-18 year, we also cosponsored community festivals featuring folk arts and crafts, dance, music and other traditions representing many diverse communities and ethnicities.

Of particular note in FY 2018, we entered into a partnership with Cia Ciab, Inc., a La Crosse-based Hmong cultural agency, to collaborate on a youth-driven and produced podcast project: *HmongBAEs*. The agency exists "to build a culturally vibrant Hmoob community. We plan to do that by providing culturally specific and holistic programming and services. Hmoob language revitalization plays a large role in Cia Siab's core values as we see it as the key to building a healthy and thriving community." During the first six months of this project we provided weekly meeting space, studios, and mentoring for the Hmong youth participants who did the preliminary planning for a five-episode podcast exploring social issues that impact Hmong-American students, from dealing with racist comments at school to finding ways to make positive change in their community. The project will culminate in the distribution of the five episodes in FY 2019.

WLSU produces and broadcasts more than 30 hours weekly of locally-hosted jazz and blues programming, recognized for its cultural diversity and significance. Our commitment to African-American and culturally diverse content is also brought to life by host Jonathan Overby's *Higher Ground* providing four hours weekly of world music with a Wisconsin perspective; *Roots Gospel*, a recurring series that explores the golden era of Black American gospel music and its intersections with jazz and blues during the middle part of the 20th

century, continued to add new episodes in FY 2018; WLSU's affiliate station, WUEC, includes occasional discussions about student experiences in other countries, focusing on what they discovered about the people and cultures in those lands. Additionally, WLSU collaborates with Wisconsin Public Radio to broadcast the annual State of Wisconsin tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. each January, and in FY 2018 committed to being a sponsoring partner for La Crosse's annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. community celebration in 2019.

The nationally syndicated *Alt. Latino* – a weekly spotlight on the world of Latin arts and culture through music, stories and conversation – airs on WLSU; and for more than 25 years, WLSU has been able to introduce a wide range of world, ethnic, cultural and mainstream musicians to local audiences through its broadcasts of *The World Café*. This nationally-syndicated daily music and talk program explores the world through its musicians who write about their lives, their politics, their cultural beliefs and practices, their homes and their history. From protests to relationships, this music often helps us understand the challenges of diversity as well as the cultural stories behind the creative energy that drives these artists.

In 2018, WLSU/WUEC staff participated in training through the YWCA's program "Creating Equitable Organizations." The program encompasses both internal culture and external content and constituents and included internal staff assessments and training to support strategic planning and action towards change as framed by the Multicultural Organizational Development Model (MCO) provided by the YWCA.

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?*

WLSU and its affiliate WUEC remain the only locally-based public radio news and information stations in La Crosse and Eau Claire; our CPB grant allows us to be locally-responsive to the needs of our communities in ways that other network-repeater services in our markets cannot. This includes locally-produced and originated programs created by locally-based community professionals, community volunteer producers/hosts, and radio staff that guide and train student/volunteer hosts and journalists. Without this grant, WLSU and WUEC would themselves simply be additional repeaters of public radio programming or music that originates elsewhere.

CPB funding allows us to attract and keep the best available local broadcast journalists; that level of professionalism provides a unique opportunity for our La Crosse- and Eau Claire-based reporters to be participants in the only statewide radio news organization in Wisconsin. These journalists are also key to producing the award-winning local news/talk/arts programs aired locally; without them, we'd not have these shows.

The scope of national news and cultural programs broadcast on WLSU (and its WUEC affiliate) would be greatly diminished without CPB's support. NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* daily news magazines, *Fresh Air*, hourly news around the clock, the *World Café*, *Alt. Latino*, *Jazz Night in America*, *Marian Mc Partland's Piano Jazz*, and more are all critical to our role of keeping this community connected to the world, helping listeners understand their local community in a national or even international context, and giving us the basic building blocks of being a sought-out source of news and music in the communities we serve.

Strong funding from CPB and the community make it possible for WLSU, La Crosse, and its WUEC affiliate in Eau Claire to create the local music, arts and cultural programming produced by students and volunteers who are trained and managed by the professional staff. This results in hundreds of hours of community-specific programs for our La Crosse and Eau Claire audiences.

CPB funding contributes to our ability to reach audiences beyond broadcast with online streaming, news and cultural content, mobile apps, community events and more. This support has enabled us to expand our online services to include greater accessibility to more of the local-only content—often including expanded versions of this material—to an audience that is becoming more diverse in how it accesses our content.

Finally, CPB funding supports our locally-based staff in its continuing development of community engagement initiatives as noted throughout this report. For FY 2019 this support will allow us to provide special candidate debates during the 2018 election season, and the culmination of our collaborative podcast project with La Crosse's Hmong community, *HmongBAEs*.