



## WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO

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### **WLSU: Telling Wisconsin Public Radio's Story 2018 - 2019**

- 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) WLSU and affiliates WUEC and WVSS are committed to community service through news, information, music and entertainment content on air, online and in communities across the state. All of our content is produced with the highest standards of ethics and audience service. We strive 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. Our 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."

Results of surveys were used to shape stand-alone news stories, but they also influenced coverage of stories throughout the year in broadcast and on [wpr.org](http://wpr.org). During the reporting period, WPR provided unbiased coverage of Wisconsin state and federal elections. WPR also completed a year-long project to learn more about how Wisconsinites view the role of government in their lives and the issues they were most concerned about. The project, called "Beyond the Ballot," included more than 500 interviews to collect perspectives from across the state. The issues and stories were featured on a special website section as well.

Long-form documentaries were also developed and broadcast from multi-part series that aired throughout the reporting period. WPR explored Wisconsin's complicated relationship with alcohol in the special series "High Tolerance." In more than 20 stories featured in our newscasts, talk shows and on [wpr.org](http://wpr.org), the project examined the many

ways alcohol impacts our lives. Stories ranged from profiles of women in the industry to the challenges of finding alcoholism treatment in rural areas.

The WPR news team and digital content received numerous awards during the reporting period including awards for Excellence in Innovation for our “Beyond the Ballot” series, Best Online News Coverage for WisContext, and “Best Documentary/Special” for WUEC’s long-standing coverage of Eau Claire’s new arts center. Our reporters were honored for coverage of active shooter training, immigration, local sports, and more.

Reporters at WPR’s other statewide affiliated news bureaus also supplied carefully researched stories from diverse voices and locations across the state. WPR began a new project, WHYsconsin, during the reporting period, asking listeners to tell us what they wonder about Wisconsin, its people or its culture. Listeners from all across the state submitted a total of more than 150 questions. Ten of these were answered through fully reported radio features, talk show features, and web articles.

During the 2018-2019 school year, WPR invited students at Monona Grove Liberal Arts Charter School to create pieces for our broadcast and web series “Wisconsin Life.” The students told the stories that they most wanted to tell — about themselves, their families, music and history. Working with staff producers and engineers, students learned interviewing skills and audio production. The final stories were broadcast statewide in a special called “Classroom Frequency: Student Voices From Wisconsin.”

WLSU’s news and public affairs program, “Newsmakers,” features weekly in-depth conversations with those making local news in and around the immediate La Crosse area. WLSU affiliates WUEC and WVSS broadcast a weekly program about western Wisconsin arts and culture, “Spectrum West,” that includes in-depth interviews and stories about area writers, musicians, theater, visual arts, and the humanities. WUEC also airs student-produced “Blugold Radio Sunday,” a program that addresses news, arts, culture and more with a focus on University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. During the reporting period, both “Spectrum West” and “Blugold Radio Sunday” received awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association.

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 hired three reporters and a summer journalism undergraduate as part of our fellowship program during the reporting period. The Lee Ester News Fellowship provides opportunities for early career journalists in WPR’s award-winning newsroom. The Mike Simonson Investigative News Fellowship, a partnership with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, focuses on in-depth reporting. The Milwaukee-based Second Century News Fellowship provides new and diverse journalists practical, hands-on experience in public radio news production. Finally, WPR also offers a summer journalism fellowship at affiliate WUEC focused on undergraduates from under-represented communities. Since 2008, 18 fellows have filed more than 1,300 stories on issues around the state.

WLSU's and its affiliate,s 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, wpr.org received millions of pageviews and delivered thousands of articles and live-streamed and archive audio. WPR also offered its Politics Podcast, a weekly program focused on state issues and politics. The podcast is free and available in the iTunes and Google Play stores and can also be heard or downloaded at wpr.org. The podcast also held several low-cost live shows in venues around the state.

WPR also uses Twitter and Facebook to distribute content, engage audiences on and off air, and for promotion. During the reporting period, WLSU and its affiliates invited listeners to post questions, share information and engage with our hosts and guests on social media. Our main Facebook page followers increased by 14%, to more than 52,000, as users continued to turn 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 28,000 followers over the reporting period.

On top of our community engagement events, our website, and our social media pages, WPR collaborates with Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) 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 our programs. These public comments are compiled and shared with the entire WPR staff on a regular basis.

The station 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.

Live music continues to be an important part of our mission, and programs like "The Midday" regularly feature performances from some of the best state, national and international talents available. We are proud to sponsor many community performances, knowing that exposure on WPR's airwaves and website help keep local musicians and venues strong. "Simply Folk" broadcasts live studio performances and concerts recorded in Wisconsin, songs for the season and traditional music of people the world over. "Higher Ground with Dr. Jonathan Overby" features "world music with African roots and more" each Saturday night. WLSU's The Odyssey Series explores many types of music and its power to create greater understanding of those near and far.

WLSU, WUEC and WVSS are 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 2019 we produced and distributed three episodes in the

ongoing series, “Big River Radio Wave,” a variety show featuring regional musicians, storytellers and comedians. We also produced/distributed an hour-long holiday special featuring music performances from a regional college.

WLSU’s licensee, the University of Wisconsin, partners with the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board to produce and distribute programming under the banner Wisconsin Public Radio. According to Nielsen, the partnership reached an average of 420,300 listeners each week in the spring of 2019. WPR’s websites – including WisconsinLife.org and WisconsinVote.org - had more than 10 million page views.

*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 WLSU and affiliates provide extensive election coverage and collaborate with WPT to broadcast important events, including the governor’s State of the State address, budget address, and state celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We encourage listeners to experience the state from diverse perspectives. “Wisconsin Life,” our state culture collaboration with WPT, continues this commitment by featuring stories of unexpected Wisconsin people and places on WPR, WPT and online at wisconsinlife.org.

In FY2019, as in all election years, we invited ballot-certified candidates to participate in broadcast debates, forums and interviews and to record unfiltered candidate statements. During the reporting period, WPR hosted and aired more than a dozen debates for regional Wisconsin Assembly and Senate seat candidates.

WisconsinVote.org, WPR and WPT’s award-winning election site, offers immediate access to voting information, candidate statements and extensive unbiased reporting on issues that affect the people of Wisconsin. The site served more than 890,000 sessions during the fiscal year.

WPR, WPT and University of Wisconsin continued its collaboration on a long-form, digital-first news site called WisContext.org. The site presents the reporting, research and community-based expertise of these partners to provide information and insight about urgent and emergent issues that affect Wisconsin, including: agriculture/food, environment, health, money, people/policy and science/technology. WisContext.org content is open to syndication and has been republished by media organizations and educators free of charge. During the reporting period, the project received numerous awards for its work and served more than 400,000 pageviews, a 35% growth over the previous year.

Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name is a traveling exhibit that features a photo for each of the 1,161 Wisconsinites officially listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. This poignant display was created by WPR and WPT in partnership with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Four sets of the 17 panel exhibit – including an outdoor “wall” – were displayed by dozens of veterans and community groups at schools, libraries and other public buildings around the state during the reporting period.

Each year, WPR and WPT 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 WLSU and its affiliates and by WPT. WPR also continued partnerships with the Wisconsin School Music Association, Madison Opera and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, to broadcast live and recorded concerts statewide.

As noted above, WLSU 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.

We worked closely with University of Wisconsin La Crosse and Eau Claire campuses during the 2018-19 academic year by involving students in local operations and programming, mentoring of journalism students, and offering special-emphasis internships. Members of our staff regularly present lectures and lead conversations in broadcast management, journalism, communications and marketing classes. We attend campus-based job fairs to counsel students on media career opportunities.

During the reporting period WLSU concluded a two-year partnership with the La Crosse Hmong cultural agency, Cia Siab, Inc. on a student-produced podcast project. This collaboration included instructing students about podcasts, guiding them through their interviews and production work, and streaming the podcast episodes on our regional website.

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.

WLSU, WUEC and WVSS have partnerships with a number of non-profit arts and community organizations in the region, including: 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, Dubuque Museum of Art and the Minnesota Marine Art Museum; among those partnering with our affiliate stations in the Eau Claire area 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.

*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.*

WLSU 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 our 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. Our coverage of the statewide and local elections in 2018 was particularly important to voters.

In election years, we invite ballot-certified candidates to participate in broadcast interviews. WPR and WPT's non-partisan WisconsinVote.org project helps citizens find information about voter registration and candidates and hosts public issue and candidate forums throughout the state. During the reporting period the site garnered more than 890,000 sessions.

WLSU and its affiliated stations also worked to promote awareness of issues through its annual fundraising efforts. During the December 2018 fundraising drive, listeners were given the option of foregoing a traditional membership thank you gift and instead support Wisconsin-based food pantries. Through this initiative, our members contributed more than 20,000 meals to those in need.

The Wisconsin Remembers exhibit, which features a photo for each of the 1,161 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. The exhibit was created by WPR in partnership with WPT and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

In FY2019, the exhibit toured the state and was seen in nine communities. Three exhibits tour the state each year and served as a model for other public broadcasters around the nation. An outdoor version of the exhibit was displayed at The World's

Largest Brat Fest and alongside traveling versions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

WLSU and its statewide affiliates supported 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 FY2019, student performances and interviews were broadcast to statewide audiences and WPR sponsored community performances, competitions and educational conferences.

During the reporting period, WLSU affiliate WUEC partnered with the Wisconsin Humanities Council and several other groups to develop a series of events that investigated the role of journalism in covering poverty in the Chippewa Valley community. The collaboration included several media partners and successfully led to the development of art and essay contests, a community read, a film and discussion series, and a music and storytelling event featuring stories of poverty. A community forum called "Beyond the Headlines: Eau Claire and its Journalists Engage on Poverty," featured Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists, a University of Wisconsin poverty researcher, and a local woman who emerged from homelessness to become a poverty activist.

As noted above, WPR and WLSU hosts regularly make special appearances at events around the state that encourage literacy, music education, cultural diversity and more. We meet regularly with community members to ensure our programs are addressing issues that affect real people in Wisconsin. We help local nonprofits promote community events that celebrate nature, agriculture, science, performing arts, families and just plain fun. These promotional partners often report back that our broadcast announcement had a significant impact on their event attendance and success of their programs.

*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 2019, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2020. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.*

WPR, including WLSU and its affiliates, is committed to serving all Wisconsinites and to reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of our state in our programs and staffing. During the reporting period, new hires brought new voices and experiences to our broadcast programs and work behind the scenes.

We continue our work to improve diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) throughout our organization and specifically within our "change team." Recognizing that our

organizational culture has a huge impact on hiring and retention of staff holding marginalized identities, we emphasized creating 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. Our DEI vision and goals focused on four main areas: culture and retention, accessibility (abilities and gender-identity spectrum), content, and recruitment. The change team began publishing a monthly newsletter, presenting at monthly staff meetings, and holding all-staff presentations and trainings on topics such as Autism in the Workplace, Islamophobia, and Hmong in Wisconsin.

During the past reporting period, WPR and WPT were two of a handful of area organizations selected for training through the YWCA's program "Creating Equitable Organizations" and WPR continued staff training as part of that effort. 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. WPR and the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) partnered on a variety of community focused initiatives, one of which is Toward One Wisconsin, a conference on building communities of equity. In addition, WPR and WIPPS worked together on convening community conversation on critical issues facing our region.

On air and online during this reporting period, WLSU and its affiliate reporters covered a significant number of stories that explored issues of diversity, including education, policing, business development, farming, health care, immigration and homelessness in Wisconsin among other things.

In addition to exploring issues of diversity through our news coverage, our cultural coverage regularly features people and places that reflect Wisconsin's diverse population. "Wisconsin Life," our collaboration with WPT, has featured stories by and about immigration, religion, community and important figures and events of Wisconsin's past and present. During the reporting period, 29 stories in the series were produced by people in minority groups.

Each January, we broadcast the official state ceremony honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., produced and hosted by WPR's Dr. Jonathan Overby. Our music programming also reflects the diversity of musical traditions around the world, including "Higher Ground" and the Odyssey Series, which focuses on music from around the world and its power to create a greater understanding of those near and far.

WLSU produces and broadcasts more than 30 hours weekly of locally-hosted jazz and blues programming. Our commitment to culturally diverse content is also reflected in "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.

Our website, [wpr.org](http://wpr.org), live streams the annual State of the Tribes Address from the State Capitol. And, through our community partnerships, we regularly feature and promote events and educational activities that embrace diversity and inclusion. WLSU's community events featured topics and guests representing diversity and inclusion in partnership with local venues and non-profit organizations.

As noted previously, WPR's WLSU concluded a two-year partnership with Cia Ciab, Inc., a La Crosse-based Hmong cultural agency this reporting period. The partnership collaborated on a youth-driven and produced podcast project: HmongBAEs. Cia Ciab, Inc. exists "to build a culturally vibrant Hmoob community." Hmoob language revitalization plays a large role in Cia Siab's core values.

Throughout the collaboration, WLSU hosted student meetings, provided production facilities and mentored the Hmong youth participants who planned a five-episode podcast. The series was produced and shared with the community at large during the second year of the collaboration. The five episodes explored trauma, assimilation, gender roles, racism and activism. WLSU's weekly "Newsmakers" program also produced a special on "The Making of HmongBAEs" that included conversations with the project coordinator.

*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?*

We share and preserve the stories of Wisconsin's people. Our programs celebrate Wisconsin's way of life. We reach out beyond broadcasts to serve Wisconsin online and in the community. Without CPB funding, all of these things would be affected. WLSU is one of the flagships for the largest and only statewide radio news organization in Wisconsin. Because of strong funding support, we continue to attract and keep the best available broadcast journalists, including two full-time reporters at the Capitol.

The scope of national programs broadcast on WLSU and its affiliates would be greatly diminished without CPB's support. Programs like NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" help keep our listeners connected to the world and help us put local and statewide content in a national or even international context.

WLSU and its affiliate WUEC remain the only locally-based public radio news and information stations in La Crosse and Eau Claire. Support from the CPB 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.

CPB funding helps ensure that our 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 our ability to reach audiences beyond broadcast with online streaming, news and cultural content, mobile apps, community events and more.