

Grantee Information

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

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

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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 2023. 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 2023 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.

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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. WPR partnered with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Green Bay Press Gazette, the Appleton Post-Crescent and UW-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs to survey Wisconsinites about the issues that were most important to them during the fall 2022 election season. The project was called "Main Street Agenda." Results of surveys were the focus of stand-alone news stories, but the surveys also influenced story selection throughout the year. Special community Town Hall events were held in Green Bay, Pewaukee and Wausau with issue experts and the public leading up to the election. During FY2023, 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 kept Wisconsinites informed about changing attitudes toward COVID-19, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, rising inflation, and the 2022 elections. When the national landscape on abortion rights changed overnight with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the summer of 2022, WPR reporters answered questions about what the ruling meant for Wisconsin with a respect for diverse points of view. Leading up to the elections in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023, WPR provided insights on the issues, candidates and voting process. Candidates on the statewide ballot were invited on for interviews and regional races were covered with local programs and, in some cases,

candidate forums and debates. WPR partnered with WisPolitics, UW- La Crosse, WXOW, La Crosse Tribune, WIZM, Seven Rivers Alliance, and the League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area to put on a debate for the 3rd Congressional District Democratic primary candidates. As part of the Main Street Agenda project mentioned above, special community Town Hall events were held in Green Bay, Pewaukee and Wausau with issue experts and the public leading up to the November election. WPR's nationally distributed program, "To the Best of Our Knowledge," partnered with the Economic Hardship Reporting Project on a special series called "Going for Broke." The three-part series, which won a National Headliner Award for Civic/Political Podcast, centers on Americans who have lived on the edge and their sometimes startling economic experiences and what it says about our society as a whole. WPR also launched "Uprooted: Cuban in Wisconsin," a podcast focused on the 15,000 Cubans that were sent to Fort McCoy near La Crosse as part of the Mariel boatlift in 1980. WPR news team and digital content were honored with more than 20 state, regional and national awards for investigative reporting, feature stories, podcasts, photography and website.. The recognition included four Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, including one for WPR's series on the second anniversary of COVID-19. There were multiple awards from the Milwaukee Press Club—including a Gold for Best News Photograph and another for a "Wisconsin Life" piece on a boy meeting his curling hero. The station also won three Awards for Excellence from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and five Eric Sevareid Awards from the Midwest Broadcast Journalists Association. Dr. Jonathan Øverby, host of WPR's world music show "The Road to Higher Ground," was inducted into the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame. As part of WPR's continuing commitment to training the next generation of journalists, the station hired three reporters as part of our fellowship program. WERN and its affiliates' news and cultural stories are also featured at wpr.org. wpr.org received millions of pageviews and delivered thousands of articles and live-streamed and archived audio. WPR also uses Facebook and Instagram to distribute content, engage audiences on and off air, and for promotion. 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 65,000 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. WPR's Instagram, launched during FY2021, had approximately 2,700 followers during FY2023. WPR suspended its Twitter account during the reporting period. WPR engaged with communities and audiences across the state with in-person and online events in FY2023. These include the Main Street Agenda Town Hall events mentioned as part of our election coverage above, a listening party and conversation for "Uprooted: Cuban in Wisconsin" with the hosts/producers and several participants in the project, a live broadcast from Bayfield's "Bayfield in Bloom" garden show and a virtual event with reporters on the "Going for Broke" podcast in collaboration with UW-Madison's national Badger Talk series among others. WPR also provided opportunities for participants to ask questions of WPR staff at events in the summer and fall. In total WPR connected with audiences at 10 live and virtual events over the reporting period, with more than 1,000 participants. 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. 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 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. Local broadcast series include the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and the Madison Opera, among others. Programs like "The Midday" have regularly featured live music 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 of WPR. According to Nielsen, the partnership reached an average of 365,000 listeners. WPR's websites had more than 12.7 million page views. WPR conducted some of its most significant audience research in the past 30 years, including focus groups, a survey focused on technology use and a content survey that had 6,000 responses. The surveys will help inform our work in the future.

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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. WPR regularly partners with the non-profit Wisconsin Watch on investigative journalism projects. The groups collaborate on reporting projects and sometimes share content for distribution to a broader audience. 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. As noted in the response to question one above, WPR partnered with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the Green Bay Press Gazette, the Appleton Post-Crescent and UW-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs to survey Wisconsinites about the issues that were most important to them during the fall

2022 election season. The station also partnered with the Green Bay Press Gazette on a special series called "Home is Here," focused on changing demographics in the Green Bay area. WPR's nationally distributed program, "To the Best of Our Knowledge," also partnered with the Economic Hardship Reporting Project on a special series called "Going for Broke." 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 fourteen locations around the state in FY2023, including the rotunda of the State Capitol. Each year, WPR and PBS Wisconsin also collaborate on culture and entertainment programs, including The 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. 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 2023, 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 in the fall and spring. 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 heating assistance. In FY2021, FY2022 and FY2023 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. The program concluded in the fall of 2023. When thanking WPR for their on air and online promotion, Alyssa Kenney at the Public Service Commission said: "Wisconsin achieved almost 50% enrollment and remained in the top 10 states for program enrollment in this critical internet affordability program." WERN and its affiliates have partnerships with dozens of non-profit arts and community organizations in communities throughout the state.

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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. WERN and its affiliated stations also work to promote awareness of issues through its annual fundraising efforts. During the year-end 2022 fundraising drive, contributors were given the option of foregoing a traditional membership thank you gift and instead support Wisconsin-based food pantries. WPR members 4,125 meals to Second Harvest in 2022. Since 2010, WPR has provided more than 419,000 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 FY2023, the exhibit toured the state and was seen in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Whitewater, Nicolet, Oak Creek, Kaukuna, Burlington, Madison, Bloomer, Waunakee, Crivitz, Verona and Elkhorn. 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 FY2023, 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. 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.

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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 2023, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2024. 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. WPR is committed to reflecting 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 recent years, WPR has worked to diversify the pool of on-air guests and experts that we interview for news and information content. 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. These efforts began before the current reporting period and are ongoing projects. This work has increased the gender and racial diversity of guests on news and information programs and musical 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 launched a new in-depth podcast called "WPR Reports: Uprooted." It looked 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 included articles available in both English and Spanish. This was the first time WPR 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. As noted above, WPR's "Home is Here" collaboration with the Green Bay Press Gazette looked at growing diversity in the Green Bay area and invited residents to share their stories on air, online and during community events. "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, WPR, PBS Wisconsin and Educational Communications Board employees worked together to craft a land acknowledgment statement. The work involved many consultations with indigenous community members, academic experts, authors and more reviewing drafts and advising us on language. The statement was shared with the public through statewide emails, broadcast mentions and is posted on the partners' websites. 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. Each of the fellowships has attracted a more racially diverse applicant pool.

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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, but also during local, state and national elections and other times of change. 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