

NEVADA PUBLIC RADIO

Local Content and Services Report

FY 20-21

October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021

- 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.**

We consider increased audience reach and online engagement to be essential to meeting the needs of our local community. The Las Vegas region's is a majority-minority community (Hispanic, Black, and Asian ethnicities represent just about 55% of the Las Vegas metro's population). As of the end of FY21 Nevada Public Radio's weekly non-white listening audience was just over 30% of its total, and that percentage shows signs of a slow rise as FY22 begins.

Our original weekday program *State of Nevada* is by design focused entirely on local issues and stories, and it continues to follow key and timely issues driving the narrative in our state. Our original mission for this project was to reflect the community to itself and build a sense of place/identity, and even with so many topics of national importance in FY20 (impeachment, Black Lives Matter, the pandemic, the election), we covered the Nevada element in all of these.

In FY21 we produced two series of podcasts focused on the diverse population of Nevada. *Native Nevada* was an eight-part series addressing the culture, issues, and perseverance of the indigenous nations of Nevada. *Exit Spring Mountain*, a ten-part series, profiled Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in southern Nevada. The production values of both were high enough that in addition to offering them as podcasts, we also aired them on *State of Nevada*. Both series received significant community attention and acclaim, and we are planning more series in FY22. A series of five *State of Nevada* programs, Race and Racism in Nevada, aired toward the end of FY20, and we are designing a followup series to air later in FY22.

- 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.**

Nevada Public Radio is strongly engaged with the civic and cultural life of the communities we serve.

Each year, NVPR donates more than \$500,000 of on-air messaging to nonprofits that invest their marketing budgets with Nevada Public Radio. This allows us to form strong effective on-air partnerships with nonprofits that see the results of the awareness we raise. We also have annual media trades with strategic partners to build traffic to their events and activities. These include (but are not limited to) UNLV's Black Mountain Literary Institute, Southern Nevada Medical Industry Coalition (Las Vegas HEALS), Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce, The Smith Center for the Performing Arts, Nevada Ballet Theatre and UNLV Boyd School of Law. We have championed the partnership of corporate supporters in using paid airtime to raise awareness of their own philanthropy in the community. Wells Fargo and Barrick Gold provide an enormous boost for charitable and cultural events through on-air messaging and print advertising and other opportunities in our media portfolio.

Our partnership with KUNC Radio in Greeley, Colorado, to cover issues of interest to people who rely on the Colorado River for water, continues. We also joined the Mountain West News Bureau, a regional network of NPR stations stretching from Idaho and Montana to Arizona. As part of that partnership we hired a roving regional reporter to cover Nevada, which allows us to focus on areas that had previously been described as “news deserts” due to a lack of ongoing and timely reporting.

Our longtime partnership with the Las Vegas Philharmonic took a different form in FY21 because of the ongoing COVID pandemic. With the cancellation of the full 2020-2021 concert season, the Philharmonic granted us permission to offer concert broadcasts from the past several years. The LVPO was very kind in granting us permission to make streaming/download of those concerts available into 2024.

We are regularly invited to serve as moderators for events including the Vegas Valley Book Festival, events at the Desert Research Institute, and high-level Chamber of Commerce events such as their annual forecasting event “Preview.”

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.

Since 2014, Nevada Public Radio members have selected meals to a local food bank in lieu of fall thank-you gifts. Underwritten by Caesars Entertainment, this effort has yielded donations to the community of more than 540,000 meals through FY20, a result of the support of more than 12,000 members of Nevada Public Radio. Our signature community event held twice a year, Recycling Day, was cancelled in 2019 for reasons connected to the need to do some extra fundraising to address a severe funding shortage from 2018, plus the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though we couldn't host those events in FY20, we'll be back.

In addition to Desert Companion's July 9th roundtable, in the aftermath of the deaths of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, and others, Nevada Public Radio's State of Nevada produced a five-part series of extended special programs on “Race and Racism in Nevada.” The series began on August 6 with an overview of the Black experience in Las Vegas, with later episodes addressing the experiences of Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans who live here, with a fifth episode summarizing what we heard with the help of Sam Sanders, host of the NPR series and podcast It's Been a Minute. Each of the first four programs in the series was hosted by a different host who represented each ethnicity. The series received a great deal of positive attention and it was rebroadcast during the first quarter of FY21; there are also plans for a follow-up series in 2021. It drew support from one of Las Vegas's largest hotel/resort companies, Wynn Las Vegas, and another resort company has expressed strong interest in funding a second series later in 2021.

In September Nevada Public Radio partnered with StoryCorps to bring their recording experience to Las Vegas. StoryCorps has a 15-year history of facilitating conversations inside its trademark Airstream trailer, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic StoryCorps launched what it called a Virtual Mobile Tour. During its time in Las Vegas 85 people signed up to be recorded.

Our program State of Nevada had quite a few interviews with candidates for the presidency prior to the Nevada Caucuses in February 2020. State of Nevada listeners heard exclusive interviews with Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, Beto O'Rourke, Julian Castro, Pete Buttigieg, Bernie Sanders, Cory Booker, and Tom Steyer. In addition, during the caucuses several State of Nevada producers

visited with a large number of caucus participants, giving listeners an unusual perspective on the caucus process in Nevada.

Audience ratings during FY20 indicate that more than 32% of KNPR's entire weekly audience listens to State of Nevada. 200,000 hours of monthly streaming. Guests to KNPR's State of Nevada regularly report they "must" be on our program to reach the community with their message.

Partners continue to report great satisfaction from their relationships with NVPR. Independent research conducted by the agency R&R Partners has revealed a correlation between community non-profits highlighted and recall from a general market audience in assessing the CSR investments of their client who chose NVPR for messaging campaigns.

Brian Burton CEO of Three-Square Food bank describes our partnership (the annual food-donation component of our fall pledge campaigns) as "one of the most important campaigns we do."

- 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 2020, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.**

The answer to question #3 contains a summary of one of our largest projects, "Race and Racism in Nevada," which applies to this question, too.

Our news efforts regularly focus on the challenges faced by diverse communities of all dimensions: race, ethnicity, economic status, urban and rural. News producers are attuned to finding the stories of those populations and getting them told in first person accounts. We work to keep track of both topics and guests in our database, with the intention of tracking diversity in State of Nevada's subject selection. In FY20 we broadcast 554 conversations on State of Nevada. Of those conversations, 90 (16%) addressed topics of particular interest to diverse audiences, while 160 (29%) featured guests with diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, religion, gender, age, language).

- 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?**

In a word, *survive*.

Our survival battle dates to August 2019, when we discovered enormous financial deficits, uncovering unpaid bills and debts totaling more than two million dollars. A forensic audit revealed that as we came to the end of FY19, we had at our most dire time no more than about three days' worth of money to cover expenses and payroll. We pared expenses to the bone, holding extended fundraisers during FY20 and laying off nearly 25% of our staff.

During FY20 CPB grants amounted to almost 10% of our total revenue. The CPB grants equated to 62% of all grants received in fiscal 2020. Without the CPB grants, we would have experienced a net loss of approximately \$509,000. Add that to the financial troubles of late 2019 and one could make the case that CPB grant support was perhaps the strongest pillars keeping NVPR open in FY20.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived.

In April 2020 Las Vegas's unemployment rate peaked at 34%, with a corresponding pandemic-induced decline in business and corporate support for NVPR, a decline which continues to this day. CPB grants are among the very few sources of support on which we have been able to rely throughout the last two and a half years. In that time we have been able to turn things around in an almost unheard-of fashion: we have been able to pay all past-due bills, we have begun to rebuild the fund balances that we had to empty as everything had to be deployed to keep us running, and we have begun to hire staff again. NONE of this would have happened without support from the CPB. CPB funding is truly making the difference in:

- Funding accessible, independent and credible local news and content production in city where there is no locally owned TV station and ownership issues have diminished the reputation of the traditional newspaper of record. Rural Nevada has become a "news desert" with the decline of local newspapers. Existing newspapers in Reno and Las Vegas have become paywalled.
- Maintaining our reach to 93% of the population of Nevada and covering sparsely populated vast rural and frontier areas of the State and contiguous counties in AZ, UT and CA that otherwise would not sustain public media. Maintaining our network of rural translators supports the EAS broadcast chain for the majority of citizens to convey weather and other emergencies that threaten life and property. KNPR is the LP1 station.
- Maintaining a classical music station.
- Providing a predictable funding source that allows us to be a full community partner in raising awareness for civic and charitable activities through donated airtime, media trades and deploy in kind staff and other resources around events and projects that leverage our audiences to engage with their community.

NVPR's community service is embodied by its commitment to locally produced content that tightly reflects the geographical region we serve and offers insight unavailable elsewhere into the experience of living in Nevada. The economic profile of our region is such that our ability to fund news programming is challenged, especially during the pandemic. The mining and casino businesses make up a disproportionate share of Nevada's economy, and recent consolidation in those dominant industries means community service budgets are likewise consolidated; additionally, private philanthropic opportunities are not mature given the rapid growth of our region in the last 30+ years.

As a result, identifying neutral funders can be difficult, thus limiting our ability to generate funds specifically for news while staying within the ethical guidelines we regard as "a bright line." Prior to FY20's difficulties prudent investments over time allowed NVPR to keep pace with technical maintenance and investment into digital platforms.

14 years after the great recession and two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, we still experience challenges in establishing capital reserves, with little capacity for opportunity or annual growth beyond "keeping up with the cost of doing business." CPB funding is essential to our service. Without federal funding, NVPR would be unable to fulfill its promise to the community to provide trusted independent journalism, information and entertainment with the public at the heart of its mission and service.