

Grantee Information

ID	5259
Grantee Name	WERS-FM
City	Boston
State	MA
Licensee Type	University

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.

WERS is Boston's Music Discovery station. Every day from the campus of Emerson College, students and professionals collaborate on a viable air product with an understanding of the power behind the microphone. All are aware that with great power comes great responsibility. As such, content on WERS is made to entertain, enlighten and provide companionship. Especially while in the lockdown phase of the global health crisis, we worked to keep people together while apart. This was accomplished through the broadcast of PSA campaigns that provided useful community information that related to vaccination clinics, events that incorporated social distancing, rent/utility payment assistance, and more. During 2022, we found the world around us taking incremental steps to emerge from the pandemic that forced us into isolation. Having optimistically anticipated the arrival of such a day, we proactively rebuilt our Community Advisory Board to better gauge how Covid 19 impacted those within our coverage area. The recruitment efforts resulted in a team of faithful listeners, who on a quarterly basis lend their voices on the issues that matter to them, while also gaining a deeper insight of the inner workings of WERS Boston. Although work remains to be done for attracting people of color, we are pleased with our new CAB and the perspectives they provide. Attendance has been impressively consistent thanks to adopting a virtual meeting model that circumvents the need to commute at a time when traffic on the roadways has reached pre-pandemic levels. Special programming days at WERS are a cultural phenomenon that surely designate us to a class of being uncommon radio. Guided by extensive research and listener suggestions, in 2022 we crafted broadcast days to salute Black History Month, Women's History Month, Juneteenth, and Pride Day. These broadcast days were supported with blog content and promotion through our social media channels. By continuing to host special programming days, we aim to demonstrate that WERS is proud to support the

contributions of all members of the community we serve: Women, people of color, and persons who identify as LGBTQ. Our hope is to foster insightful conversations and respect for all.

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

Jump to question: [6.1](#) 

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.

WERS Boston continued collaborative efforts to unite the audience we serve, by working with organizations that exist as threads stitched into the greater quilt of our diverse community. For every season, there's a reason or cause we align ourselves with. Our first major event since the easing of Covid 19 restrictions, our annual "617 Day" was a big success at bringing people together to enjoy a night of music. 617 Day takes place on our around June 17th and refers to Boston's 617 telephone area code. Following an all day tribute to Boston musicians, attractions, and businesses, we hosted a remote broadcast from Brighton Music Hall, simulcasting a sold out concert with The QTip Bandits and Coral Moons as featured artists. We continued our work during the summer months by partnering with the brain trust at The Boston Foundation on their event, BAMS Fest ; The Boston Art and Music Soul Festival. In 2019, Boston Magazine described it as one of the fastest growing, NATIONAL, summer festivals in the City of Boston that celebrates and amplifies Black culture, music, food, art and entertainment. Our efforts included an on-air interview with the principal organizer, Catherine T Morris, hosting live performances and interviews with the local artists who were a part of the festival line up, and capturing footage of the festival by appearing on-site the day of the event at Boston's Franklin Park. As the transition to autumn crept up on us, we completed a multi-platform messaging campaign for City Awake, a division of The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. City Awake is the presenter of the Fierce Urgency of Now (F.U.N.) Festival. A week long event, The F.U.N. Festival took place in person and online at varying locations around the city of Boston. We were more than happy to promote the goal of bringing Boston's diverse young professionals together with business leaders, organizations, and peers, for networking and expert-led professional development, along with inspiring talks from some of the thought leaders of today. When the hustle and bustle of the academic year commenced, WERS connected with Massachusetts Broadcaster's Association to offer a paid internship to a student from the Berklee College of Music. The opportunity allowed the student the chance to learn about radio programming and digital content like blog articles and social media posts. The experience has led to the decision we'll continue to work with the Massachusetts Broadcaster's Association so that all of our internships will be paid. An additional project we worked on with The Association was The High School Radio Project that launched a high school radio station in Watertown Massachusetts. We were called upon for guidance in setting up the music library. It's a victory for the industry to have a commitment in incubating a new wave of talent on the level that precedes higher education.

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.

The WERS Food and Friends campaign is the initiative with the biggest impact on the community. When Covid 19 restrictions prevented us from volunteering at the women's food pantry, Rosie's Place, we pivoted to find a way we could still assist the venerable organization. Initially an experiment, Food and Friends is now another way WERS proves to be uncommon radio. During our end of calendar year fundraiser, we promise one woman served at the Rosie's Place food pantry for each donation in support of the station attributable to the campaign. This is fulfilled in cash donations from individual and corporate sponsors directly to Rosie's Place as solicited by WERS and based on a calculation of \$10/woman. Additionally, WERS donors were given the opportunity to send their winter hat thank you gift directly to Rosie's. This year, it translated into \$10,000 to feed homeless women in Boston who rely on Rosie's Place for a meal during the cold winter season. It continues to be an honor to work with Rosie's Place, and we hope our partnership can continue to serve both of our organizations for years to come.

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.

The Urban programming at WERS Boston has long been a best kept secret in our market. The Secret Spot (R&B and Soul) and WERS Plus (R&B and Hip Hop) are an alternative to the city's rhythmic formats that only flirt with the culture at best. WERS Plus, is Boston's Black Experience: A 24/7 deep dive into R&B and Hip Hop on WERS HD2. Meanwhile, the book ends of the WERS broadcast day belong to The Secret Spot. It exists as a time tunnel of sorts, connecting the dots between the smoothest new tracks and deepest throwbacks in R&B and Soul. The younger end of our demo have commented with surprise that Hip Hop songs they know well have R&B/Soul roots in songs they've discovered on The Secret Spot. To that end, The Secret Spot's regular over the air programming is bolstered by periodic opening of the

WERS Vault of Soul which spotlights the historic and noteworthy contributions of the pioneers and legends of the genres with blog content and promotion on our social media channels. Our goal is to replicate the WERS Vault of Soul with a Hip Hop feature appropriate for WERS Plus. We'd also like to expand the categories of content on WERS Plus to include news and podcasts of interest to Boston's Black community. On the weekends our Jewish singer/songwriter program, Chagigah, continues to capture attention with an approach described as Jewish music, humor, and schmoozing. Although eschewing religion and politics, the host is effectively nimble at silently connecting playlist selections to issues of the day simply by featuring the likes of Paul Simon, Barbara Streisand, Leonard Cohen, Carole King and Burt Bacharach.

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?

WERS continues to benefit from CPB funding by having financial resources available to stay relevant as a traditional form of media in an increasingly on demand/digital era. Over the years we've been a CSG recipient, our CPB funding has let us improve upon our level of ubiquity. We've been able to establish and maintain a relationship with Triton Digital for an industry leading web stream, mobile app, streaming metrics and monetization tools for injecting pre-roll into our audio chain. We were also able to capitalize on the explosion of smart speaker popularity by partnering with Xapp Media on an Alexa Skill. This allows our content to be readily available in the homes of individuals that research suggests do not own a traditional radio inside of their place of residence. A moment of immense notoriety was when our CPB funding helped us to hold our first ever free music festival on The Boston Common. More recently, our CSG grant was a crucial lifeline during the global pandemic, (allowing us to swiftly shift to a remote broadcasting paradigm) and now it's serving us well during what can be referred to as the global reset. Listening habits have changed, making it important to remind our community that we're with them and what we offer. On a small scale, we've used our funding to promote our diversity driven special programming days using the Meta Business Suite. On a larger scale, the funding has been used promote the WERS urban programming that one listener described as "a national treasure". We worked with the agency Outfront on a targeted transportation marketing campaign to raise awareness of The Secret Spot and WERS Plus. Of note, WERS Plus has since made repeated appearances in Nielsen ratings in a mix with bigger, commercial, HD2 channels. Attrition may be an accepted norm in the competitive media landscape, but it's undeniable that it was exacerbated during the global reset with a trend known as "silent quitting". The effect on WERS alone was quite potent. To it, was added an additional layer of challenges due to turnover within the Emerson College administration. A small but mighty team, we reached 50% of our normal staffing level at one point. Fortunately, our CPB funding had us poised to tap into non-commercial radio resources (eg Greater Public and The Current) for recruitment and consultants that helped new and existing staff move the station's journey forward. As we continue to meet our obligations as a public radio station, we face heightened infrastructure concerns. The issue of aging equipment is more magnified because of incremental upgrades we weren't able to make during the lock down years of Covid 19. With Live Music Week as the theme of our bi annual fundraisers, upgrading our performance space to current audio standards is essential. It wouldn't be possible without CPB funding. Our CSG grant has been a critical element in the growth of WERS as a public media station with a teaching mission. Especially throughout the challenges of the past few years, it's allowed us to enhance our efforts in programming and production, marketing, and fundraising. The provisions guide us to be a transparent, trusted partner in the community we serve. With a milestone 75th Birthday approaching, we hope to preserve our relationship with the CPB and celebrate all of the unique qualities that public stations bring to radio markets nationwide.

Comments

Question

Comment

No Comments for this section