

Grantee Information

ID	1370
Grantee Name	WBEZ-FM
City	Chicago
State	IL
Licensee Type	Community

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 2019. 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 2019 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.

Chicago Public Media's (CPM) mission is to serve the public interest by creating and delivering diverse, compelling content that informs, inspires, enriches and entertains. Through a broad range of media platforms, including Chicago's premiere public radio station WBEZ 91.5FM and Chicago's Urban Alternative station Vocalo Radio 91.1FM, we connect diverse audiences in our service area and beyond to one another. CPM is committed to its public service mission as a leading, independent source of news and information that makes our community, and our democracy, stronger. CPM content is available free of charge over traditional broadcast, digital broadcast, online streaming, on-demand listening via web and mobile apps, smart speakers and podcasts, extending the audience reach of CPM far beyond Chicago. Listeners rely on WBEZ for quality local talk programming, immersive journalism, storytelling, national and international news coverage and unparalleled local community reporting. WBEZ's robust broadcast schedule includes nationally revered programs, such as NPR's Morning Edition and All Things Considered, and a new locally produced talk program, Reset, which is a daily conversation to keep Chicagoans connected to each other, to newsmakers, and to the top stories of the day during the midday listening hours. In FY19, CPM expanded its local journalism and daily news operation, bolstering the existing reporting teams with leading journalists and skilled editors to better serve the news and information needs of our community. We built our newsroom around four enterprise desks and an expanded multiplatform news desk. Significant developments in FY19 included the establishment of our Race, Class & Communities desk, the addition of a full-time Cook County Reporter on our Government & Politics Desk (making WBEZ the only Chicago newsroom with a dedicated reporter covering county government), and the hiring of veteran newsroom leaders Tracy Brown as Managing Editor and Mark LeBien as our new AM News Editor. CPM has established new priorities for digital production and established the structure and workflow needed to foster a true multi-platform newsroom publishing across radio, digital audio, web and social platforms. In FY19, we launched an e-newsletter, Daily Rundown, that provides a compelling mix of local, national, and international stories to subscribers' inboxes every afternoon by 4 PM. Since introducing the newsletter in September of 2018, the Daily Rundown has grown its subscriber list to 120,000 and boasts high engagement metrics, including a 22% open rate. WBEZ also has a growing library of original podcasts, as previously stated. In FY19, WBEZ launched a number of podcast, including 16 Shots and Public Official A, both of which garnered national attention, national media coverage, large audiences, and demonstrated new ways of producing and distributing the work of our newsroom for digital audiences. Ending FY19 with a staff of 131 full-time and 6 part-time employees working in service of our mission, WBEZ reached approximately 532K weekly broadcast listeners, plus 58,985 weekly digital stream listeners. CPM also bolstered its growing portfolio of podcasts, ending FY19 with 834,266 monthly podcast downloads.

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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.

CPM enthusiastically embraces collaboration, both internally and externally, as an important tool to serve the public and increase the impact

of our work. In recent months, WBEZ has collaborated with other newsrooms in our community, including the Chicago Tribune, ProPublica Illinois, NPR, Better Government Association, Chicago Reporter, and the Chicago Reader. For example, WBEZ worked in partnership with ProPublica IL to produce Driven into Debt, a series that highlights how Chicago's ticketing practices burden the poor. As a result of the collaborative project, the City of Chicago has overhauled its practices. In late 2019, City Council approved an overhaul of its punitive ticketing and debt collection system, and in January 2020, Gov. Pritzker signed legislation to end license suspensions for unpaid parking tickets, affecting nearly 55,000 IL motorists. Lawmakers cited the WBEZ/ProPublica reporting for leading to the new law. In another collaborative project, WBEZ's Government & Politics Team worked in partnership with the Better Government Association to provide a deep dive investigation into a complex web of corruption in local government. The investigation provided in-depth coverage of a pattern of influence and conflicts of interest that shape local development and resource distribution in our city. Since then, WBEZ's reporters have continued to shed light on the complex web of federal probes that reverberate through Illinois government, with a focus on exposing patterns of corruption. CPM also regularly collaborates with local organizations to produce live events. In FY19 we held four Community Conversations, free events that feature community stakeholders, leaders and residents, and allow for maximum audience engagement. We partnered with subject matter experts to foster informed dialogue on issues including environmental racism, the impact of public school closings, city ticket debt, and water affordability. We also held a live mayoral runoff town hall in partnership with Chicago State University and the League of Women Voters.

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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.

CPM aims to provide the highest quality programming and journalism that the Chicago region deserves—the kind of news that not only informs, but engages and inspires action. We are committed to providing multiple viewpoints, holding public officials accountable, amplifying the voices of those underrepresented in mainstream media, and helping to foster community connection and civic engagement. We consider the following indicators and factors when examining the impact and quality of our news coverage: • Reporting that receives a significant response from the public • Reporting that sparks a broader public conversation • Changes in policy resulting from our reporting • Reporting that uncovers systemic injustice • National attention to and distribution of our reporting • Reporting that is widely viewed and shared through social media • Reporting that receives recognition for its journalistic excellence Here are a couple of examples of how we have executed our public service mandate with impactful reporting: Surviving War, But Not The Veterans' Home: Government & Politics Reporters, Tony Arnold and David McKinney, undertook an investigation that has spanned nearly two that exposed former Gov. Bruce Rauner administration's problematic response to a series of deadly legionnaire's disease outbreaks that have contributed to 14 deaths at the state-run Illinois Veteran's Home in Quincy. The investigation detailed the Rauner administration's efforts to keep key documents about the crisis hidden. The investigation prompted more than a dozen bills in Springfield aimed at preventing such a crisis in the future, including money for a \$230 million brand new veterans' home to begin rebuilding the state's largest and oldest veterans' facility, and formal investigations from lawmakers and the state Auditor General. The state's mishandling of the crisis is also the subject of an intensifying criminal investigation. These concrete policy changes and probes demonstrate the power of journalism. But we know that is not where the story ends. WBEZ Government & Politics reporters were committed to telling the full story and seeing it through. The team has continued to follow-up over the last two years, covering the flawed systems that failed to protect our elderly veterans, holding Governor JB Pritzker and Attorney General Kwame Raoul accountable to their own promises to resolve victims' lawsuits, and giving voice to families who have been directly impacted by the Legionnaires' outbreaks. Changing Classrooms: WBEZ reporter Susie An launched a series to explore how schools are adjusting to growing student diversity in the Chicago suburbs. In one story, Susie amplified the experiences of students and staff at one suburban high school where the student population has become majority black but the staff remains nearly all white. This, Susie explained, is one example of a national trend: public schools across the country are increasingly becoming less white, but districts are far behind on hiring teachers to reflect the demographic shift. As a result, students like Mia Pettigrew have spent four years in high school without being taught by a single teacher who looks like them. Another report in that same series looked at the demographics of local school boards. Susie found that many districts in the Chicago suburbs are becoming more diverse, but that change is not necessarily reflected on local school boards. As schools across the country are taking up equity and diversity initiatives, Susie's reporting has helped to shed light on the lived experiences of students in our community.

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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 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.

We believe race, class, and immigration have fundamentally shaped Chicago's past, lie at the heart of the most significant challenges facing Chicago today, and will fundamentally shape the region's future. Investing in contextual, in-depth coverage that helps us understand these forces and the people at the heart of them is critical to understanding the direction and health of our region in the 21st century. For this reason, WBEZ established a new desk in FY19 to focus on the intersection of people and place, a desk that will bring rigorous reporting and human insights to these fundamental forces of urban life. Whereas WBEZ's first three enterprise desks take their inspiration from key institutions that govern urban life (government, schools and the criminal justice system), the Race, Class & Communities Desk shines a light on the people who call this region home, nearly three million in Chicago and nearly six million in the surrounding suburbs. WBEZ's Race, Class & Communities Desk goes beyond demographic data to uncover both the deeper trends and the human stories that help us understand our region. Our reporters focus on the people who live and work here, the contributions they make to our communities, the challenges they face, how they intersect with individuals and institutions, and what those intersections say about the current health and future trajectory of Chicago. As we build our reporting capacity, WBEZ is wholly committed to ensuring that our staff and newsroom mirrors our city's demographics. We firmly believe that our organization must be truly representative of the communities we serve in order to provide the journalism that our community needs and deserves. We also recognize that if WBEZ is to be the premier news organization of Chicago, we must actively recruit, hire, and develop the best talent and human capital. This means evolving and challenging our traditional hiring practices to ensure a wide applicant pool, easing the barriers to entry for traditionally underrepresented applicants such as people of color, women, and gender non-conforming individuals. We understand that racial representation in our staff is merely the first step in a process towards racial equity in our organization. Beginning in early 2018, WBEZ leadership established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, made up of senior and junior level staff that has been tasked with assessing the current climate of CPM and offering a suggested path forward. Partnering

with the Morten Group, a consulting firm specializing in non-profits and advising organizations on achieving racial equity, we undertook a complete internal assessment of the organization surveying the full board and staff, resulting in several key findings that identify opportunities for CPM to achieve racial equity. As a direct result of this assessment, the entire CPM staff has undergone mandatory diversity, equity and inclusion training. The DEI committee also developed a DEI charter to guide our efforts to ensure CPM is a diverse, inclusive and equitable environment where all employees can thrive, plan successful careers and contribute to the long-term success of the organization. From the results of the assessment survey, training and feedback sessions, as well as with guidance from an outside consultant, the CPM DEI Committee developed a DEI Work Plan. The three tracks of work that the DEI Committee laid out are 1) recruiting and hiring; 2) professional development; and 3) editorial voice and audience development.

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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?

Healthy communities and thriving democracies need more robust journalism, not less. That's especially true in Illinois and in the greater Chicago region specifically, which faces critical questions regarding economic opportunity, public safety, educational quality, fiscal stability and racial equity in our community. CPB funding has been vital to our organization's ability to grow and better meet the needs of our community despite the financial hardships facing local new organizations. In no uncertain terms, we cannot do this work without the generosity of our community members and supports like CPB.

Comments

Question

Comment

No Comments for this section