

Grantee Information

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

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 2021. 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 2021 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.

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 (CPM) is a nonprofit, mission-driven public media organization rooted in community and dedicated to serving our region across audio, digital, and events platforms. We believe robust local journalism is at the heart of a well-functioning society, and we are committed to serving our region as a leading source of news, storytelling, and cultural programming that connects Chicagoans to each other and to the world. Through two branded services, WBEZ 91.5 FM and Vocalo 91.1 FM, we nourish the public conversation by telling the stories that matter, stories that provoke thought, entertain, capture emotion, and inspire action. For more than 25 years, WBEZ 91.5 FM has been a leader and innovator within the public media system, developing path-breaking original programs and podcasts such as This American Life, Serial, Sound Opinions, Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me, and more recently, Art of Power, Consider This, and Motive. In Fiscal Year 21, we continued our in-depth topic area coverage with teams of reporters and editors focused on areas of particular importance to civic life, Government & Politics; Criminal Justice, Education, and Race, Class & Communities. These topics are also profoundly interrelated and establishing these distinct thematic enterprise desks also allowed us to find synergies for deeper coverage. Vocalo 91.1 FM launched in 2007 as a mission-based service designed to engage the next generation of Chicagoans in creating and defining a new sound and approach to public media. In the years that followed, Vocalo matured into one of the most cutting-edge programming formats in public media, prompting stations in many other communities to follow its lead. True to its founding principles, Vocalo continues to reflect Chicago's distinct cultural and creative fabric through hip-hop, R&B, dance, and indie artists with an emphasis on the Chicago sound. At CPM, we aspire to become the essential and most trusted news source that Chicago turns to each day for understanding the people, events, and ideas that shape our community. To achieve that vision, CPM's Board of Directors approved a three-year strategic plan in June 2021 following a thorough strategic planning process. The plan's four pillars: 1) Invest in journalism 2) Grow and engage a more diverse audience 3) Convert relationships to funding; and 4) Invest in talent and culture; will guide our work and focus our resources.

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.

Public radio has long played a critical role in informing the public on the critical issues of our time and fostering a shared sense of community. CPM's work over the last year, in particular, serves as a demonstration of that unique role in our community. Among our greatest accomplishments were projects that built lasting trust and centered community voices and issues. For example, WBEZ tracked COVID-19 vaccine distribution through much of 2021, tracing whether the groups that were disproportionately hit by the contagion received their share of vaccines. Coverage was driven by our community's information needs and primarily focused on two fronts: distilling what our listeners and readers need to know about the local distribution of the vaccine and focusing a lens on equity in vaccine distribution. More recently, in a series called Re-Imagine Chicago, WBEZ partnered with the Center for Effective Government to investigate how institutions and systems operate in Chicago and how they might work better to serve residents in the future. The series was solutions oriented, emphasizing ways our city can lift up residents, improve civic engagement, and enhance quality of life. Daily and weekly segments featured in-depth discussions with academics, innovators, and public servants to explore four core topic areas for Chicagoans: city government, financial investment, public safety, and schools. We also held community conversations as part of the series, inviting community members into open dialogue on issues that directly impact their lives. Vocalo continued to amplify community voices through projects such as Chi Sounds Like, an initiative that captures the stories of people who give their all to Chicago and enrich us socially and culturally by virtue of their artistry, social justice work, and community building. These stories are shared throughout Vocalo's daily music and talk programming and through Vocalo's social media channels. Vocalo also continued to be responsive to community needs during the pandemic; in a series called Music Economy of Chicago in the time of Covid-19, for example, Vocalo highlighted the pandemic's ongoing impact on Chicago's music industry. Chicago Public Media has a strong culture of editorial collaboration and cooperation. We are committed to nurturing and expanding this ethos in our own newsrooms and in partnership with many of the other news outlets in Chicago; especially independent, local news organizations that serve Chicago's diverse communities. WBEZ regularly shares reporting from fellow Chicago news organizations through our channels; for example, as curated links in our daily Rundown newsletter, when we invite fellow journalists to appear on our programming such as our midday show, Reset, and when citing others' reporting in our own journalism. Additional examples of recent collaborations include: WBEZ participated in Solving for Chicago, a collaboration of 20 local news organizations that focused on the most vulnerable workers and their jobs during the pandemic. WBEZ Criminal Justice reporter Shannon Heffernan covered Illinois prison systems as part of ProPublica Local Reporting Network (LRN) for 2020; this year, Shannon continued her investigation into Illinois prisons, which will be featured in a forthcoming season of our investigative podcast, Motive. WBEZ partnered with the nonprofit journalism outlet The Trace, which is devoted to covering gun violence in the U.S., stories focused on survivors of Chicago gun violence and the resources they need to recover. WBEZ partnered with local news organization City Bureau for an investigation called "Where Banks Don't Lend," a report on mortgage lending and modern-day redlining. WBEZ partners with Crain's Chicago every week for a Monday business segment on our midday show, Reset. WBEZ partnered with the Becker Friedman Institute for Economics at the University of Chicago to produce The Pie, a limited podcast that featured leading economists from the University of Chicago and other experts talking about the most pressing matters of today. Through a collaboration with StoryCorps Chicago, Vocalo was able to bring the stories of Black Chicago to life. Hosted by Ayana Contreras, Vocalo produced two public listening sessions that highlighted the untold stories of the Black residents of Alton and Robbins, Illinois. The past year has been a time of exploration, investigation, and growth. Despite the hardships of 2021, we produced meaningful journalism that resulted in real policy change, brought communities together through the power of storytelling, and grew our audiences through innovative new programming. We are proud of what we have accomplished this year and excited about all that is to come in Fiscal Year 22.

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's intended impact is to create a more informed, engaged, and empathetic Chicago. These guiding principles inform our work from start to finish, from deciding what stories to cover, to the dissemination of a story after it has been published. An empathetic community is key to a healthy democracy, and we evaluate our impact through several factors including reach and feedback. CPM ended FY21 with an average of 537,400 weekly broadcast listeners, plus an additional 101,581 weekly digital stream users. We also engage community members online via wbez.org, social media platforms, and e-newsletters with 205,936 daily subscribers. WBEZ has grown our strong membership base by more than 5,000 members resulting in 90,107 community members. Finally, in FY21 our community engagement events reached more than 13,000 individuals and engaged them through conversation, storytelling, and music. Our broad reach – whether through traditional broadcast or emerging digital technologies – provides an enormous opportunity to foster dialogue and connect people across lines of difference. We believe that cultivating an informed, engaged, and connected community is a critical component to advancing equity in our region, and CPM has a vital role to play in that process. We tell the stories of our time, expand perspectives, amplify diverse voices, ask difficult questions, provide context, and connect people across lines of difference. As a part of this work, we regularly solicit feedback from members, event attendees, and casual listeners. Below are some examples of the feedback we received in FY21. "As a person who worked in public health pandemic response, I'm grateful to WBEZ for their factual coverage and the quality journalism that has kept Chicagoland informed. Thank you." "WBEZ has made me a better person, plain and simple." "I loved the hosting, the interactivity, the variety of guests, and the subject matter is really relevant and important. You really chose experts in their fields, and most importantly, someone who lived through it and came out on the other side." "As a full-time stay-at-home mom with four kids under four years, WBEZ is a comforting voice and informative companion each day and especially on the longer lonelier days of this past year. Thank you for being a lifeline for those of us at home all day." "I'm glad there was Spanish translation available, unfortunately, this is often an oversight." "I am an immigrant: I have been in this country for almost 18 years. For the first 5 years, I was really poor and had a job requiring a long commute. WBEZ was the only station I enjoyed listening to that also helped me learn proper English. I've changed jobs and improved my status, and I feel that WBEZ has played a huge part in my story." "I absolutely love listening to WBEZ on a daily basis. This zoom moderated by Araceli was absolutely engaging and important. I had my mom and best friend watching it. I even shared it on Facebook. We need more live streams like this."

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 2021, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2022. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Underpinning all of CPM's work is a theory of change and intended impact centered around empathy: We aim to create a more informed, connected, and empathetic Chicagoland. We believe that inclusive storytelling can serve as a pathway toward understanding and that audio storytelling, in particular, has a unique power to connect people through the magnetic sound of the human voice and the ability to imagine and inhabit a story heard. Community involvement is critical to our ability to carry out that charge, and we continue to improve our programming to create opportunities for more authentic involvement. In 2019, we launched a Community Conversations program that sought to bring conversations about our city's systemic challenges to communities most impacted by them. In Fiscal Year 21, CPM held more than 25 community engagement activities with 13,514 participants over 12 months. Highlights included: Citizen's Agenda: Little Village Town Hall November 16, 2020 3,050 unique views Alex Keefe moderated a question-and-answer session with three elected officials who serve the Little Village community: Congressman Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (Rep Garcia was only able to join us for the first half-hour), State Senator Celina Villanueva, and Alderman Michael Rodriguez. The Citizens' Agenda team narrowed the topical focus for the evening by looking at the survey responses from Little Village area zip codes. COVID – both as a public health concern and its economic impact, public safety and education were the subjects that residents identified as their top concerns. Significantly, this was WBEZ's first foray into providing Spanish language interpretation for a virtual event. Latine Communities and the COVID-19 Vaccines January 21, 2021 | 666 registrants WBEZ's Araceli Gomez-Aldana led a discussion about COVID-19 vaccines with Ngozi O. Ezike, MD, Director of Illinois Department of Public Health; Archana Chatterjee, MD, Ph.D., Dean, Chicago Medical School, and Member, FDA Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee; and Juanita Mora, MD, Allergy and Immunology, Chicago Allergy Center, and national spokeswoman for the American Lung Association. The event featured live Spanish language translation via a dedicated phone line. Re-Imagine Chicago Ideas Forum: Community Investment June 3, 2021 | 575 registrants On June 3, WBEZ hosted our first event of the Re-Imagine Chicago series. This event, moderated by Reset host Sasha-Ann Simons focused on community investment. The conversation was centered around three segments: the history of Chicago investment/divestment, exploration of investment South/West, and bold ideas for community investment. The event started with an interview with WBEZ reporter Natalie Moore covering a brief history of community and economic development in Chicago. Viewers learned about former mayors' approaches to community investment and compared them to present mayor Lori Lightfoot. After every event we conduct audience surveys, both qualitative and quantitative, to understand the overall success and impact of an event. In FY21 we saw an average satisfaction score of 4.22 out of 5 and we engaged over 5,000 new audience members. The success of our virtual community engagement events, despite the hardships of the past year, has helped us identify the desire for connection among our audience. In the coming fiscal year, we will continue to learn and iterate so our events best serve our community and community voices continue to inform our work.

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?

Support from CPB has enabled the organization to provide in-depth, human-centered reporting that reflects the complexities of our region. In FY21, CPM delivered on our mission to serve as a cornerstone of public conversation. Now, more than ever, journalism is vital to the wellbeing of our community and to American democracy. This is the moment when CPM and our flagship stations WBEZ Chicago and Vocalo can and will serve as the essential and trusted source that a diverse Chicago turns to each day for news, learning, information, community connection, and human-centered storytelling that leads to solutions. It is only with support from CPB and dedication to our mission that we can continue to deliver high-quality news every day, secure and sustain the future of WBEZ and Vocalo, and grow our reach and impact in service to the people of Chicago and our region. On behalf of all of us at CPM, thank you for your support.

Comments

Question Comment

No Comments for this section