**WERS SAS For FY16**

**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 has been Boston’s Music Discovery station for more than 67 years. Our goal is to introduce the local community to new artists and curated classics through a variety of programming across digital and terrestrial platforms. WERS is committed to representing the musical diversity of the greater Boston Area by providing great radio and compelling original programming, digital content, and engagement with organizations in the local Boston music community and beyond. Currently, WERS carries the only Jewish music program (Chagigah), Broadway program (Standing Room Only), and A Capella program (All A cappella) in the Boston area.

WERS employs a diverse range of professional staff, work study students, interns, and volunteers from the local community and student body. During the course of an average semester there are more than 100 individuals working and/or volunteering at the station. This diverse group of people works in concert to execute the stations primary goal of creating a bridge between the artists we play and the audience, while also engaging the greater Boston Community as a whole. Our place in the local community drives us to continuously re-invent the way we deliver content across multiple platforms and has led us to consider WERS a media center for the local community rather than a simple radio station.

**The WERS App and HD Stream**

The WERS App and HD Stream, available free of charge, allow listeners to connect with their local music community on multiple platforms including personal computers, cellular devices, and tablets. Now our audience can take advantage of our many programming options no matter where they are. The ubiquity of the WERS App and HD stream also allows the message of our non-profit partners, such as Rosie’s Place to spread beyond the greater Boston Area.

**Wicked Local Wednesday**

Wicked Local Wednesday is a weekly showcase of local, Boston area artists with a focus on undiscovered or on the verge talent. Artists come into WERS live mix studio for a 15-20 minute set complete with interview questions, live streaming (when possible), and an opportunity for the artist to convey information about their work . Wicked Local Wednesday is a sought after destination for up and coming artists in the community and serves as a bridge between artist and audience. Wicked Local Wednesday also offers artists a platform they would not otherwise have to reach a large audience. The experience and opportunity to record with excellent audio equipment is invaluable and to date, artists have been extremely grateful for the opportunity.

**Chagigah**

Chagigah is the only Jewish music program on the radio in the Greater Boston Area. It serves as a connection point and forum for the Jewish community and everyone who appreciates ethnic and world music. From special programming and guests recognizing the Jewish holidays, to providing a platform for local, national, and international artists from the Jewish community, Chagigah introduces its listeners to a broad array of Jewish content. The music on Chagigah spans the breadth of the Jewish experience from Yiddish and Klezmer, to singer songwriter and modern Israeli and world Jewish music.

Recent guests include the Guy Mendilow Ensemble, Manginah (the Jewish a cappella group from Brandies University), Shennaganns (Gann Academy), and Pizmon (Columbia, Barnard, JTS); Klezmer performers Klezwoods, Ezekiel’s Wheels, Yaeko Miranda Elmaleye Quintet, and solo artists George Aronson, Jacob Spike Kraus. Chagigah also features interviews with community leadership, visiting dignitaries as well as international performers.

Chagigah is a bridge between Jewish communities in the area by serving as a platform for highlighting community events and announcements specifically related to Jewish culture and the arts. The program also serves and educational component through features like “A Minute of Hebrew,” “News of the Jewish World,” and special long form interview segments on topics of interest to the community.

**Standing Room Only/SRO HD2 Stream**

Standing Room Only (SRO) is the only show tunes/Broadway music program on the radio in Boston. For more than 46 years, SRO has served as a link between the arts and the community, with live-in studio performances from local community theatre casts as well as regional production companies. SRO also has a calendar of events highlighting local theater productions, alongside ticket giveaways for further promotion of the performing arts in Boston. Because of the popularity of SRO, WERS has initiated an HD2 stream, where listeners can get their show tunes fix 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year. Catering to Broadway fanatics of yesteryear as well as fans of the current smash hits, SRO is a unique, listener-tailored radio experience you won't hear anywhere else on Boston radio.

**The Secret Spot**

Every night at 10 pm, WERS features The Secret Spot. The “Urban” program is based on R&B and Soul music, traditionally considered among the favorite choices for members of the African American community. The loss of a station dedicated to serving the needs of Boston’s Black residents opened a hole in the market that was quickly exploited by pirate frequencies. In allowing The Secret Spot to be broadcast every evening, WERS has helped to fill a void with a regularly curated exploration into R&B and Soul that avoids only broadcasting current hits. The Secret Spot library has been expanded to not only present the trending artists within the Urban Adult Contemporary format, but to also touch on the influential founders of said genres. Without pontification, The Secret Spot nimbly connects the dots from Ray Charles to Quincy Jones; From Quincy Jones to Al B Sure; From Al B Sure to Teddy Riley; From Teddy Riley to Michael Jackson. The program has an ambitious goal of existing as “edutainment” by concurrently educating and entertaining. We’d like to think that it’s possible for generations to be bridged by this family tree of R&B and Soul, hence an oft used slogan “Boston’s Home For R&B, Soul, and Slow Jams”. The 10pm-2am timeslot makes it a natural fit for an increasingly mellow flow, so themes of love, romance and relationships become more prevalent as each night runs its course. The Secret Spot, is the spot that knows just how to rock it for an underserved community.

**The Playground**

The Playground is WERS’ home for children’s music “Where you can be a kid at any age.” The Playground has been on the air for over 30 years and provides family friendly music for families during the weekend mornings. The Playground is especially interactive for our younger audience, taking requests and shout outs from children. The Playground is also a platform for children’s artists to perform live for the Greater Boston Area and beyond. We have also taken the time to promote local children’s activities with our events calendar.

**WERS News Department**

WERS has an AP award-winning student-run news department that brings newscasts covering local, national, and international stories to our regular audience weekdays from 6 to 9 AM during the George Knight & Company morning show. The news department also produces a weekly public affairs program, *You Are Here*, that airs Sundays from 7 to 8AM. The program covers stories of global importance, but with relevance to our listeners. Topics include, but are not limited to, politics, technology, health, sports, and the arts. Through long-form, innovative journalism and creative storytelling the *You Are Here* team informs the Greater Boston community by reporting on topics that directly affect them. *You Are Here* brings to light important themes in the news that are often overlooked in mainstream media by introducing and exploring new angles and perspectives to newsworthy topics. Between 7/1/15 and 6/30/16 *You Are Here* provided its listeners with extensive coverage of the upcoming presidential election, the refugee crisis, local events and activism, and state legislation (transgender, opioid, and environmental laws, etc.). Every story contained a local component to appeal to our listeners.

**WERS Discovery Shows**

WERS has launched an initiative focusing on local music and artists who are “on the verge.” Our WERS Discovery Shows introduce our audience and the local music community to artists who otherwise would not receive attention from such a large audience. The Discovery Shows are intended to introduce the community to new music that they otherwise wouldn’t hear. These shows occur at music venues around Boston and are generally low cost or free to the local community. These shows are an important component in the stations ‘Music Discovery’ mission.

**Live Music Week**

Twice a year during our fundraisers, WERS gives back to the community through live music week. We do not feel comfortable asking for the community’s support without giving back ourselves. During Live Music Week, we feature three live acts each day for nine days, with a focus on local acts. Live Music Week introduces the community to a number of artists they otherwise wouldn’t be exposed to and gives artists a platform to have their music played on air. WERS has forged a number of relationships with artists who first appeared on the air during Live Music Week. We have used these relationships to have artists play at festivals and listeners appreciation parties.

**Reykjavik Calling**

Every year WERS teams up with the Iceland Airwaves Music Festival to bring Icelandic artists to Boston and pair them with local Boston bands. Together those bands put on a collaborative show at a local venue that is free to the public. People from the local community line up around the block hours before the show to get in.

**Throwback Thursday**

Every Thursday we highlight a curated classic artist from our archives and play a selection of songs from the artist. The DJ also includes information about the artist(s) lives, history, and discography that the listener is probably not familiar with. This feature gives us an opportunity to go back in time and reconnect with the artists that introduced us to music in the first place.

**Live Mix Monday**

Every Monday we provide live music to our audience, recorded in the WERS Live Mix Studios. These mixes are live versions of songs our listeners will hear nowhere else on the radio.

**7 O’Clock News**

Not a news program, but a feature on new music from upcoming and established artists that wouldn’t normally be played on the radio. The student music team listens to countless hours of content in order to select four songs to feature each week.

**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 believes that community interaction is the most important service the station provides. We strive to be an integral part in the local music community and beyond by engaging local organizations and groups through volunteering, free public service announcements for nonprofits, media career exploration with youth from under privileged areas, and promoting wide spectrum art related to music and performance.

**Rosie’s Place**

WERS partnered with Rosie’s Place, founded in 1974 as the first women’s shelter in the United States. Their mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment that helps poor and homeless women maintain their dignity, seek opportunity and find security in their lives. During our second annual community service fundraiser, we raised over 200 hours of service for Rosie’s place. WERS members, staff, and student volunteers translated those hours into more than 1000 meals served during the month of March, when volunteers are most needed. We also collaborated with Rosie’s Place to bring awareness to their mission and the good works accomplished therein on a number of occasions throughout the year, including their annual fundraiser, Funny Women Serious Business.

**St. Francis House**

St. Francis House is the largest day shelter in New England. Located in the heart of downtown Boston, St. Francis House serves more than 800 poor and homeless men and women a day, 365 days a year. Their basic, rehabilitative, and housing services overlap and build on one another to provide guests with continuous and comprehensive care. WERS partnered with the St. Francis House to promote their Shoe’s Cruise, a fundraiser for the shelter, by bringing awareness to the good works the shelter does through PSA’s and the donation of our Music for the Independent mind CDs to the residents of the shelter.

**Readings for the Blind**

**Common Ground Podcast**

The Common Ground podcast, sponsored by the Division of Diversity and Inclusion at Emerson College, focuses on issues of social justice, diversity, and inclusion for College students, staff, and faculty, the community of Greater Boston, and beyond. Started in 2015, the podcasts have covered a variety of topics including political conservativism, autism, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, athletics, and inclusive pedagogy in the classroom. Initial podcasts were recorded at a small table in an administrative office. As it grew, WERS provided space to record in professional studios, allowing the podcast to reach much higher product quality, and reach a larger community. Common Ground is posted at <http://commonground.emerson.edu/category/cground-podcast/>, and is available on iTunes.

**Cape Cod Community College**

Cape Cod Community College students and their professor Naomi Arenberg visited WERS for a tour of the broadcast facility and a Q&A with General Manager, Jack Casey and other staff. The topics ranged from careers in radio broadcasting to the impact of pirate broadcasters on the local marketplace. Students also observed various aspects of the station’s operation including live musical performances and a live DJ show. Students were also able to set up relationships with professional staff and current students to serve as mentors should they choose a career in radio.

**Outside the Box**

WERS partnered with Outside the Box, a free music festival, to bring over 70 diverse acts to the Boston area, with an emphasis on providing access to underserved and economically distressed areas. The show was a success with over a million attendees over 7 days. The shows included music, dance, and art from a number of different genres.

**Zumix**

Zumix Radio of East Boston operates with a mission to “promote youth and community voices while supporting teens in learning valuable 21st century skills in technology, radio production, communication and journalism.” WERS is proud to host an annual tour that affords the students the opportunity to witness the activity of a more established radio station like WERS. Although the station Operations Manager leads a very casual tour, he invites all manner of questions as they explore the studio space. The students have been known to inquire about the technology used for broadcasting, from audio editing, to music scheduling. Some of the more interested teens ask about the connection between WERS and courses at Emerson College with a desire in furthering their education. Such was the case when Katleen St. Fleur took part in a tour as a student with Zumix. She was so enthralled with what she learned at WERS that arrangements were made for a summer internship during her junior year of high school. The internship provided a taste of the hands-on learning available at WERS. This, in turn, prompted Katleen to apply for Emerson College. In 2013, she graduated Emerson with a degree in Broadcast Journalism, having devoted much of her free time to WERS where she quickly rose in the ranks of the student leadership team. Currently, Katleen is growing into a future leader of the media industry. She’s an internet radio talk show personality, a host for community/corporate events, and a contributing writer for Boston’s historic, Bay State Banner newspaper, targeting the city’s African American communities. Even if there’s only the slightest chance for a repeat of this type of story, WERS remains committed to maintaining a relationship with Zumix Radio.

**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.**

WERS believes the key to a successful public radio station is engaging the local community through organizations that serve the underrepresented. During our Community Service Fundraiser, the station was able to donate almost 240 hours of service to Rosie’s Place, a shelter for homeless women. WERS brought members, students, and professional staff from around Boston together to serve approximately 1000 lunches over the course of 5 days.

Also, the exposure Rosie’s Place received from being featured prominently during the fundraiser increased their visibility within the community. Several employees from Rosie’s Place mentioned being approached by members of the community to support their work. Additionally, many of the people who volunteered with WERS went on to volunteer regularly at Rosie’s place. Finally, our Community Service Fundraiser brought two very different economic groups together and informed many of our members on the plight of homeless women here in Boston.

The Shoez Cruise initiative with the St. Francis House saw an uptick in the number of people participating after working with WERS on their public services announcements. We have also seen an uptick in the number of students interested in working at the station, to the point where we have changed our fundraising slogan to incorporate the education of future leaders of the music industry.

Finally, our Discovery Shows have had a large impact on the artists we partner with as those shows have begun to sell out regularly and artists who otherwise would not get exposure are being promoted actively on air.

WERS recognizes the value of being a vital part of the local community through providing a platform to service-based organizations who otherwise wouldn’t receive the exposure. The above are just two examples of how WERS interacts with the community. More information on our participation in Zumix, Readings for the Blind, and Cape Cod Community College can be found above. Through each of these programs WERS was able to impact an underserved community.

**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 2014, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2015. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.**

Through our broadcast signal, WERS engages a diverse audience and meets the needs of a wide array of communities. Our program, The Secret Spot, seeks to bring together lovers of R&B, Hip Hop, and slow jams, regardless of race or community. Specifically, The Secret Spot has a large white and African American Audience. Anecdotally, we have heard from several listeners praising the amalgam of music featured by The Secret Spot.

Chagigah, seeks to preserve the heritage of the Jewish people by curating the music of that community. Every week, the host of Chagigah explores events occurring in a number of locations around the Boston area that promote Jewish culture.

Our AP award winning news department has done several features on race and gender issues in the local community, with at goal of bringing light to these worthwhile but often neglected issues. These are just a few examples of how WERS tries to serve minority communities. With CPB funding we hope to expand these offerings.

**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?**

During FY16, WERS put its CPB funding to good use. First and foremost, we were able to purchase a new transmitter, which provided a higher quality terrestrial signal to the Greater Boston area. Our previous transmitter was a source of constant consternation and was running on partial power. The CPB funds were a godsend.

Additionally, we purchased a set of new audio boards which allowed us to improve the audio for all of our pre-recorded content. With these boards we started recording new promos featuring new music, local music and live music. We were able to introduce our audience to new music through our 7 O’Clock news, which features four new songs from up and coming or established artists that normally would not be played on the air. In turn, this feature has aided our digital assets, as we are able to produce a weekly video supplement to this feature called “Behind the Music Desk.” We were also able to introduce Live Mix Monday, which is a pre-recorded feature filled with live acts recorded in our on-air studio that were not able to air live. The boards have also improved the programming quality of our voice-tracked, overnight programming.

The CPB funds had a significant impact on the station during FY16. We very much appreciate the CPB and our participation in the Community Service Grant.