

Grantee Information

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

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 2020. 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 2020 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.

WERS has been Boston's Music Discovery station for over 70 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 Cappella 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 Emerson College 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 station's 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 continually reinvent the way we deliver content across multiple platforms and has led us to consider WERS a media center for the community rather than a simple radio station. 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, smartphones, and tablets. 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. We are dedicated to ensuring our website meets the needs of our listeners. For example, we have a widget player that allows people to listen uninterrupted while exploring our site, all while providing more artist and song information directly from the player. 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 to 20 minute set complete with interview questions, live streaming (when possible), and an opportunity for the artist to convey information about their work. Furthermore, these sessions are recorded using professional video equipment and posted to YouTube giving artists high-quality promotional material to use for their own purposes. Due to the multi-platform promotion that accompanies each session (web, social, newsletter, on-air, etc.), 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. This level of audience reach and exposure is something that many Wicked Local Wednesday would not otherwise have and as such, artists have been extremely grateful to work with WERS. In further celebration of local music, local business, and local radio, WERS hosted its second annual 617 Day on June 17th, 2020. This day-long celebration of local artists, music purveyors, and venues came at a time when live events had come to a halt and artists were more dependent on exposure than ever before. Partnering directly with artists, nonprofit organizations, record stores, Emerson College, and more, WERS was able to raise the level of visibility of the arts across the city while centering diverse voices with specialized blog content, on-air programming, and our first-ever virtual concert. There was also a special edition of Wicked Local Wednesday as part of the festivities. WERS has made a major commitment to the Jewish Community by broadcasting Chagigah for nearly 40 years on air and online. This specialty program broadcasts weekly on Sundays from 8 am to 11 am to a large audience of Jewish and non-Jewish listeners that enjoy the Chagigah brand of contemporary Jewish music, humor and schmoozing. This audience enjoys the Chagigah outreach to Jewish organizations and individuals who deal with and discuss the issues, needs and interests of the Jewish community in a way unlike what's offered by any other radio station in the Greater Boston area. Hosted by Hal Slifer, our goal is to continue broadening the Chagigah audience to further include Jewish and non-Jewish households of all kinds including interfaith families, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox families, as well as non-practicing Jewish families. Worthy of note, Chagigah does not get involved with religious or political issues, rather it stays true to its mission of bringing education, entertainment and comfort to its diverse audience. Features include Jewish Family Issues with Dr. Alan Kaplan, Our Jewish Heritage and The

Hits with Rabbi David Meyer, Rabbi Reflections with Rabbi Josh Breindel, Chagigah Connections with Mike Slifer and The Message in the Music with Michele Tamaren.

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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.

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. One premier partnership at WERS is our work 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. In the fall, we renewed our media sponsorship of their Funny Women, Serious Business Luncheon. Afterwards, during our annual community service fundraiser in FY20, we sponsored more than 240 hours of service for Rosie's Place. WERS members, staff, and student volunteers translated those hours into roughly 1000 meals served in their dining room over the course of a week of service. Finally, in May 2020 we instituted a new, Mother's Day membership campaign that raised the visibility of Rosie's Place and provided direct support in emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our every intention to continue collaborating with Rosie's Place to bring awareness to their mission and the good works for years to come. The Talking Information Center Network is a 501(c)3 nonprofit radio station for the blind, visually impaired, print impaired or otherwise disabled. With the help of over 500 statewide volunteers, TIC provides human-voiced broadcasts of local news, magazines, books, consumer information and items of interest to our listeners throughout Massachusetts to promote independence and enrich quality of life. TIC is a proud member of the International Association of Audible Information Services (IAAIS), and is the hub of the Massachusetts Reading Network, broadcasting to all of Massachusetts as well as southern New Hampshire and Connecticut. TIC programming can be heard a variety of ways: via live audio stream on their website (ticnetwork.org), over the phone by calling 712-832-7025, by downloading their smartphone app for your Apple or Android device and through a special radio receiver. Over 1,300 receivers have been distributed throughout the state of Massachusetts. These receivers would not be able to receive a clear signal without the sub-carrier frequency provided to by WERS/Emerson College. WERS helps TIC distribute its important programming to a population that needs it.

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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.

WERS believes the key to a successful public radio station is engaging the local community through organizations that serve the underrepresented. As a result of our Community Service Fundraiser in December 2019, the station was able to sponsor 240+ hours of direct service to Rosie's Place, a shelter for poor and homeless women. WERS brought members, students, and professional staff from around Boston together to serve approximately 1,000 lunches over the course of 5 days in February. Many of these volunteers were first time visitors to Rosie's Place, and staff at the shelter have repeatedly mentioned these folks' continued support of Rosie's as volunteers and donors as a direct result of our introductions. Also, the exposure Rosie's Place received from being featured prominently during the fundraiser and over the course of the year through PSAs increased their visibility within the community, critical to their own success in pivoting and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was further aided by our novel and successful Mother's Day campaign in May 2020 which centered the services being offered by the shelter, and the needs they had in order to continue offering those services. We heard from many donors that while they would be supporting our efforts in partnership with Rosie's, they would also be making separate gifts to Rosie's as well as a direct result. In FY20, WERS was the lead media sponsor of the inaugural Boston in 100 Words writing contest. This initiative invited Boston residents to write stories of no more than one hundred words depicting everyday life in their communities. Modeled after a contest originating in Santiago de Chile in 2001, Boston in 100 Words believes that storytelling is a powerful social tool that connects individuals to each other despite their differences which in turn makes our community stronger and our city a better place to live. Due to our promotion of the project, information sharing about the submission guidelines and deadlines, and hosting of the digital event, Boston in 100 Words had a successful first year and plans to be an annual event going forward. 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. This has manifested as even more alumni earning positions at media organizations nationwide, both public and commercial. At the very onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WERS began running PSAs for the CDC Foundation, encouraging listeners to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and loved ones from the virus. By contributing to a larger narrative of health and safety, there is no telling the impact we were able to have on what was one of the hardest and earliest hit cities.

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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 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.

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 an audience spanning multiple demographics. 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 the goal of bringing light to these worthwhile, but often neglected, issues. These are just a few examples of how WERS tries to serve underrepresented communities. Looking at FY21, we have already begun to expand these offerings by launching ERS+, an HD2 radio deep dive into R&B and Hip Hop that includes the legendary voices of soul alongside new and pioneering MCs. Funky fresh beats combine with though provoking lyrics that pierce through the issues that impact cities across our nation. Featuring established acts and indie artists on the rise, every day ERS+ threads together the most powerful and outspoken members of the urban music community, presenting a Black Experience that's as danceable as it is insightful. With continued CPB funding, we hope to expand these offerings.

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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?

The CPB funds had a significant impact on the station during FY20 because they allowed us to continue our comprehensive advertising campaign for the station, including out-of-home, digital, billboards, and social media. We believe this campaign has resulted in audience growth. We plan to follow up on this growth with subsequent campaigns. We would not have been able to do this without the support of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. We very much appreciate the CPB and our participation in the Community Service Grant.

Comments

Question

Comment

No Comments for this section