FY-2016

WBUR's Annual Local Content and Services Report

As submitted to the Corporation of Public Broadcasting (CPB)

Report Date: February 15, 2017
#1: Describe 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.

WBUR’s overall public service in 2016 flourished with long form, in-depth journalism serving much of Massachusetts including Cape Cod and the islands and WBUR’s growing national audience through programs produced at WBUR and distributed by NPR including On Point, Here & Now and Only a Game. WBUR is in a formal editorial partnership with NPR for the production of Here & Now – carried on more than 400 stations across America.

WBUR’s growing newsroom focused most of its work in 2016 on important issues around greater Boston and New England. The journalistic efforts continue to flourish on radio broadcasts with much growth continuing online - engaging with WBUR’s audience on whatever platform chosen to consume content. Also ‘live,’ in-person events continued to grow in 2016 as WBUR engage WBUR listeners in town halls and auditoriums for vibrant community discussions.

In addition, WBUR took a major leap forward in 2016 in the expansion of its coverage of arts & culture through its vertical the ‘Artery’ online and radio segments and stories. As 2016 came to a close the Artery was on the verge of expanding its staff and resources to add much greater depth to its coverage of arts in micro communities all over greater Boston including under reported areas of the inner city.

WBUR in 2016 continued its ‘iLab’ – the in house production for innovation for series and projects. Kind World – which focuses special stories on acts of kindness won numerous national awards and was heard on NPR news magazine like WE Edition Sunday as well Here & Now and WBUR’s Morning Edition.

WBUR’s online op-ed page Cognoscenti has continued to grow its list of contributors – now well over 100 – with new essays and dispatches daily.

Podcast production is now a staple at WBUR with weekly production of ‘Modern Love’ in partnership with the New York Times and also featured on NPR weekend magazine programs and ‘Dear Sugar’ the popular advice podcast.

WBUR also joined a New England wide collaboration in 2016 with stations across the region to report on issues of common interest including transportation, infrastructure, opioid addiction and immigration. The collaboration is funded in part by CPB and is off to a great start with reporters at each of the stations including WBUR each dedicated to the project.

Coverage:

WBUR dedicated coverage in several important areas including the presidential election that started in February of 2016 in New Hampshire with the 1st in the nation presidential primary. Following the primaries, the presidential election migrated to a national campaign that included
vibrant coverage and discussions related to issues and candidates including Donald Trump and a multitude of other republicans, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders (who beat Clinton in the NH Primary) and independents. WBUR devoted major resources to coverage of the election including issues related to migrants, rising health care, income disparity, opioid addiction and the growing problems with the nation’s infrastructure including bridges and roads. These issues were examined subsequently outside the election as important subjects in need of further examination in Massachusetts.

WBUR dedicated major resources and became a primary source for a variety of issues around the growing crisis related to heroin addiction and deaths. WBUR also continued its robust reportage on rising health care costs and issues around the Affordable Care Act. The station also produced a major series around transportation in eastern Massachusetts and reported regularly on the growing controversy around migrants.

In 2016 WBUR launched a new vertical ‘Edify’ designed to focus on issues related to education – at the school level and higher education in Massachusetts. The primary focus in 2016 was on a statewide ballot initiative designed to enable more growth on the number of Charter Schools allowed in Massachusetts -- a hugely controversial topic. ‘Edify’ devoted much reporting to the issue on WBUR radio, streaming and online. WBUR also broadcast on ‘Radio Boston’ multiple conversations around charter schools and a ‘special’ public forum held at UMass Boston in partnership with the McCormack Institute and the Boston Globe that included voices on both sides of the charter school issue.

‘Edify’ reporter Tonya Mosely produced a compelling 2-part series on how racial history is taught in Bay State schools called: ‘Mass. Schools Find New Ways to Teach Racial History.’
Textbooks are often thought of as a critical tool for teachers in the classroom. But when it comes to teaching the history of race, WBUR found that more and more teachers in Massachusetts are moving away from traditional textbooks.

At Lowell High School, social studies teacher Robert De Lossa relied on a 20-year-old textbook, "A History of the United States a book that is almost 1,000 pages. De Lossa said there are just 10 pages in this 1,000-page book that cover the contributions of minorities to U.S. history. It’s a chapter on the 1960s civil rights movement called "The Problem of Civil Rights: The Black Revolt."

“One of the things that troubles me as an educator,” said De Lossa, “is that it’s almost antagonistic in its language. So a student who would be using a textbook like this, the last images they would have on the black rights movement is that it’s revolt, a rebellion and it’s problematic. The problem that we have, and the problem that a lot of schools have, is I’ve got over a thousand copies of this (book),” said De Lossa. “To adopt fully a new text that has the characteristics that we want would be over $100,000.”
De Lossa’s dilemma is one that teachers throughout Massachusetts share. Teachers said that, while they are frustrated by the way some textbooks teach about the contributions of minorities, they can’t afford to replace the books. Many instead work around the problem by using digital and primary sources, as well as audio and visual materials.

**Series on Transportation:**

In 2016 WBUR launched an ambitious series on transportation in late April. The series included more than a dozen radio stories, conversations, video projects and a poll about the growing concern about getting around Boston and the region’s growing gridlock. According to the [WBUR poll](https://www wbur.org), 14 percent of Boston-area residents said in 2016, they’ve considered leaving the area because of traffic.

![Traffic in Boston](image)

In fact Greater Boston is the [sixth-most-gridlock-plagued](https://www wbur.org) urban area in the country which is costing lots time and money. The average driver in the region spends 64 hours a year stuck in traffic, twice what it was in Boston just 30 years ago, and adding $1400 a year to the average commuter’s costs. As Branner Stewart of the UMass Donahue Institute says, the traffic is both a blessing and a curse. “What stands out is that we are [one of the most congested cities](https://www wbur.org) in the country,” says Stewart, who’s studied the economic impact of transportation. “People spend, as everyone knows, a disordinate amount of time sitting in traffic. But also one thing that stands out about traffic levels is that our congestion is also a reflection of our success.” The city of Boston is trying to make changes: ‘Some projects include adding pedestrian and bike paths in different
The growing crisis around opioids and heroin overdoses and deaths continued to rise in 2016. WBUR reporters Deb Becker and Martha Bebinger have become primary sources on the issue with many important reports in 2016: ‘There is still no sign that Massachusetts’ opioid epidemic is slowing,’ say experts. New numbers in April indicated that 1,379 people died from unintentional opioid overdoses in Massachusetts in 2015, a number that was expected to top 1,500 once all death investigations were completed and tabulated in 2016. The data also showed that more than half of the deaths that year involved the potent painkiller Fentanyl, which is sometimes mixed with heroin. “The first-time inclusion of data on fentanyl allows us to have a more honest and transparent analysis of the rising trend of opioid-related deaths that have inundated the Commonwealth in recent years,” said Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.

From 2013 to 2014, opioids accounted for more than a quarter of all fatalities for residents age 18 to 24. For residents age 25 to 34, opioids were responsible for more than a third of all deaths — rising to more than 40 percent for men in this age group. In 2015, roughly two out of every three residents who died from opioids were younger than 45.

The situation persists in the state’s largest cities and in towns like Framingham where Becker and Bebinger produced a joint report in December 2016 working closely with the town’s police department and a supplier of heroin, “There’s an urgency in the state’s largest town, as 120 men and women have overdosed so far this year -- a 50 percent increase in one year.” There is still no sign that Massachusetts’ opioid epidemic is slowing.

WBUR has focused much of its attention over the past years to immigration one of the country’s hot button issues. As the overall population ages in Massachusetts and New England there is a demonstrated need for young immigrants to be trained to help bolster an aging workforce. That is especially true when it comes to health care: ‘As New England’s baby boomers grow older, and live longer, the need for health care workers also grows. In a class designed especially for immigrants, an instructor writes basic medical definitions on a whiteboard. Nine students from all over the world scribble down notes and shout out answers in unison. 30 year-old Ayehu Lakew sits next to classmates from Nepal, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica -- all here for a class called “Working with Frail Elders” at Boston-based Jewish Vocational Services. It's a nonprofit job-training program focused on specific industries like food service and health care, both sectors facing labor shortages. These students are the changing face of health care workers. Said one expert: “If you go into any segment of the health care industry, whether it's the acute care hospitals, community health centers, long-term care organizations, you're going to find a significant portion of the workforce are made up of immigrants. In fact, it's really the bedrock of the health care industry.”
Ironically the need is happening at a time when there are 13,000 pending deportation cases in Boston. Sitting in a small shared office space at the Boston University Immigrants’ Rights Clinic, Sarah Sherman-Stokes, a clinical teaching fellow, instructs a young client from El Salvador about his next appointment in immigration court. Speaking in Spanish, she asks the young man whether he has any questions or concerns. He says he doesn’t and leaves the office with a notice in his pocket for a court date four months out. For people in the immigration court system, hope and anguish can be measured in backlogs and daily dockets. And as Sherman-Stokes says, many of the cases involve high stakes. "People are facing really life or death situations and many of them don't have counsel, don't speak the language and are completely unable to navigate the really complex system of immigration law on their own," she says. Sometimes judges have 15 cases in a three-hour period and sometimes they have 25 cases and sometimes even more," Klein says. "So you don't have at the outset the amount of time that you really need to spend with each person.”

#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.

WBUR created over 30 events in 2016. Some highlighted WBUR news stories, series, initiatives and podcasts while the rest of the topics were wide ranging to reflect and serve diverse communities. WBUR also frequently partners with community groups, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, hospitals, museums, choirs, theatre companies and book stores in putting together community events. Our hosts and reporters moderate panels, emcee galas, and interview leading thinkers on various topics in Greater Boston and across the state. These partnerships help WBUR deepen our reach into the community; attract new listeners and members; and elevate the station’s standing as Boston’s convener of important, timely and enriching events.

WBUR’s “On Tap” series, held in our Events room (which holds about 80), is free and open to the public. In 2016, our topics ranged from the opioid crisis to summer book clubs to the presidential election. To complement WBUR’s robust coverage of the opioid crisis, we held two events: a panel consisting of a physician specializing in addiction, a police officer, a lawyer for victims, a recovering addict, and a family member, moderated by reporter Deb Becker; and an event for health professionals who have been effected by the crisis. The conversation convened people from all areas of the community and we were applauded for our attention to this important subject.

To accommodate larger audiences, we partner with various organizations who lend us their venues: a dance performance at Harvard’s Art Museums; a conversation on concrete architecture at City Hall; a screening of “Spotlight,” followed by a conversation with the Boston Globe reporters at Arts Emerson; an interview with primatologist Frans de Waal at Harvard’s Museum of Natural History; the launch of an exercise/health podcast, “The Magic Pill,” outdoors at the Rose Kennedy Greenway; Patti Smith at Berklee School of Music; an evening of Elena Ferrante at the Coolidge Theatre; a holiday cooking demonstration at the Cambridge School of
Culinary Arts. After WBUR published Boston’s 50 Best Works of Public Art – one of the most popular articles on our website, WBUR organized a walking tour through historic Boston. All of these were free and open to the public.

In addition, many of the local book stores and theatre companies request WBUR personalities to interview visiting authors and conduct post-performance talk backs. Approximately twice a month, one of our hosts is interviewing an author on his or her book tour or one of our reporters or ARTher critics is engaging a theatre audience in a conversation.

WBUR partnered with the McCormack Graduate School at UMass Boston to hold four debates centered around the state’s ballot questions. Meghna Chakrabarti, host of Radio Boston, moderated and they were aired live.

WBUR is the media sponsor for many high profile festivals and conferences where our hosts and reporters serve as emcees and moderators: The Berklee Jazz Festival; the Boston Book Festival; Mass Poetry Festival; the Independent Film Festival; Cambridge Science Festival; Flash Forward Festival (photography); Woods Hole Film Festival; Massachusetts Independent Comics Expo; Cape Cod Yoga Festival; Martha Vineyard’s Summer Author Series; Boston University Power of Narrative Conference; HUBweek (a weeklong series of events that showcase art, science and technology; partners include MIT, Harvard, Mass General Hospital and the Boston Globe). During HUBweek, WBUR organized a panel on the art of podcasting; our science reporters moderated several panels on medicine; and Tom Ashbrook, host of On Point, moderated a standing room only forum on Blockchain at the Federal Reserve.

Ticketed events include our two annual Moth Story Slams (in addition to monthly local Moth Story Slams); our monthly “You’re the Expert” shows; Listen Up (an evening of turning off the lights and listening to audio stories) at the Institute of Contemporary Art; and On Point Live, Tom Ashbrook interviewing journalists on the presidential election with a band performing at the Paramount Theatre. Also, this year WBUR partnered to bring the west coast phenomenon, “Pop Up Magazine” – storytelling performed live with video and music – to Boston. These revenue-generating events highlight what WBUR does best on air – telling stories and reporting the news but doing it on stage. These live performances help to create a community of shared values and conversations.

We once again were the partner for StoryCorps’ “Great Thanksgiving Listen,” encouraging high school teachers to ask students to interview a grandparent or elder over Thanksgiving 2016 using the free StoryCorps mobile app. Participants uploaded their recordings to the StoryCorps archive at the American Folklore Center at the Library of Congress.

The annual reading of “A Christmas Carol” by WBUR hosts and reporters to benefit Rosie’s Place, a shelter for homeless women, generated a sold-out crowd at Boston’s Parker House.

#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.

WBUR presented approximately 150 live community events — on its own and in partnerships — in 2016. Our email list grew from 8,000 to almost 9,000 this year. Surveys collected after every one of our events indicates the appreciation of our attendees and also suggestions on how to improve.

Our partnerships with festivals reach audiences of thousands and a few in particular very large audiences, i.e., HUBweek approximately 50,000; Beantown Jazz Festival 40,000; the Boston Book Festival 25,000.

In particular, our opioid forums connected affected families with important medical and legal resources; our community discussion at Roxbury Innovation Center following the summer police shootings convened families, police officers and city officials to help ease tensions; and the event to continue the conversation started by Anna Deavere Smith’s play on race and education introduced several people from different organizations with the same mission.

#4: Please describe any efforts (e.g. programming, production, engagement activities) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of the 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 2016, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during fiscal year 2017. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

- In May, celebrated the 25th anniversary of Zumix, an after school Boston Public School program in East Boston that provides free music and recording lessons. Jose Masso, host of Con Salsa, moderated a panel of students.
- Media sponsor for 826 Boston, an organization supporting literacy for Boston’s immigrant children. In May, Robin Young, co-host of Here & Now, was the emcee of their annual gala.
- Media sponsor for Rosie’s Place, an organization supporting homeless women. In May, Bill Littlefield, host of Only A Game, was the emcee of their annual gala.
- Media sponsor for Best Buddies, an organization to support those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. (In May 2017, WBUR will form a team for the annual bike ride from the Kennedy Library to Hyannis Port.)
- In July, convened a community event at Roxbury Innovation Center following the police shootings.
- In October, we invited all who had attended Anna Deavere Smith’s new play about race and education, Notes From the Field, at the American Repertory Theatre to “extend” the conversation in our Events room with one of the play’s facilitators.

2017:
• WBUR is planning more outreach into the Latino community with a series of forums on Latino cuisine, music and culture.

• On April 13, WBUR is partnering with TripAdvisor for a forum on the Refugee Crisis.

#5. Please assess the impact that your CPB funding has on your ability to serve your community. What can you do with your grant that you wouldn’t be able to do if you didn’t receive it?

WBUR produces 19 daily local newscasts and, on average, 20 minutes of feature-length long-form stories each morning within NPR’s Morning Edition and 14 minutes each afternoon for local features within All Things Considered. WBUR also produces Radio Boston – a one-hour daily public affairs program that typically focuses on several issues of local importance each day, including lengthy segments that often includes calls from listeners.

The depth of the feature reporting is made possible with help from CPB. To do a strong job editorially, WBUR needs to understand what issues are important and vital to the region and then have resources to examine and report on those issues in the manner expected by our discerning listeners. Here are more details about WBUR’s efforts in 2016 that were made possible by CPB’s help:

• WBUR has 18-20 local reporters producing stories on issues and news events in eastern Massachusetts. The reporters cover state and city government, healthcare, the economy, education, arts & culture and many other issues and news stories of great importance to WBUR’s listeners and the users of wbur.org. There are another 20 staffers helping to make that content possible, including editors, producers and news writers. WBUR’s online body of work flourished in 2016 with a new website and greater use of visual graphs, charts and photographs.

• WBUR produces a daily public affairs program, Radio Boston (3-4pm, repeated 10-11pm weekdays). Each broadcast, supported by a staff of dedicated producers, focuses on several issues of importance around greater Boston and tackles national issues through a distinctly local lens for residents.

• WBUR in 2016 sends out a daily newsletter for listeners focused solely on news and information. The newsletter was sent out to listeners every morning to let listeners know about the most important stories produced by WBUR – with links to each story. The newsletter is sent to more than 15,000 listeners and readers each week day. The newsletter includes local stories from WBUR and national and international stories from NPR and the Associated Press.

• WBUR’s health blog ‘CommonHealth’ flourished in 2016 and continues to garner almost 50% of WBUR’s entire web traffic. The blog, with an editor and reporters, continues to
focus on healthcare issues, including rising costs and the Affordable Care Act as it has been integrated into the Massachusetts Health Reform law. It remains a must-read for those involved in the healthcare community across Massachusetts. The Editor of ‘CommonHealth’, Carey Goldberg, also contributes each week to WBUR broadcasts including Morning Edition, Here & Now and Radio Boston. WBUR Medical Reporter Martha Bebinger was also a regular contributor to ‘CommonHealth’ in 2016 including extensive reporting on the region’s Opioid crisis.

- WBUR in 2016 experimented with aggressive social media strategies to get its content out to as many listeners and readers as possible. Included in the strategy were experiments with Facebook a ‘live’ video offering. The experiment has been wildly successful. ‘Live’ video offerings have also become popular covering events on Instagram and Twitter. WBUR is one of public radio’s leaders in this new and growing field.