



# **WBUR's Annual Local Content and Services Report**

## **2022**

As submitted to the Corporation of Public Broadcasting (CPB)

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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.**

WBUR, Boston's NPR news station, is a public media leader committed to exceptional journalism on-air, online, on demand and on stage. Our mission is to produce high-quality journalism and enriching experiences that foster understanding, connection and community for an expanding circle of people. Our vision is to become a daily habit for every person in Boston and beyond who seeks to engage with the most consequential issues of our times.

WBUR reaches seven million radio listeners across the country each week with two nationally-distributed programs, On Point and Here & Now. A pioneering podcaster, WBUR produces critically acclaimed shows such as Endless Thread, Anything For Selena, Last Seen, and Circle Round. In 2022, WBUR also launched The Common, a daily local news podcast for the Greater Boston region.

WBUR is home to Boston's largest radio newsroom and reports original, local stories that provide insight and cultural context to the community — helping to unite a diverse, complex and changing world.

WBUR CitySpace, the station's 270-seat venue, is home to approximately 100 programs a year that convenes the community – in-person and virtually – around important conversations about politics, science, health, education, culture, arts, environment, as well as showcasing Boston artists in performance.

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2022 was marked by a return to in-person programming (virtual option offered for all events) without vaccination requirements and mask wearing.

An NEA grant for an eight-month performance series of up-and-coming local artists took place from January to June (condensed into six months due to Covid restrictions in the latter half of 2021). This series featured musicians, dancers, poets, and visual artists and brought in new, younger, and diverse audiences.

**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.**

Partnerships are critical to WBUR's strategy and the organization believes that through these collaborations we can serve our communities better together than we can as individuals. This is particularly the case with editorial partnerships, which include: An ongoing partnership with community-oriented news outlets, including El Planeta, Boston's Latino Daily, and the Dorchester Reporter. These are long standing editorial partnerships in which newsrooms collaborate on stories and projects and share coverage.

In 2022, WBUR also partnered with other local news outlets, including The Lowell Sun and The Boston Globe, to grow the reach of WBUR's journalism in the Greater Boston community and beyond. These initiatives expand WBUR capacities to reach new audiences via these trusted community partners, broaden the reach of our journalism, and strengthen the network of local journalism in Massachusetts.

In 2022, WBUR's partnership with ProPublica resulted in an investigation into controversial hiring practices in local police departments that prevent outside candidates from being considered. The piece was published by WBUR and ProPublica and got the attention of U.S. senators and federal prosecutors.

During the 2022 election, WBUR collaborated with media partners The Boston Globe and WCVB-TV to design and host a series of broadcast debates for open statewide office seats, including the governor's race, which were aired and livestreamed on WBUR and wbur.org. Many of these debates were hosted at CitySpace where members of the public were able to attend. In addition, WBUR partnered with the Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM) on a gubernatorial candidate forum on issues related to the environment and climate in Massachusetts, which was also held at CitySpace and was open to the public.

WBUR is also a member of the New England News Collaborative, a collection of public media organizations from around New England, which collaborate on coverage and share stories with one another.

2022 marked the second year of an ongoing editorial partnership between WBUR's Here & Now and The Washington Post fastened by weekly international news reports on the WBUR daily news magazine show from Post correspondents fanned out across the globe. High interest international topics including the war in Ukraine and global distribution of Covid vaccines were among the consequential news reporting provided to H&N audiences via the partnership.

In 2022, WBUR CitySpace hosted 75 programs. In addition, we hosted a weekend Children's Podcast Festival and a three-consecutive-night "gala," our biggest fundraiser of the year. In addition to the NEA performance series mentioned above, we continued our monthly, highly successful Curated Cuisine series; MOTH StorySlams; our Sound On music series; a four-part Remarkable Science series; and our Phenomenal Women series.

We partnered with American Public Media for the mental health content initiative, "Call to Mind," and produced the last event of the tour (January) focusing on the mental health among students attending community colleges. A grant from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop as part of the Next Gen Public Media Initiative (with funding from the CPB) supported two youth events – "Student Voices on Gun Control" and "The Art and Sound of

Boston's Next Generation." A grant from the Nellie Mae Educational Foundation supported a conversation on the childcare crisis. In August, we hosted primary debates for the upcoming Attorney General and Lieutenant Governor races.

Partners included: Neighborhood Villages, NPR, MOTH, Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM), Vertex, Cambridge Science Festival, The Boston Globe, and Boston University Food & Wine Program.

We were also the media partners for high profile festivals and conferences where our hosts and reporters served as emcees and moderators: The Boston Book Festival; Independent Film Festival; Rosie's Place Safe and Sound Gala (a homeless shelter for women); Mass Poetry Evening of Inspired Leaders; Mass Conference for Women.

**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.**

2022 was a major election year in Massachusetts at the statewide and local level. In the lead up to the primary and general elections, WBUR produced robust voter guides providing quality, fact-based information and reporting to the Massachusetts electorate about candidates and issues. The voter guides leveraged several new and existing partnerships, including the debate consortium, El Planeta, and GovPack. The latter enabled WBUR expand its coverage to local races that weren't being covered regularly by the newsroom, and which receive less coverage overall with the decline of local news.

In addition, WBUR engaged a Boston-based mural and graphic designer to create a public art installation in conjunction with the voter guide. The "mobile mural" was created to both inspire and inform by including a QR code to access the guide. The mural was placed at several key community locations in Lynn, the fifth most diverse city in the state with 45.6% of the population identifying as Hispanic/Latino according to the 2020 US Census. The team leveraged existing reporter relationships with community organizations working on the ground to inform how the project was carried out. Based on foot traffic estimates, hundreds of people likely saw the mural. In addition, an Instagram post and reel about the mural from the artist reached more than 3,500 accounts.

WBUR's web analytics show the voter guides reached a large, local audience by WBUR standards. WBUR published these guides well in advance, and from publication until the day of the elections, the guides saw a sustained and sizable audience of engaged readers. Many readers found the guide via search, meaning they were seeking information about the ballot questions, individual races, issues or candidates, and finding WBUR's explanatory reporting.

Assessing the success of our events is determined by attendance (both virtual and in person), post-event surveys, and anecdotal audience feedback. As the year progressed, in-person attendance continued to climb as people felt safer gathering. Post event receptions for our science, environmental, childcare, and women series offered audience interaction with speakers and networking among like-minded organizations. The receptions for the performance series were particularly popular and successful – connecting these young, up and coming artists with one another, their fans, and possible funders.

**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.**

In 2022 WBUR was part of a cohort of leading public media institutions brought together by Knight Foundation and American Press Institute focused on advancing engagement strategies through editorial, marketing, membership, product and more. The other participants include KPCC, WBEZ and MPR. WBUR selected as its area of focus for the multiyear project to expand and better serve Greater Boston's Latino communities through contemporary engagement strategies, providing more inclusive coverage and improving the audience to be more reflective of the region's population demographic. This is a multiyear effort that will extend into 2023 and beyond and will set best practices for WBUR being more reflective and responsive to communities traditionally underserved by legacy media.

In 2022 WBUR also expanded the source tracking efforts that have been underway for several years in the local newsroom to all of WBUR editorial. This data will continue to be collected, analyzed and tracked over time to help our journalists establish necessary baselines for assessing identifiable gaps with representation across our media channels and be better positioned to shift strategies in order to reach our goal of reflecting the demographic backgrounds of the communities we serve.

As noted above, WBUR has a strong editorial partnership with the Spanish-language news outlet, El Planeta, Boston's Latino daily. In addition to regular content sharing, the partnership was reflected in live election coverage and analysis and became a regular feature of the new daily local news podcast The Common. WBUR and El Planeta are looking at a variety of ways to deepen the partnership in 2023.

WBUR also dedicated substantial resources to coverage of migrants arriving in Massachusetts and the Northeast in 2022. The issue received substantial public attention due to the unexpected arrival of a plane of Venezuelan migrants on Martha's Vineyard. WBUR's coverage of that ongoing story was robust and contextual, but did not start or end there. WBUR dispatched reporters to the border with local attorneys to chronicle the conditions at the crossing, the experience of migrants heading north, and the varied efforts to help migrants find community in Massachusetts.

While WBUR broadcasts in English, in early 2023 WBUR made available NPR's Spanish-language translation, coverage and analysis of the annual presidential State of the Union on wbur.org and promoted the coverage on air and in English and Spanish on social media. DEI is intrinsic to all of our programming, inviting speakers who represent all racial, sexual, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Many of our chefs, performers and women leaders are POC. In addition, we had a program, "Addressing the Systematic Racism in National Monument" and a conversation about the legacy of the late hip hop producer J Dilla.

**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?**

Due in large part to the extraordinary circumstances related to the pandemic and the related challenges in securing revenue during the year, the CPB Community Service Grant allowed WBUR to continue its service locally, nationally and beyond! WBUR uses the funds to support robust reporting on urgent and critical issues affecting our communities, like health, racial justice and election coverage, with the largest newsroom of reporters and local news producers in Boston. The grant also helps continue the stability of our national programming and its national reach. Having this stability of revenue allows WBUR to focus some of its own resources on local news and emerging tools to bring our journalism to people where and how they want to consume it. Our expansion into podcasts is helping us engage our audiences in new and exciting non-traditional ways, and bringing our programming to some traditionally underserved audiences, such as children and non-English speaking communities. These podcasts are available around the world, helping WBUR to expand its reach globally. Without the annual grant, some of these efforts could not be sustained.