

CPB Station Activity Survey

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.

As FY17 began, VPR had adopted a new strategic plan with a vision “to explore the whole Vermont story, together.” The plan set out new goals for the station that address six initiatives. The initiatives include a sustainable financial plan, innovation in news and enterprise reporting, communication and collaboration, the use of VPR facilities to expand the dimension of our public service, and a channeling of inspiration into support for public radio.

Primary among the issues of community interest during this period, were the 2016 elections. They also were in the forefront of VPR's public service news and public affairs coverage. VPR's content teams persistently carried out a comprehensive plan with wider-than-ever and deeper-than-ever public service at its heart. The 2016 election was especially complex for VPR with the presence of a Vermont candidate for president, Sen. Bernie Sanders.

A distinguishing feature of the 2016 campaign coverage was the audience-driven aspect. Many times, VPR asked the audience what they wanted to know about. We also asked for questions about the New Hampshire primary, and what voters wanted to know about the political conventions. Our Meet the Candidates project was designed with the user in mind. VPR conducted a half-dozen “Ask Me Anything” sessions on Reddit. VPR employed the Hearken digital platform and social media to cultivate questions from Vermonters that were asked in our debate series. Our weekday news magazine Vermont Edition sourced questions for primary interviews as well as General Election debates.

VPR's signature voter guide digital project was launched on Oct. 31, with nine pages of information about Vermont's November election. There were 99,000 page views by 12,600 users in total. The average session was 9 minutes, 27 seconds, more than double the average time spent at VPR.net. In order of most-viewed-posts to least-viewed, users read about contests for attorney general, governor, auditor, U.S. Senate, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, U.S. House, and treasurer. More than 40 percent of the users of “Time to Vote” were new users.

Although Vermont has been a blue state in presidential contests, nearly one in three Vermont voters cast their ballots for Donald Trump. Immediately following the election, VPR met with some of the Trump voters to hear what decided their votes, and learn what they want out of a Trump Administration.

Other post-election coverage included responses, uncertainties and actions in Vermont immediately following Trump's election. VPR reported on the potential future of refugee resettlement in Rutland, Burlington's move to formalize its status as a sanctuary city, UVM students' protests and the Vermont delegation's response to the appointment of Steve Bannon. Coverage also included Governor-elect Phil Scott's effort to establish a coalition of New England governors to work together in the face of Trump policies, a post-election, bi-partisan call for unity from Scott/Shumlin, and a conversation with Bernie Sanders about his plans in his new leadership position in the Democratic Party.

VPR also prepared an online analysis - "Five Things to Know About Vermont's 2016 Election Results" - with facts, figures and maps: Number 1 was: "Clinton got far fewer votes than Obama did in 2012, while Trump did slightly better than Romney...."

After the election, VPR followed Vermonters on their way to the Women's March on Washington, covering the event from start to finish on the bus and on the ground with regular updates to VPR over the air and on social media. Meanwhile, VPR also covered march events at home in Montpelier.

After the first 100 days of the Trump Administration, VPR asked Vermonters how they were feeling. More than 150 people responded, and VPR posted a representative sample of 65 responses online at VPR.net.

A key issue in 2016-17 was the plan by the city of Rutland, Vt., to welcome Syrian refugees to their community. Coverage of the Syrian refugee plans in Rutland took place over many months as VPR's Nina Keck followed former Mayor Christopher Louras' plan to resettle refugee families in the city. First planned for up to 100 individuals, the resettlement faced controversy, and ultimately several families actually moved into Rutland. Through it all, Keck covered the local scene and also spent a week in Jordan to report on what life is like for the Syrian refugees awaiting resettlement, the process they have to go through and the impact they're having on their host country. Keck also shared her experiences in Jordan in a special community engagement event in VPR's Studio One, which was also live-streamed on Facebook.

Immigration also was an issue on the northern border of Vermont, where VPR led the way in reporting for the New England News Collaborative and NPR on the reporting of surges in illegal crossings in Canada. Officials reported that Quebec was seeing the highest influx of people seeking asylum, with many crossing in remote, snowy areas west of Lake Champlain. And as VPR reported, one illegal border

crossing area was so popular among immigrants seeking asylum that all taxis in Champlain, N.Y., know it by name. Meanwhile, Canadian police park on their side of the border. We visited the scene and told the story of one woman's voluntary arrest as she crossed the border into Canada with her infant child and was immediately taken into custody by the Canadian Police

Brave Little State is VPR's new monthly podcast where listeners ask the questions and listeners decide what VPR will investigate, and then the question-asker from the community works with the staff to find the answers. In FY17 Brave Little State investigated, among other topics, the cost of electricity to consumers, the status of the Abenaki Native Americans, an examination of the Trump voters, a look into the natural world and the circumstances of the coyote in Vermont, why Vermont is so overwhelmingly white, what can be done about Vermont's aging sewer systems, what it's like to be a migrant worker in Vermont, and how Vermont's citizen legislature works.

Early in 2017, a new era began in state government when the new Legislature convened, new leadership took over the House and Senate, and a new governor and lieutenant governor were sworn in. Vermont Edition was there for live broadcasts of these moments. VPR carried live the farewell address by former Gov. Peter Shumlin, the inauguration of Governor Phil Scott and the new governor's budget address. In addition, Vermont Edition offered insight into the new office-holders with live interviews with the new House speaker and the new Senate president. As in previous years, VPR made the proceedings available through the live-streaming from the Statehouse.

In March 2017, VPR's grassroots Town Meeting Day coverage took on a new dimension with heavy social media posting and the updating of a live blog from 2 to 10 p.m. with results from all over the state including the Rutland mayoral race, the ballot item to urge presidential candidates to disclose tax returns, a vote in Montpelier to honor poet and playwright David Budbill, the voiding of the ballots in Plymouth, a ban on plastic bags in Brattleboro, and sanctuary city status votes. Vermont Edition and VPR News previewed Town Meeting Day issues and followed up with results.

Educational and informational service was at the center of VPR's news magazine, Vermont Edition, when the program dedicated an entire week of programming to mental health care. The programs examined the ways that mental health can have far-reaching consequences for our personal lives and public policy. The programs covered the psychiatric crisis in hospital emergency rooms, the stigma and discrimination around mental illness, how kids cope with illness, the role of caregivers and family impact, and proposed legislation to address mental health care in Vermont.

A multi-platform project on Vermont gun deaths revealed that 420 people died from gunshot wounds in Vermont between 2011 and 2016. VPR examined the data from every recorded gun death over six years and provided insight into the issue in the project “Gunshots.” The project included a complete data set, reported stories online and on air, and a discussion on Vermont Edition. Each of the 420 entries in the database represents a real person with a unique story. Viewing the database as a whole made it possible to see patterns and better understand how different parts of Vermont’s population are affected by gun deaths.

On one of Vermont’s signature issues - agriculture - VPR produced seven related pieces on the future of farming, as Vermont agriculture continues to be in a period of transition. The series was prompted by farmers who are ageing out of their occupation and the potential for a new generation to come in. Also, the dairy industry has been the anchor of the farm economy, but it faces steep challenges.

VPR engaged a new audience with its new podcast “But Why,” which is a program led by kids who ask the questions and the podcast finds the answers. But Why is hosted by Jane Lindholm, and it tackles topics large and small, about nature, words, even the end of the world. Questions answered include: Who was the first person, why are there so many different languages, and why do people die.

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.

In this fiscal year, VPR celebrated its first anniversary as a founding partner with the New England News Collaborative. NENC was launched with eight public radio stations contributing one reporter to a shared editorial vision. The stations are VPR, WNPR, WBUR, NEPR, NHPR, RIPR, WSHU, and MPBN.

NENC re-organized the workflows and changed the mindsets of eight public media companies. Its work was featured on national outlets, and it partnered with other regional journalism collaboratives. NENC gained notice in local and national media for its work, and developed new channels of distribution for content.

The weekly program NEXT was the region’s first effort at creating a truly regional news magazine program. NENC succeeded at providing daily news coverage during major events, such as the political conventions, and in-depth enterprise coverage of water quality and energy issues. It established weekly calls with reporters and monthly check-ins with news managers, added more producers, editors and

reporters to regional journalism collaboration and member station daybook lists, allowing for regular cross-pollination of news activities.

The project balanced major multi-station reporting efforts, regular coverage on areas of focus, breaking news, and increased sharing of all content among stations. The project also developed two comprehensive reporting projects, and delivered dozens of stories to national partners.

In FY17, NENC's weekly program, NEXT, was carried on five of eight collaboration stations, and was available as a podcast. A landing page that compiles all stories and series was built and exists at <https://nenc.news/>

VPR regularly broadcast the stories of the collaborative in Morning Edition and All Things Considered, raising awareness of the connections among the New England states and the issues they face.

Examples of VPR's contribution to the Collaborative included stories on refugee stress and trauma, health insurance problems for Vermont farmers, prevention of contamination of drinking water, a special series on the inherent challenges and opportunities from the influx of immigrants, and continuing coverage of our energy system at a moment of big change in the series "The Big Switch."

Other partnerships included one with the Podcast "Rumble Strip Vermont." The podcast is produced by independent producer Erica Heilman, is being produced as a monthly broadcast segment for VPR. Heilman's character-driven storytelling has been gaining attention by listeners for her intimate conversations with Vermonters.

VPR also partnered with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies to produce the monthly feature called "Outdoor Radio," which explores the natural world with biologists Kent McFarland and Sara Zahendra.

Awesome Etiquette, the podcast by Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning of the Emily Post Institute on etiquette in the 21st century, is recorded at VPR and as a result a partnership has developed and a broadcast segment which aired on Sundays. Awesome Etiquette guides listeners through everything from traditional etiquette quandaries to newly emerging issues in the modern world.

In "Live from the Fort," VPR continued a partnership with local musicians with the music discovery video series. This project expanded into a monthly video of short interviews and song set with local musicians.

In "Dorothy's List," VPR partners with libraries to encourage thousands of Vermont students read the books nominated for the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award. Thirty books make the annual list, and fourth- through eighth-graders vote for their favorite title in the spring. Each month, Vermont Edition highlights a book nominated for award. We visit schools and libraries where the book is being read,

check out how young readers are interacting with the book and relay students' questions to the author.

The Vermont Symphony Orchestra continues its partnership with VPR in order to broadcast a weekly concert. This program includes current and archival performances. It is hosted by longtime VPR Host Walter Parker and airs on Wednesday nights at 8. Parker also is a regular speaker at the beginning of VSO performances.

In addition, VPR is a partner with Music-Comp to produce the monthly Student Composer Showcase on VPR Classical, where we feature the musical work of a young musician in Vermont. Music-COMP is the online mentoring program that connects students with professional composer mentors in an online discussion forum, and organizes live performances of student work.

Every Sunday, listeners to VPR hear the VPR Café, in which the station features local food writers who talk with VPR's Ric Cengeri about stories from the farms, kitchens and eateries of Vermont that connect our communities.

VPR partners with the Young Writers Project to present selections of the work of young writers in Vermont. Promoted over the air each week is a submission from the Young Writers Project, which is posted online. The work may be an essay, it may be non-fiction or fiction, or it may be poetry. The weekly selection might be a student blog post or it might be a video. The idea is to provide another avenue to hear the voice of the people of Vermont, in this case, the young people of Vermont.

Perhaps the longest partnership is the one with the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium, in which the two organizations produce the "Eye on the Sky," a unique view of the weather through daily forecasts as well as unique features such as the Eye on the Night Sky. The partnership includes detailed information through social media outlets.

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.

One of VPR's key initiatives was comprehensive and meaningful coverage of the 2016 elections. VPR's coverage of presidential and gubernatorial debates and election night and voter information guide online reached thousands and thousands of people. VPR was an important source of information for voters in a year that saw one of the highest election turnouts at about 68 percent. One related impact for the

public and the digital community was that VPR shared the complete set of results of its political polling that was done with Castleton, Vt., University, providing high transparency and access for those seeking to do their own analysis. VPR received a number of communications thanking the organization for this access. VPR's "Time to Vote" digital voter guide provided nine pages of information about the November election. There were 99,000 page views by 12,600 users. The average session was more than 9 minutes, more than double the average.

Timeline, VPR's history-of-music podcast with James Stewart, was used as an educational outreach of VPR Music. It already has served local music teachers and schools; and it has been reported that it is required listening for music appreciation courses at the University of Vermont.

VPR's coverage of Syrian refugees being resettled to Rutland, Vt., created local and statewide awareness of the controversial plan. Continuing coverage of this issue included several dozen in-depth stories on the proposal, its implementation, setbacks of the project, relationship to President Trump's positions, and ultimately the arrival of several families to the community, far fewer than the 100 planned for. Awareness was heightened also in several statewide call-in programs on the station's daily news magazine Vermont Edition. The plight of the refugees was further explored and brought increased understanding to Vermonters when a VPR reporter visited Syrian refugee camps in Jordan, filing stories from Jordan, and then participating in a community engagement discussion upon her return, which was live-streamed to Facebook. VPR's coverage also raised awareness of resources that would be available to refugees.

Midway through the year, VPR dedicated a week of programming to mental health care and the ways in which mental health can have far-reaching consequences for people and for public policy. The programs on Vermont Edition elicited personal stories and in-depth discussion from guests and from callers. Just a couple of examples suggest the impact the programs had on the Vermont audience.

One Listener wrote:

"I noticed a lot of great info on your site that promotes a healthy, meaningful conversation on the topic of mental health. As someone who works closely with those in addiction recovery, I sincerely appreciate that."

Another listener wrote:

"So glad that Vermont Edition hosted a week of interviews devoted to mental health issues, and hoping the conversation will continue and deepen. I've been working in community mental health for 10+ years now and still don't understand the upper-level funding issues (insurance companies, state regs, etc.) but do see low wages as the root problem. Glad this was acknowledged throughout the program and by the state legislature, but not sure anything will change."

The community seemed to be completely engaged by VPR's discussion on Vermont Edition about septic system issues. In rural Vermont more than half of the state has individual septic systems as opposed to municipal systems. The program invited callers to bring all kinds of septic systems to the air.

One listener wrote about the direct impact of the program:

"I listen to Vermont Edition regularly. I was tuned in when you aired the show on septic systems. We had no outward signs of trouble yet I was still concerned after listening. We have faithfully pumped our system every three years. We were almost due, and I told my husband what I heard on the show. He agreed we should get it pumped and went one step further researching treatments for the leach-field as it is 19 years old. He found one called Septic Scrub. The treatment required the distribution box be uncovered and added to the field directly. When we did this we found the distribution box beginning to crumble and the out-going baffle in our septic tank had broken off. The show might have saved us tens of thousands! Thank you for inspiring us to action.

"I also really appreciated you having a guest that had many creative workable solutions for Vermont's challenging soils. The state needs to be a little more flexible. I understand the need to protect us with safe waste water regulations, however their more or less one size fits all 40,000 mound system approach causes inaction and folks skirting the system.

"Thank you for a very informative show."

And when the VPR Podcast "Brave Little State" did an episode on municipal sewer systems and wastewater pollution in our streams and lakes, that episode brought this comment and action:

"WOW, Great job!

"You both killed it keeping the story on track and I really appreciate the final result. Throughout the process I took many attempts at trying to explain the whole idea (the question and what I found out) to friends and family. It can be hard to communicate such a complex body of information with any number of breaths. This episode condensed hours and hours of discussion in a way that presented insights into the big picture that I could not have foreseen.

"I am truly inspired. I'm so stoked about the discussions that this piece will spark. So stoked in fact, that I am starting my own podcast where I will be discussing various aspects of the water cycles in Vermont. It's called VT Water Cycles. Check it out! I'm still getting it setup but, once I'm up and running I'll be doing long form conversations with interested parties about any of the many tangential topics related to our most precious resource that keeps our green mountain state green.

"Again, I loved the episode and thank you both for putting in the time to help me answer my question.

"Mike Brown"

VPR served as a media sponsor for the June 2017 Vermont Gives campaign. Over a 24-hour period, Vermonters are encouraged to support any number of participating

nonprofits who serve the region. Thanks in part to VPR's publicity and promotion of the effort, more than 1,000 Vermonters contributed over \$100,000 to 207 participating organizations. This effort helped promote philanthropy in general and helped bolster the overall nonprofit community in the state of Vermont.

VPR also worked in collaboration with the Vermont Foodbank on a special campaign on Giving Tuesday in November 2016. With more than \$10,000 in funding provided by the Vermont Community Foundation, the campaign helped raise important funds for public media in Vermont while also helping to serve the mission of the Vermont Foodbank. Over a 24-hour period, VPR raised over \$100,000 from 1,705 donors. Every pledge resulted in 25,575 meals for the Vermont Foodbank (thanks to the funding provided by the Vermont Community Foundation. Direct feedback received from the Vermont Foodbank: "This partnership means so much to us and to our neighbors who face hunger. Thank you for ... helping us raise funds to feed our neighbors!" While the Foodbank directly benefited from the effort, it also provided great exposure for them during the height of their fundraising season.

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 2017, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2018. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

VPR's new podcast Brave Little State answers questions raised by members of the community, and they become part of the story as it develops. One especially drew strong interest - the history of Vermont's whiteness and stories from people of color about what it's like to live here. The question about Vermont's whiteness was answered with a review of the historical, economic and social forces that have shaped Vermont's "whiteness" over the years and with interviews with people of color who are living in Vermont. The episode resulted in thousands of downloads since it was released. It was featured on NPR One, and also was featured on the New England News Collaborative weekly program "Next."

In another episode of Brave Little State, VPR examined the history and presence of Abenaki Native Americans in Vermont by seeking out and sharing the stories of a number of families around the state. The episode received a national Edward R. Murrow Award for documentary reporting. Brave Little State podcast host and creator Angela Evancie said this about this episode: "A seemingly simple question prompted complicated conversations about how the native community sees — and doesn't see — itself in contemporary Vermont. I was so grateful to the Abenaki leaders who opened up their homes and tribal headquarters to me, and trusted me to share a small part of their story."

VPR has produced extensive coverage of immigration issues. Below is just a sample of some headlines from our coverage of this topic from FY17:

- A Vergennes father of six faced deportation to Mexico in a case that highlighted shifting federal immigration enforcement priorities.
- Two Vermont dairy workers were arrested and handed over to Immigration. Previous to the arrest VPR covered a local forum to determine what would happen to the dairy industry if the migrant workers were to be deported.
- Quebec saw an increase in asylum-seekers sneaking across the U.S-Canada border.
- A third Syrian refugee family arrived in Rutland, Vt., in a community that experienced controversy over the proposal to bring the refugees to the region.
- A Brave Little State episode explored exactly what it's like to be a migrant worker in Vermont.
- Farmworker advocates confronted the ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's to protest labor conditions.
- A clinic helped refugees who have settled in Vermont to work through stress and trauma that they may have suffered due to war or torture or loss of family members.
- One story also broadcast by NPR focused on immigrants who fled the U.S. knowingly walking into arrest the moment they cross into Canada by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- As mentioned above, VPR sent a reporter to Jordan to report on Syrian refugees awaiting resettlement as part of the coverage of the refugees coming to Rutland, VT.

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?

In FY17, CPB funding continued to support the important and unique contributions of the New England News Collaborative. The impact of the project was to bring together eight public radio stations in New England to serve the region and explore common issues in the region of immigration, environment, infrastructure and culture. The project continued to illuminate common issues in the region with reported stories from participating stations and through the weekly program "Next." Without the CPB funding this project would not have gotten off the ground and the collaboration of eight public radio stations would not have occurred and the impact of regional issues would not have been explored for the benefit of the people of New England.

CPB funding constitutes approximately 6.5 percent of VPR's revenue and helps VPR to contribute to its growing role as a news organization and its importance to the public not only as a broadcast organization but as a multi-platform news source for listeners and digital users. The expense to provide trusted journalism across different platforms and devices requires additional resources. The support by CPB makes it possible to continue to expand the public service.

The CPB grant continues to support in part the 13 daily newscasts which are broadcast each weekday. The grant also helps to support the statewide conversation that occurs in the weekday news magazine Vermont Edition.

As VPR receives no funds from Vermont state government, the grant is an important source of funding and support as the demands by the public for digital news and podcasting increases.

The grant helps to make it possible to purchase national programming from NPR.

Finally, the CPB funding has helped to make possible the network of transmitters and translators that connect Vermont into a statewide community. The mountain ranges of our rural state make it particularly difficult to serve the geographic area with news and music formats, and the grants help to make that possible as well.