6.1 Telling Public Radio’s Story

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 2019. 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.

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.

   1. Kosu strives to serve the Oklahoma community by providing news and information that allows citizens informed and civically engaged and entertainment services that highlight Oklahoma culture and elevate local artists. The last year has been one of transition following the retirement of the stations long-term director and attrition of staff, which has led to the natural reevaluation of mission and values statements and strategic planning. That process is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2020. As that planning continues, Kosu has continued to provide news and information through local newscasts and feature reporting on its broadcast and digital channels. In addition, Kosu continues to provide this information to listeners through its long-term reporting collaboration, StateImpact, which provides beat reporting in the areas of health, criminal justice and education. In 2019, the station also increased its offerings by joining the Harvest Public Media collaboration to offer agricultural and rural issues reporting in anticipation of the hiring of a local reporter in 2020 and through the hire of an engagement and special projects reporter. This position is designed to spend time listening to Oklahomans and produce more citizen-led journalism. Kosu highlights Oklahoma culture and elevates local artists by playing at least one local artist per hour in its music service, The Spy and hosts 70 hours per week of locally-hosted music. Through the station’s collaboration with NPR music, more than a dozen Oklahoma artists have been elevated to the national stage.

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.

   2. In 2019, Kosu partnered with 14 organizations to create broadcast and event programming. This included the screening of the Ken Burns County Music Documentaries with partners including The Tulsa Office of Film, Music, Arts & Culture, Oklahoma Museum of Popular Culture, Oklahoma State University Allied Arts, Tower Theatre, Circle Cinema and the Oklahoma Office of Film and Music. More than 750 people attended those events. Kosu elevates its ability to produce local news by collaborating with KWGS, KGOU and KCCU to produce StateImpact Oklahoma and Oklahoma Engaged. In 2019, this collaboration produced an event with 35 people in attendance as a follow-up to the 2018 election coverage and produced more than 140 stories informing local and national audiences about Oklahoma’s lawsuit against opioid manufacturers, the first trial in the country. StateImpact also experienced transition in 2019 because of the departure of its managing editor. To maintain the partnership and production, Kosu’s Rachel Hubbard stepped in as interim editor while the partner stations conducted a search for a replacement. Also, in 2019, Kosu evaluated and changed its community music presence and partnered with local venues to highlight the station and public radio’s music discovery services at concerts. The station was present and greeted attendees at 14 concerts with a collective audience of 9,800. Kosu also maintains a relationship with an active volunteer community. In 2019, volunteers worked nearly 250 hours to support Kosu at the station and in the community.

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.
3. KOSU measures impact quantitatively through sources including Nielsen, Google Analytics, Ando Media, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and financial giving. In 2019, the station saw flat broadcast and membership numbers. Many people attributed this to news fatigue related to the unrelenting political news cycle. However, engagement with listeners remained high, and many anecdotally told KOSU staff members that while they took a break from the news they were thankful our reporters were continuing to hold officials accountable and make information available to the community. However, engagement numbers continued to increase. In 2019, KOSU added nearly 1,000 active new members to its texting club, which allows people to respond and contribute to news stories. KOSU also measures impact qualitatively. In 2019, some of the comments the station received included the following: “As a teacher, I value deeply the work that you are doing to inform people of the events shaping our world.”, “I love all the work done for our local stories. I have learned so much from you and your collaboration with KGOU on local reporting. I love the weekend programming and listen to the news everyday.”, and “I appreciate the variation in the stories that are presented, especially the more upbeat ones when politics seems to be a heavy weight in everyone's lives at this time. I cannot thank KOSU/NPR enough for the gift of great radio. You all are irreplaceable.”

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 2019, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2020. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

   4. All of KOSU's work is done with the desire to communicate with diverse communities, however, we acknowledge there is much work to be done. In 2019, KOSU started actively using Groundsource, a text messaging service designed to engage with audiences who do not traditionally listen to public radio. This allowed the station and its reporters to start communicating with nearly 1,000 people who are not members of the station to gain their insight on potential journalistic work. In addition, KOSU continued to support the production of two African American hosted hip hop music shows. Because of the time of staff transition during this fiscal year, the station also created a strategic plan designed to increase its diversity in 2020.

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 Community Service Grant KOSU receives provides a base of support for KOSU to provide basic programming from NPR and a small amount of local news. This support is critical for maintaining core services and for building local community philanthropic support for more diverse programing and innovation. Without the Community Service Grant, KOSU would likely have to eliminate many of its local services in order to provide basic national news coverage to the Oklahoma audience.