

Public Media Stations

Responding to the Changing Education Landscape
in Communities throughout the United States



2015

*Findings from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's
2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work and
2015 Environmental Scan of Public Media Community Partners*



Education continues to be a core value of the public broadcasting community, as it has been since its inception. In fact, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's mission underscores the critical role of our work to "provide programs and services which inform, enlighten and enrich the public."

CPB would like to thank the following organizations for providing the images used in this report: CET, Nine Network of Public Media, PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs, PBS SoCaL and WSIU.

Foreword

Public media traces its roots to educational television, and while we adapt to rapid changes in technology, education, and the media, our purpose remains the same: to provide programs and services that inform, enlighten and enrich the public.

This report highlights how public television's educational services are tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities and give our nation's children and youth the opportunity to learn. Results indicate that 87 percent of public media stations provide services to support underserved and high-needs audiences through community-based partnerships.

Building on our 20-year history of success with the Ready To Learn program, we have been entrusted to keep delivering high-quality content to children to help them get a solid start on their education. Through public media's American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen initiative, we are helping to turn around the nation's high dropout numbers. America's high school graduation rate is rising and now tops 81 percent after stalling between 71 and 75 percent for decades. We in public media are helping to make it happen.

This new research affirms our approach.

Educational services provided by public television stations include a wide range of content and engagement ranging from online activities designed to spark student learning in science and math, to professional development resources for teachers and in-person reading programs for parents and childcare providers. A majority of public media stations are using new media to connect to children, parents and teachers beyond the school day, sustaining long term participation in stations' education and learning-related initiatives.

Further, public media stations report that their strategic partnerships with community organizations enhance their work. Community partners affirm that they benefit as well—expanding their reach and message through public media. Whether on air, online, or in the community, or as is most prevalent a combination of all three, public media continues to make an important and vital contribution to education and, subsequently, to building an informed and strengthened civil society.



Patricia de Stacy Harrison
President and Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for Public Broadcasting

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From its inception, education and community service have been cornerstones of public broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 established a vision for media that would be used for "instructional, educational, and cultural purposes," and encouraged "the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities." Since that time, public media professionals have worked to fulfill this charter in communities across the United States.

Public media professionals have achieved success by becoming deeply involved in the communities they serve. They have become experts in the strengths, needs, and envisioned futures of their communities. With expertise in broadcasting, other digital media, community outreach, collaborative partnerships and education, they work to produce positive change through initiatives responding to the learning needs of Americans at every stage of life—from the very young learning to read, to at-risk youth graduating high school, to adults seeking training and lifelong learning.

Excerpts from the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967*

The Congress hereby declares that –

- it is in the public interest to encourage the growth and development of public radio and television broadcasting, including the use of such media for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes
- expansion and development of public telecommunications and of diversity of its programming depend on freedom, imagination, and initiative on both local and national levels
- it is in the public interest to encourage the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities
- public television and radio stations and public telecommunications services constitute valuable local community resources for utilizing electronic media to address national concerns and solve local problems

**as amended by Congress*



Public media stations play a variety of roles that support education and learning in their communities. These roles include:

- **Awareness and Knowledge Builder:** Public media brings a community's attention to an issue, and then provides opportunities for community members to discuss solutions.
- **Community Convener and Catalyst:** Public media serves to assemble groups within a community for a common purpose.
- **Content Developer:** Public media creates educational materials matched to a community's needs.
- **Service Provider:** Public media disseminates educational content, materials, and best educational practices based on community needs and opportunities.

Public media, through its charter and connections to the communities it serves, is uniquely equipped to perform this education work. Public media is both ready and especially well-qualified for what the future will bring.



Responding to Today's Changing Education Landscape

Traditionally, education has been thought of as something that happens at schools or in other formal learning environments. For public media, this meant providing television and web-based educational content to schools, and training the teachers who used the content and their accompanying resources in their classrooms.

Today, educational trends are moving away from the long-held perspective that learning largely takes place while sitting at a school desk within the four walls of a classroom. Evolving technologies and definitions of "learning" have expanded our concept to a point where it is recognized that learning can happen any time and anywhere.

In this new environment, *content* is key—and at the center of any learning experience. Public media is facing unprecedented opportunities to be a collaborative partner that provides high quality content with specific learning objectives, raises awareness, builds knowledge, supports student achievement, and increases dialogue at the local level.

To fully embrace these changes and ultimately become community leaders for education within their communities, public media professionals must evolve their practice. To what extent is public media responding to, and in fact leading, in this new educational landscape?

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting commissioned a study to better understand the education and learning-related work of public media in communities nationwide. This report presents key findings from two data collection efforts that examined the work of public media in communities nationwide. It describes public media efforts, observed outcomes and realized benefits from the perspectives of public media professionals and the community partners with whom they collaborate.



Five Facts About Public Media's Education Work

1. Audience. As the last locally-owned, locally-controlled media outlet in America, public media reaches nearly 99 percent of the American population. During the 2013-14 season, 77% of all children ages two to eight watched publicly broadcast shows.

2. Innovation and Access. Public media's programming is available free of charge. Public media professionals call upon diverse technologies to support education and learning that is received by a range of audiences. For example, in May 2015, streaming programs on PBSKIDS.org accounted for over one-quarter (29%) of all time that the public spent watching kids videos online. Additionally, the population spent more minutes viewing video on PBSKIDS.org than any other site in the "kids" category.

3. High Quality Content. Public media's educational content has been proven effective for learning. In research studies, the free and universally available children's educational content has been shown to be effective in narrowing the achievement gap. For example, it has helped millions of pre-school aged children—including those who cannot afford to attend pre-school—get ready to learn and succeed in primary school. In randomized research studies, transmedia public television programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Ready to Learn initiative have been demonstrated effective for learning.

4. Supporting Learning in Many Ways. Educators rely on public media's high quality content to engage students and inspire learning. More than 1.6 million educators serving 30 million students are registered to use PBS LearningMedia—a partnership between PBS and local stations—in K-12 classrooms around the country. Through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's American Graduate initiative, public television stations are helping reduce the high school dropout rate, keeping America's young people on track to complete their education so they can compete successfully in the twenty-first century economy.

5. Community Engagement. Public media stations are actively addressing the needs of their communities and community members—across a range of ages. Through its education work, public television runs the largest nonprofit GED program in the country, serving hundreds of thousands of people whose high school education was interrupted prior to graduation. Public media stations are also helping develop the American workforce, including veterans, by providing digital learning opportunities for training, licensing, continuing education credits, and more.

The 2015 Data Collection Effort

Between February and July of 2015 and with the guidance of the Education Committee of public television's Affinity Group Coalition, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) contracted to collect data on the educational work of public television stations and their community partners.

145 public media licensees responded to the *2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work*—an 86% response rate. The data collection effort also investigated community partnerships with public media outlets through interviews, focus groups and a survey. 143 community partners responded to the *2015 Community Partner Survey*. Additional details about the data collection methodology can be found at the end of this report.

Results of this study demonstrate that public media stations and professionals across the country are indeed meeting the expectations established, revised and updated by Congress during the last 48 years. Rooted in community needs and strategic partnerships, public media professionals serve as educators, communicators, storytellers and community conveners—to the benefit of the people and communities they serve.



Overview of Key Findings: Public Media & Education



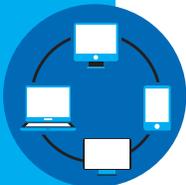
1. Public media's education and learning-related efforts target many distinct education audiences, with particular attention to high needs, underserved populations.



2. Public media stations assess the education and learning-related needs in their local communities, and use their findings to craft results-oriented solutions.



3. Public media stations are successfully navigating a changing educational landscape.



4. While public media professionals are experts in broadcast media, they are increasingly adopting a complex range of modern technologies in order to reach education audiences, sustain interest and serve communities.



5. Community-based partnerships enhance a station's understanding of its local community, and increase the impact of its education and learning-related work.



6. Community-based partners and their education and learning-related work benefit from public media's unique contributions. For many, the success of their organization's efforts relies on the involvement of their public media partners.



7. Public media stations remain committed to their work in education and learning, and are poised for continued success in the future.

Key Findings

Following are key findings about the education and learning-related work of public media in communities across the United States.



1. Public media's education and learning-related efforts target many distinct education audiences, with particular attention to high needs, underserved populations.

Virtually every household in the United States receives public media's free education and learning programming and services. Education and learning-related programs are significant components of what public media offers to people and communities nationwide.

Responses to the *2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work* quantify the wide-ranging audiences targeted by local stations. Following its congressional charter, public media has always worked to address the unserved and underserved, and children and minorities in particular. Current efforts documented by 145 station responses confirm that stations are continuing in the spirit of the charter by specifically targeting younger audiences and high needs, at-risk populations.

Summary of Station Responses

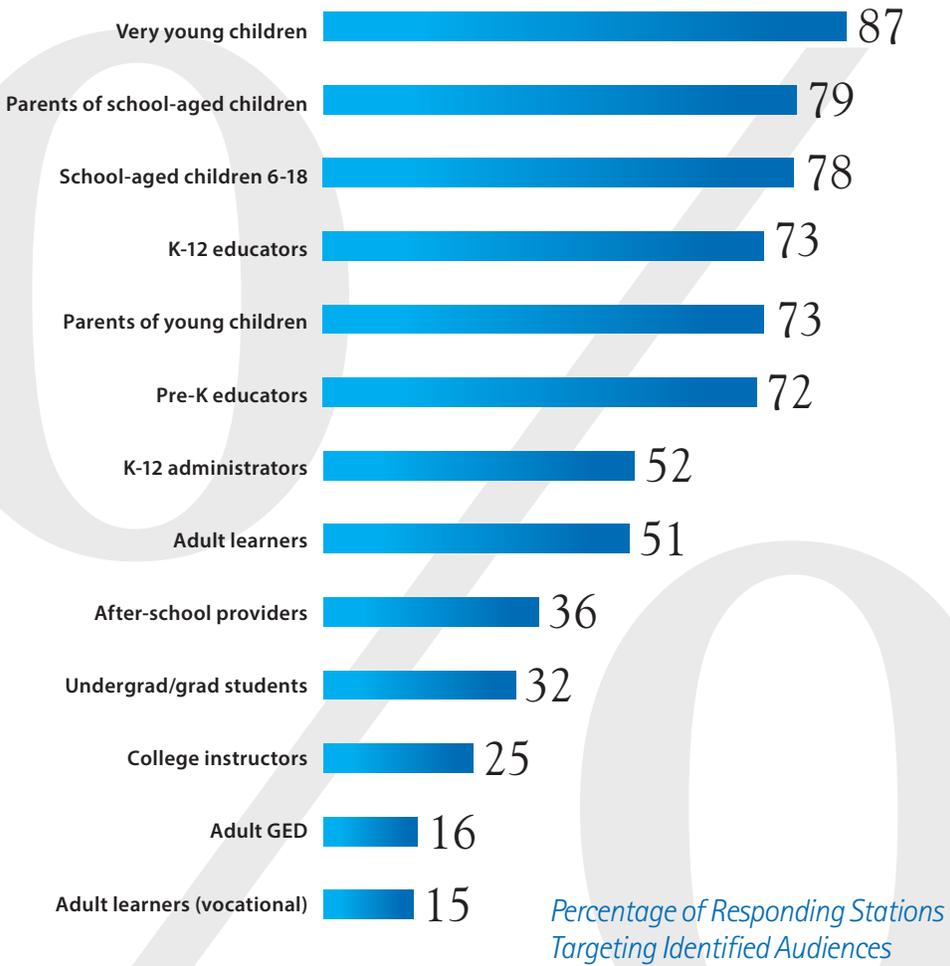
- 85% of stations target education and learning-related services to very young children in low-income families.
- 87% of stations provide significant or moderate amounts of services to support underserved and high needs communities within their reach.
- 92% of stations use community partnerships to expand the reach of their programming and services.

Partnerships Increase Access to Audiences in a Community

Survey responses from public media stations suggest a direct relationship between the number of community partners and the audiences they serve. On average, more community partnerships means a greater number of targeted audiences.

Public Media Targets Many Distinct Education Audiences with its Education Programs

Stations were asked to identify the audiences they currently target with education and learning-related programs. The following figure breaks down the audiences targeted by the 145 responding stations.





2. Public media stations assess the education and learning-related needs in their local communities, and use their findings to craft results-oriented solutions.

Many public media stations are licensed to the communities they serve; others are licensed to a local university or school system. The vested interest of public media stations in the communities they serve is demonstrated through their continuous work to identify and anticipate needs, opportunities and problems, and then respond with well-matched solutions that yield predictable impact and corresponding improvements.

Solutions include responding to a community's low graduation rates with opportunities for vocational training, and helping people mired in the mortgage crisis with educational programs about mortgage financing. These solutions often leverage public media's relationships with community partners. Working together, a complete solution is realized—and public media stations are often able to reach additional members of the target audience.

Summary of Station Responses

- 97% of stations use community needs as a driver to focus their education and learning-related work.
- 92% of stations produce some amount of original, high-quality content to address the education needs of their communities.
- 71% of stations indicated an increase in their focus on community-based needs in the 18 months prior to completing the *2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work*.

Public Media Stations Increase their Focus on Needs

Stations were asked to indicate the top three influences guiding their decisions about their education and learning-related work. 59% of stations reported that local, regional or national needs are among the top three influences that guide those decisions. This finding reflects an 11% increase in the number of stations indicating needs as a primary influence for their education work, when compared with data from a 2007 station education survey.

A Sample of Needs Addressed by Public Media Partnerships

The 2015 *Environmental Scan of Public Media Community Partners* asked responding partners to briefly describe the focus of their public media partnerships. The following quotes illustrate the diversity of needs addressed by these partnerships.

Improving Community Health

Partnering with our local public media station allowed us to bring greater awareness to community health issues such as bullying prevention and substance abuse. Through community events open to the public, we have been able to help our community understand how health education provides knowledge and skills that can last a lifetime.

*Byrnes Health Education Center, York, PA
Partner with WITF-TV—Harrisburg, PA*

Increasing the Capacity of Low-Income Parents to Care for their Children

Working with our public media station, we have been able to illustrate the impact of poverty on families in our community, and the role of home visiting support as a resource to strengthen the capacity of parents to care for their children and encourage their growth and development.

*Hillside Children's Center, Rochester, NY
Partner with WXXI-TV—Rochester, NY*

Addressing Barriers to Success of Youth in the Community

Our public media partnership has brought awareness of barriers to success facing the youth and communities that need us the most. Additionally, this partnership has brought us resources in the form of hardware as well as training for our staff to effectively teach our clients skills they need to breach these challenges... specifically in the target area of academic success, high school graduation, and STEM.

*Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area, Austin, TX
Partner with KLRU-TV—Austin, TX*

Reducing High School Drop-out Rates

Vegas PBS has been a valuable source of information for young people to increase their understanding of the need to complete high school, and where they can access educational services to meet expectations for their high school diploma.

*Clark County School District Department of Adult Education, Las Vegas, NV
Partner with Vegas PBS—Las Vegas, NV*

Facilitating Dialogue about Critical Community Issues

Through our partnership, we have been able to bring our nonpartisan public dialogues to a much wider audience—both in terms of geography and demography. These dialogues inform the public and key stakeholders of critical issues facing the state of Idaho and the nation. Topics have included: Idaho's healthcare exchange (Q&A, FAQ), Sage Grouse issues, and state and national fiscal issues.

*McClure Center for Public Policy Research, University of Idaho, Boise, ID
Partner with Idaho Public Television—Boise, ID*

Providing Leadership for Community Outreach Initiatives

Our public media partnership has allowed us to maximize the vast outreach we already do as a big, urban library system. We would not have the reach, nor be as successful, with many of these projects without the involvement of our public media station. They are the lead organization and, frankly speaking, the program would not take place without their leadership and involvement.

*San Diego Public Library, San Diego, CA
Partner with KPBS—San Diego, CA*



3. Public media stations are successfully navigating a changing educational landscape.

The introduction to this report described the shifting nature of our nation's educational landscape. As the complementary concepts of education and learning evolve, opportunities for learning are expanding in significant ways. Once confined to the four walls of a classroom, learning can, and does, happen any time and anywhere in the twenty-first century.

Content is a critical ingredient; it is at the heart of almost any learning experience. As content providers and community conveners, public media professionals are addressing the education and learning-related needs of today's students in new ways, and lending their expertise to help other community organizations do the same.

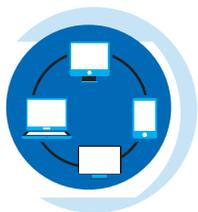


Once confined to the four walls of a classroom, learning can, and does, happen any time and anywhere in the twenty-first century.



Summary of Station Responses

- 85% of stations indicate that the community looks to them as a source of educational content very often or always.
- 71% of stations indicate that the community looks to them as a source of education/learning expertise very often or always.
- 67% of stations report raising their community's awareness about topics impacting education very often or always.



4. While public media professionals are experts in broadcast media, they are increasingly adopting a complex range of modern technologies in order to reach education audiences, sustain interest and serve communities.

While broadcast television is the historical and familiar work of public media, today's world requires coordinating multiple media technologies to reach targeted audiences and communities.

Public media professionals assess broadcast, Internet-enabled and face-to-face technology facilitated delivery options based upon the targeted audience and educational outcome, and deliver the right "mix" of media to achieve the defined outcomes.

Summary of Station Responses

- 91% of stations are using technology applications and new media to initially attract participation to their education and learning-related efforts, and to sustain engagement.
- 70% of stations increased their use of education/learning technologies and media in the 18 months prior to completing the *2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work*.



Public Media Reaches Audiences through Multiple Platforms

Stations were asked to indicate the delivery strategies they use to reach education and learning-related audiences. The following figure shows the percentage of stations that use each given strategy in support of their education work. 145 station responses are included.



Broadcast educational content (e.g., PBS KIDS, primetime science, public affairs, other educational content)



Web-based resources (e.g., station website, resource portals, online databases, blogs, wikis)



Community screenings



Email



Streaming media



In-person training or instruction



5. Community-based partnerships enhance a station's understanding of its local community, and increase the impact of its education and learning-related work.

This report has described the close ties public media stations share with their communities. It has also highlighted a handful of community-based partnerships that are core to public media's work in addressing education and learning-related needs. Such partnerships are critical to the education work of public media.

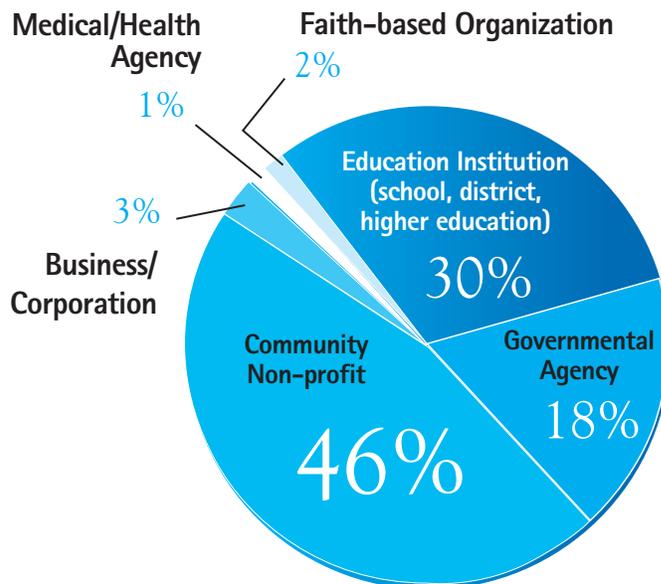
Through carefully developed and focused partnerships, public media is extending its reach and increasing the impact of its work. Public media stations establish and sustain community partnerships that are carefully designed to bring the right mix of education programming and resources to audiences in greatest need. Establishing goals for the partnership, defining outcomes for the collaborative effort and defining roles and responsibilities all contribute to the success of a partnership. When effective, partnerships not only increase the productivity of the organizations involved; they also amplify each organization's contributions to the community. Here, the whole is typically greater than the sum of its parts.

Station Survey and Community Partner Survey Highlights

- 88% of stations use a moderate or significant number of community partnerships to increase the effectiveness of their education and learning-related work.
- 92% of stations report that their strategic partnerships with community organizations improve their work.

Partnerships as Diverse as the Audiences they Serve

There are many types of public media partnerships, each of which brings together diverse organizations to address populations in need. *The 2015 Community Partner Survey* provides an example of the types of organizations engaged in partnerships with public media. 143 community partners responded to the survey in which they indicated their organization type. The figure shows the percentage of responding community partners based on the focus of their organizations' work.





6. Community-based partners and their education and learning-related work benefit from public media's unique contributions. For many, the success of their organization's efforts relies on the involvement of their public media partners.

Public media stations address their communities' needs with the help of a diverse range of community organizations and partnerships. But how does partnering with public media benefit community partners?

First through focus groups and interviews, and then confirmed via a survey with 143 partners across the United States, public media partners pointed to a range of unique and impactful contributions realized through their work with public media professionals.



Above all, partners benefit from public media's established relationships within the communities they serve. Strong ties to their communities make public media stations natural "hubs" where connections naturally occur—between community partners and community members alike.

Partners also state that their work benefits from public media's neutrality, and the public's established trust in public media institutions. Part-

ners recognize these unique attributes and, in focus groups, were quick to delineate the advantages public media brings to their work when compared to for-profit media in their communities.

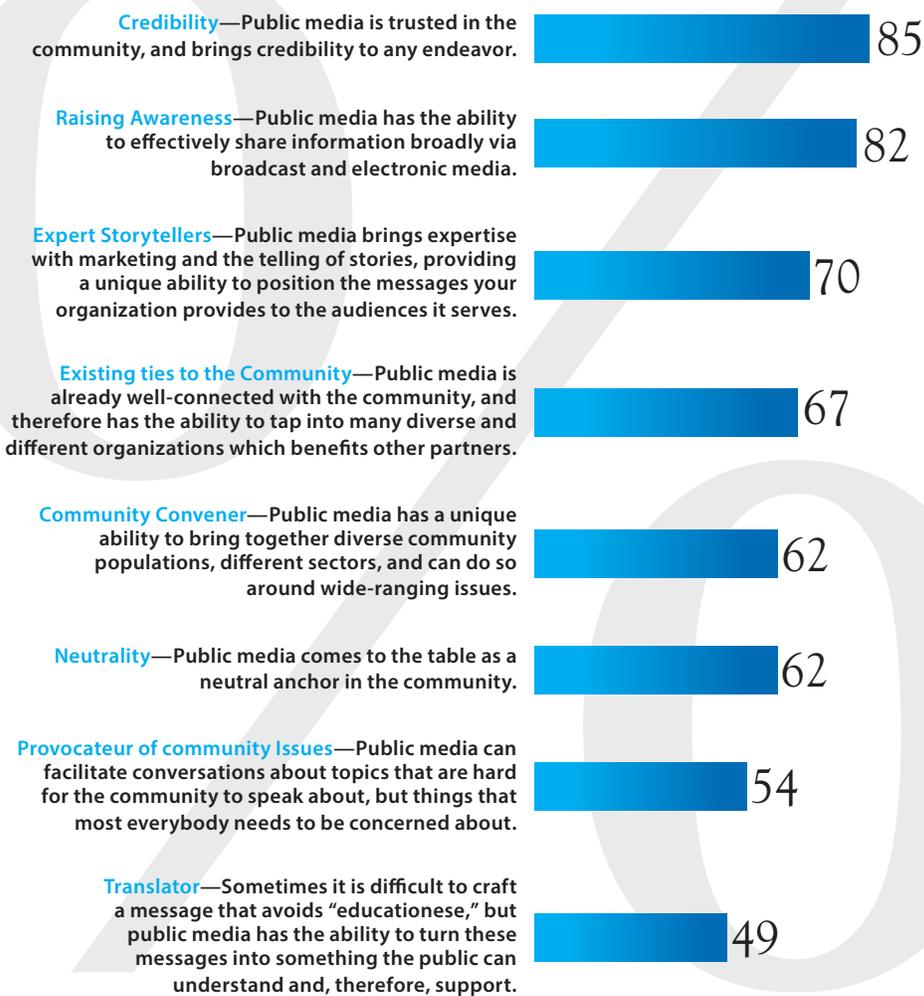
Community organizations confirm that partnering with public media helps them reach their goals, and that public media organizations are essential members of their project teams. When asked to quantify the impact of public media as a partner, more than three-quarters of surveyed partners indicated that their work would be less successful in the absence of their public media partnership.

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Community Partners Benefit from Public Media Affiliation and Public Media Know-How

143 community partners used a four-point scale to rate potential benefits realized through work with their public media partner. The scale ranged from "has not benefited our partnership," to "has benefited our partnership significantly." The following figure presents the percentage of responding community partners who indicated having benefited significantly for each of the corresponding competencies.

Public Media is Deemed Essential by 82% of Community Partners



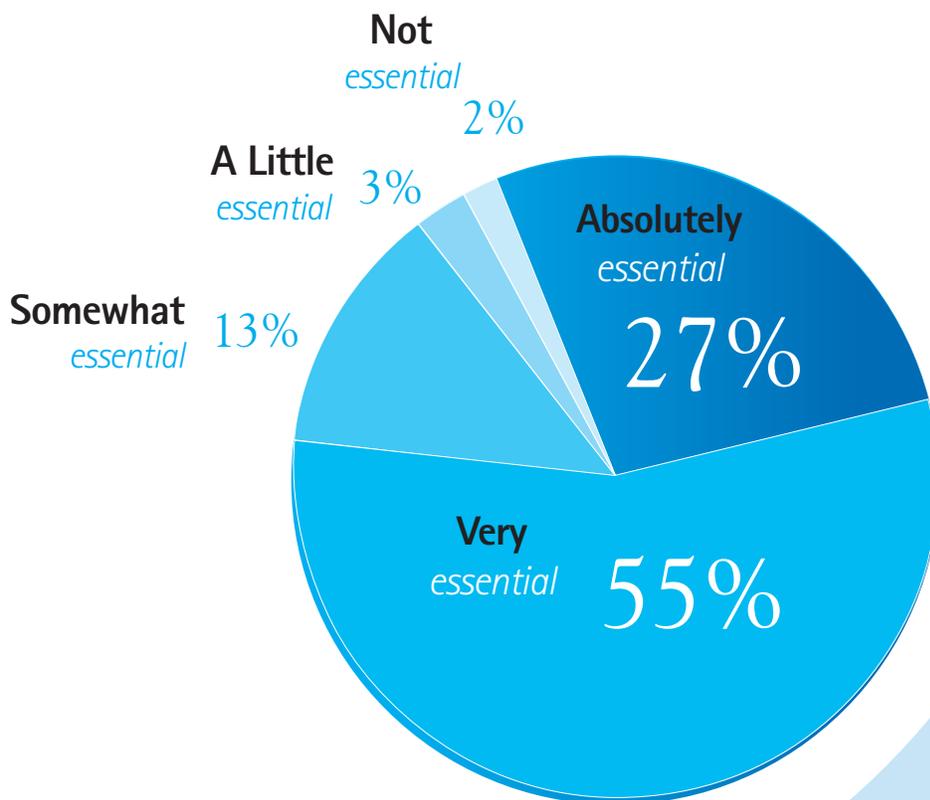
Percentage of Responding Partners indicating Public Media provides a Significant Benefit to their Work

Community partners were asked to indicate, overall, how essential their public media partner is in helping them achieve their organizations' goals. Respondents indicated the level of essentiality on a five-point scale, ranging from "not essential" to "absolutely essential." 143 community partners provided ratings.

A World without Public Media?

Public Media is Deemed "Absolutely" or "Very" Essential by 82% of Community Partners

How essential is your partnership with public media toward achieving your organization's goals?



Community partners were asked to “[i]magine, for a moment, that your local public media station had NOT been a partner on your project(s)... [P]lease indicate what you perceive would have been the result of the project(s) in the absence of public media.” Partners rated their project’s success in this scenario on a five-point scale that ranged from complete success without public media to no success without public media. The following figures illustrate the partner’s perceived impact of project success in [the absence of public media](#). 143 community partner responses are included.



Percentage of Responding Partners

■ *Complete or Significant Success without Public Media*

■ *Some, Limited or No Success without Public Media*



7. Public media stations remain committed to their work in education and learning, and are poised for continued success in the future.

This report has described the vital contributions public media's education and learning-related work is making in communities across the United States. Results of the data collection efforts have illustrated how public media is responding to the changing educational landscape. With careful attention to community needs, and through community-based partnerships, public media is supporting the people and communities it serves. But what will tomorrow bring?

An analysis of public media stations' future plans for education and learning-related investments suggests renewed commitments to much of the work it is successfully performing today. On average, stations plan to increase their capacity for community partnerships, remain focused on underserved and high needs audiences, and continue producing high-quality content that is matched to community needs. Additionally, stations intend to engage in more evaluation in an effort to quantify the impact of their work.

Station Survey Highlights

Increasing Capacity for Community Partnerships

- 96% of stations plan to use community partnerships to increase the effectiveness of their work.

Remaining Focused on Underserved and High Needs Audiences

- 94% of stations plan to provide services that reach underserved or high needs communities.
- 92% of stations plan to increase the community's awareness of the education benefits that public media provides to the community.

Producing Content Aligned with Community Needs

- 91% of stations plan to produce original high-quality content that addresses the education needs of their community.
- 83% of stations plan to develop or produce content in a variety of platforms for digital education.

Measuring Impact to Determine Worth

- 79% of stations plan to conduct evaluation or research to demonstrate the impact of their education and learning-related work.

Conclusion

Results of this data collection effort have described the education and learning-related work of public media stations. Responses from public media stations and their community partners have underscored the importance of public media stations' involvement in the communities they serve, and their relationships with community partners.

While the educational landscape has changed considerably in recent years, it is apparent that these changes have only increased the relevance of the education and learning-related work historically accomplished by public media. As our definition of education continues to evolve, public media professionals are actively engaged in charting a course to success for all through learning.

Methodology

This descriptive study was initiated to document the work of public media stations across the United States. The data collection involved the following two efforts.

1. 2015 Questionnaire of Station Education Work

This data collection effort detailed the activity of public media stations across the United States. The 22-item online instrument was developed in a collaboration between the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Dr. James Marshall of San Diego State University. The draft survey benefited from reviews by the Education Committee of public television's Affinity Group Coalition. Station general managers received an invitation and were asked to identify the person with the most knowledge of the station's education work to complete the instrument. Data was collected in March 2015.

Sample: 145 responses were received, resulting in an 86% response rate.

2. 2015 Environmental Scan of Public Media Community Partners

This data collection effort was initiated to understand perspectives of organizations that regularly partner with public media organizations. The effort involved interviews and focus groups as an initial strategy to document public media partnership experiences with key community partners. Results of this initial phase informed the development of a 10-item online survey instrument.

The draft survey benefited from reviews by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and members of the Education Committee of public television's Affinity Group Coalition. Station questionnaire responses were used to identify 72 stations with significant partnership activity. These stations were provided with a community partner survey invitation to distribute to their key community partners. Data was collected during June and July 2015. Given the sampling method employed, the results presented herein may or may not be representative of public media partners as a whole.

Sample: 143 community partner responses, representing 28 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa and Puerto Rico.



Stations plan to increase their capacity for community partnerships, remain focused on underserved and high needs audiences, and continue producing high-quality content that is matched to community needs.



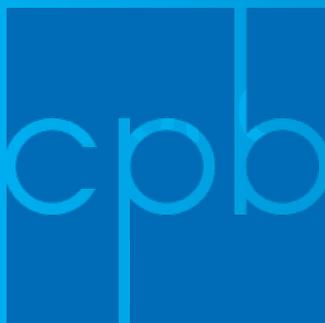


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