2024 Local Content and Services Report - Submitted 2/14/25

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 2024. 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.

WMRA's mission is to be a trusted source of news and information that supports an engaged community. WMRA's vision is to be recognized as the essential, community-supported source of news, information, and stories significant to our listening area. WMRA's core values are service and engagement, accuracy, reliability and accountability, professionalism, innovation, and civility and respect. WMRA strives to be more engaged in the local community by seeking opportunities to serve a broader range of people, and to provide news, information, and events that reflect the culture and issues of the region.

WMRA reaches a weekly audience of approximately 50,000 listeners across a largely rural area. The station must use a combination of platforms to maximize its outreach and ensure that its news reporting represents the needs of all communities within its audience. WMRA seeks to achieve its organizational goals through a combination of long-form stories, news features, a daily news podcast, digital media, and community events that are offered both in-person and virtually. WMRA currently employs one full-time reporter and has a small pool of freelance journalists. With a small newsroom and limited resources, gaps in reporting are inevitable. WMRA utilizes partnerships with other media outlets to help bridge these gaps and ensure that WMRA's news coverage has a broad geographic footprint.

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.

WMRA regularly partners with Virginia Public Radio, WHRO, and VPM in Richmond to provide more comprehensive coverage of local and state news. WMRA shares these stations' features on-air, in "The WMRA Daily" news podcast, and in its weekly newsletter that is emailed to approximately 6,000 listeners. WMRA also features content from a local, independent newspaper, "The Harrisonburg Citizen," on the station's mobile app.

WMRA, in partnership with VPM News in Richmond, was a Report for America host newsroom in Fiscal Year 2024. This partnership resulted in eight wraps and 13 feature stories, all focusing on rural health care issues in the Shenandoah Valley and Charlottesville areas. Topics included staffing shortages in rural

health care systems, the effects of the end of pandemic benefit programs, and the relationship between health care access and chronic homelessness.

WMRA's cultural event series, "Books & Brews," is an ongoing collaboration between WMRA and several small, locally owned businesses: breweries, an audio production company, and a woman-owned, independent bookstore. In addition, a local architecture firm has sponsored the series for several years, to help cover production costs. This collaboration resulted in 10 hours of community engagement between September 2023 and April 2024. In Fiscal Year 2024, WMRA partnered with more breweries in more cities. For the first time, events were held in Waynesboro, Nellysford, and Winchester, which made the in-person events accessible to more of WMRA's audience.

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.

WMRA's "Books & Brews" in-person events had an average attendance of 75 people per event. The Fall 2023 to Spring 2024 season featured authors discussing a broad range of topics, including: herbalism, spirituality, the Appalachian Trail, and the memoir of a chaplain who served on Virginia's death row. These events were recorded and uploaded on YouTube for on-demand viewing. The February 2023 event on near-death experiences remains WMRA's most popular video, with over 60,000 views to date.

According to Google Analytics, WMRA's website had and estimated 156,636 unique visitors and 434,148 page views over the course of Fiscal Year 2024. WMRA's mobile app, which allows listeners to access news in areas with limited radio broadcast coverage, continued to provide significant service in its sixth year. In Fiscal Year 2024, the app had 3,821 unique users, peaking at an average of 484 daily users.

WMRA's daily news podcast reached 19,815 users and had 61,028 downloads for the year, with an average of 225 downloads per day. Station news stories were downloaded 50,116 times from 43,041 unique users. The most popular story on WMRA's website—with 6,727 views and 20,937 downloads—was a report about Shenandoah County considering changing two school names back to their original designations that honored confederate figures in Virginia.

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 2024, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2025. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Through a partnership with VPM News and Report for America, WMRA added a full-time reporter to its staff for Fiscal Year 2024. The reporter was assigned the rural health care beat, and covered issues faced by Virginians who are at risk of homelessness, have limited health coverage, and are recipients of federal aid such as Medicaid, WIC, and SNAP.

During the 2023 election season, top criminal justice positions were on the ballot in every county in Virginia. WMRA produced a multi-part series, “Law of the Land,” in which WMRA’s reporter interviewed incumbents and challengers in several of those races. The series also explored how those positions influence the landscape of a county’s legal system. The candidates discussed local issues such as violent crime, substance abuse, mass incarceration, and the long-term aftermath of the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville. They also discussed how criminal justice policies affect people with substance abuse and mental health issues.

In early 2024, a local school board voted to restore the names of Confederate generals to two of its schools. WMRA reported on this issue at the time of the vote, and later investigated it in depth in a multi-part series that aired in early Fiscal Year 2025. WMRA remains committed to regularly reporting on issues related to the diverse populations across its listening area. In Fiscal Year 2025, WMRA is seeking funding to add another full-time reporter to its staff, to cover these and other issues more effectively.

In September 2023, WMRA reported on cases of over two dozen Guatemalan teenagers who had gone missing from the Culpeper area over the past two years. A Spanish translation of this story was available on WMRA’s website. WMRA’s sister station, WEMC, continues to air “Concierto”—which is broadcast in both English and Spanish—on Saturday afternoons. This music program helps address the needs of the large Hispanic and Latino population in WMRA’s audience.

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?

With CPB funding, WMRA can afford to staff a local newsroom with one full-time reporter, a full-time news director, and numerous freelance reporters. This funding is essential in providing more coverage of issues affecting WMRA’s local communities. WMRA covers a large geographic area, with many listeners living in rural areas with no reliable internet or television. A significant portion of WMRA’s audience relies on radio—and WMRA in particular—to stay connected on a local, national, and international scale. Without CPB funding, WMRA would have to significantly reduce its local news reporting, which would lead to the local community losing the in-depth coverage and insights that national news reports alone cannot provide.