NPR Illinois
Community Advisory Board Meeting
September 14, 2021 Meeting Notes

ATTENDEES

Executive: Bethany Jaeger (chair), Karen Witter (past chair)
Members: Natalie Beck, Deanie Brown, Cindi Canary, Jamie Dunn-Thomason, Monique Garcia, Bill Holland, David Kohn, Gina Kovach, Mario Jimenez, Regina Kovach, Lisbeth Leanos, Laurence Msall, Kent Redfield, Nikita Richards, Chuck Scholz, Richard Schuldt, Christina Schutt.

Ex-officio/guests: Jen Bettis, Jim Bray, Sean Crawford, Randy Eccles, Mark Grant, Terri Hempstead, Molly Lamb, Lisa Whelpley

ABSENT

Adam Porter (vice chair), John Carpenter, Bob Gallo, Kelly Glass, Chuck Scholz, Stephanie Rhodes, Jerimiah Stephen, George Van Dusen, Timothy Killeen, Karen Whitney, Robin Fretwell Wilson,

NOTES

Chair Bethany Jaeger welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted. New members introduced.

NPR Illinois Update on **hiring challenges**, from the understaffed UIS HR department to the lack of applicants for openings. Some positions have been open for over six months. Two manager positions are now working their way through the approval process to fill, along with account executives, and journalists. The CAB suggested looking at unorthodox recruiting techniques, virtual recruiting meetings, collaborating with diverse organizations to increase pipeline.

Statehouse headline service transitioning to WBEZ. NPR Illinois will still cover the capitol by from more of a feature approach of identifying issues and tracking progress on them. Driven by inability to fill openings quickly and WBEZ pulling funding making it more expensive for other stations. WBEZ does not have the same constraints as a community licensee. WBEZ is in a better position to find funding to reduce station costs through Chicago-based foundations and sponsorships. WBEZ has posted two positions for the service. The NPR Illinois statehouse editor may move to WBEZ or will stay to lead the NPR Illinois government and politics team that will lean into our *Illinois Issues*, Statewide, and State Week efforts. It was suggested a WBEZ representative be added as an ex-officio member of the CAB.

DEI committee work will report to the CAB and communicating to the Board of Trustees through the annual report to the BOT. The committee is working through the transition by a couple departing CAB members. We are expanding the committee with members from the UIS Center for State Policy and Leadership and are coordinating with other units in the CSPL to align with UIS. A regular story source audit has been identified as useful. NPR Digital Services is working on a tool to help with tracking this. The CAB emphasized it is important to grow the audience in this work.

UIS Advancement's Lisa Whelpley made a presentation on activity to date for fundraising for the *NPR Illinois 50>Forward Plan*. The departure of Nice Garcia has delayed some plan. The position will soon be posted. Period-to-date results have been up over the same period last year. The CAB asked for

clarification on the ways to support NPR Illinois. Unrestricted major and planned gifts are the priority. Proceeds will address decreases in UIS funding and capacity growth. Annual giving continues to be the top area of revenue as the Calendar Club and drive will need to grow results. Planning for the year-end drive is underway. Hiring a contractor to rum the drive is possible, otherwise, internal staff will execute. Once account executives are hired, business gifts for underwriting announcements will create significant revenue gains. During the shortage of supply during the pandemic, vehicle values have increased which has seen increase in vehicle donation funds.

How the CAB can support the *NPR Illinois 50>Forward Plan* was discussed. Several CAB members emphasized growing the audience. The 100% CAB giving goal is at 80%. CAB members contribute what they feel appropriate. The key message is that NPR Illinois is healthy and can operate on its current cash flow. To fulfill its mission of keeping the community and state informed, enriched, and engaged; fundraising growth will be essential to reaching our potential.

Suggestions for the CAB included talking points regarding what CAB members need to do, "What are we selling?" Those talking points include giving to stabilize and build on state policy reporting. Funds to build capacity to fill the local journalism vacuum. Unrestricted donation are preferred and will be used initially to generally cover state and local stories then to grow our capacity to hire staff for specific teams as fundraising results allow. The identified beats at this point on the state, local, and regional levels: government and politics, economy and business, equity and justice, health and harvest, education, arts and life, Lincoln and history.

The need includes engagement staff and activities to identify community priorities. These activities will range from surveys, to listening sessions, to community member training. Create a wish including, in addition to the above priorities, a downtown studio location with space for an NPR Illinois Academy to host events, workshops, and forums. Additional frequencies to broadcast HD channels and add a diverse younger targeted station. Resources to create and maintain a marketing campaign to grow the audience.

Local Content and Service Report is part of the annual CPB grant process. It will be the template for the annual report to the CAB and UIS administration on the *NPR Illinois 50>Forward Plan* progress. The CAB suggested the report track how NPR Illinois 'Moves the needle' tracking the impact of our funders investment. This ROI proof should be motivating.

Story ideas. It was suggested an updated shared list of CAB story ideas be tracked. Published ideas will be tracked on the nprillinois.org CAB page. Coverage area priorities identified included democracy, the Biden administration, COVID, climate change, and social justice.

NEXT MEETING

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting is December 7, 2021, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.