

Grantee Information

ID	1671
Grantee Name	WORT-FM
City	Madison
State	WI
Licensee Type	Community

6.1 Telling Public Radio's Story

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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.**

Joint licensee Grantees that have filed a 2024 Local Content and Services Report as part of meeting the requirement for TV CSG funding may state they have done so in the corresponding questions below, so long as all of the questions below were addressed as they relate to radio operations in such report. You must include the date the report was submitted to CPB along with the TV Grantee ID under which it was submitted.

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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.

WORT's mission is to promote communication, education, entertainment, and understanding by providing a forum for discussing public issues and expanding musical and cultural experience. It also facilitates community expression and provides community access to the airwaves for sharing music, culture, news, and information. Through unique and diverse programming, WORT challenges our listeners' cultural and intellectual assumptions. It is oriented toward the audience and concerns those underrepresented by other media. We seek to identify community issues and concerns through our call-in programs, listener comments logged throughout the year, station staff outreach efforts at local events, partnerships, and professional connections with community groups, volunteers, and our Community Advisory Board. We have begun tracking digital analytics (social media, website, and podcast) and are seeing more engagement there. Programming at the station is created by an active volunteer base of over 300 people from all walks of life. Our volunteers are energetic and knowledgeable, often experts in their fields. In FY2024, the station also had more than 3,200 listener-sponsors who donated money, goods, and services to keep the station running. These listener-sponsors are an active part of WORT programming. WORT encourages and receives many comments from the listenership and posts these comments in a log for volunteers to consider as they prepare their programs. By working with local school organizations and colleges such as UW Madison, the UW-Madison Journalism School, UW-Madison's Successworks Program, WSUM, Madison College, and Edgewood College to provide internships; the station is expanding its listening audience to new generations of listeners. Our news reporters are trained in recording, editing, and news ethics and immersed in local knowledge to report on issues affecting our community. Our talk hosts - at least two hours on weekdays - interview activists, scientists, elected officials, and more. Our multilingual programming helps us to reach out and serve new immigrant populations as well. Our Labor Radio program, produced by and about working people in our community, is one of the only shows of its kind addressing issues of importance to workers from a workers' perspective. Our daily Radio Kiosk, a four-minute interstitial aired four times a day, provides listeners with a calendar of free and low-cost events and a space for public commentaries. Another program, The Access Hour, has different members of the public hosting and producing the show to talk about a particular local subject.

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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.

WORT 89.9FM offers radio access to south-central Wisconsin. Community members have the opportunity to be heard on the WORT airwaves, and the station provides programming that is not available on other stations in the listening area. This unique programming appeals to WORT's more than 30,000 listeners by providing the area's widest range of folk, jazz, rock, blues, experimental, gospel, international, hip hop, soul/R&B, reggae and dub, women's, and classical music. The music shows on WORT regularly feature interviews and in-studio (or online) performances from local musicians. Our show hosts regularly announce upcoming local music performances. The music heard on WORT is complemented by our volunteer-produced news and public affairs programs that provide many perspectives unusual in the mainstream media. Staff, hosts, and other administrative personnel regularly receive and review feedback from listeners. In addition to radio programming, WORT regularly produces concerts and sponsors musical stages at several neighborhood festivals. We also continued to promote nonprofit events in the area and maintained our connection with area nonprofits to promote their online events. We regularly host live

remotes from community diners, restaurants, and festivals - from outside the WORT studios. In 2024, we partnered with over twenty organizations, offering promotions for countless online and in-person events. The station is a member of several local organizations, including Community Shares of Wisconsin, RSVP, WISE, Center for Change, Dane County Administrators of Volunteer Services, and Dane County TimeBank. We are also members of Dane Buy Local and have strong support from local businesses through underwriting, event sponsorship, and the donation of goods and services for raffle prizes and pledge drives. WORT's partnership with RSVP and WISE connects the station with retired Madison residents who are looking to stay engaged with their community and gain new skills. We have programmers, receptionists, and pledge drive phone answerers from these organizations who have gained audio production and computer skills that they now use in their everyday lives. As a part of Community Shares Wisconsin, WORT is required to report our hours of service to CSW. WORT always exceeds the required hours and with the new CWS policy, our extra hours go towards other organizations that struggle to meet the requirement. If the required hours for the year are not met, organizations that are a part of CSW may have their membership revoked. WORT's extra hours are regularly enough to help at least 4 organizations meet their requirements. WORT is the only radio station in the area to provide grassroots coverage of local elections, including all candidates and their issues. It airs speeches by local activists at community events and—more than any other media outlet—offers a forum where non-profit groups can discuss their causes and activities to a listening audience known for its concern and participation. Much of this information is unavailable in other media. The station began full-time web streaming in February of 2006. It has provided access to on-line archives and podcasts since 2008. The station's website has undergone an update in style and content in October 2015 and offers visitors more interactive and searchable content as a result, including a popular calendar of events that allows public submission of events. Our website received more than 593,000 views in 2024. An active Facebook presence was begun in 2009 and now has more than 13k followers; three Twitter accounts in 2015 (@wortradio has more than 2,000 followers, @wortnews has more than 4,000 followers, and @worttalk has more than 800), and an Instagram account in 2019 (more than 3,800 followers). The number of our online followers continues to rise. WORT is located near a major university in a well-educated community with four local high schools. These are big sources of our volunteers; we train students and recent graduates in radio news, radio producing, sound engineering, and radio DJing. Our public affairs and talk programming regularly feature community, state, and national leaders, writers, academics, scientists, elected officials, political candidates, labor leaders, and journalists. Our daily community calendar announcements keep listeners aware of upcoming events of interest on campus and in the community as a whole. Many of our music programmers are experts in their fields of interest. For example, our country music host, Bill Malone, wrote the definitive history on country music and was featured in a Ken Burns documentary on country music. Our hosts provide educational programming on particular and sometimes obscure artists and styles. A few music programmers even produce their own newsletters for listeners and other interested students of a particular genre or style. Many have independent social media presences and dedicated fanbases, in addition to the station's main outlets. WORT provided training for dozens of community members in FY2024: new volunteers were mentored in engineering, field recording equipment and techniques, news writing and interviewing, journalism ethics, audio editing, and on-air vocal techniques. Volunteers and trainees of all ages are afforded hands-on experience and numerous opportunities for challenge, responsibility, and growth. WORT volunteers are able to carry this experience to other aspects of their lives and to careers in media; those involved in our news and public affairs often go on to careers in broadcasting and journalism (National Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Radio, WisPolitics, local newspapers and TV, etc). WORT staff and volunteers have also been resource people for classes and workshops at local high schools, colleges, and universities. When the new student radio station at the University of Wisconsin went on-air in February 2002, WORT assisted with technical needs and the training of students and staff. In summer 2024, our News & Talk Department launched a pilot journalism program, with the goal of training future journalists from Black, Indigenous, and Hmong backgrounds. The project was part of our efforts to broaden the diversity of perspectives in our news stories and increase our audience's understanding of issues that are under-reported in the local news landscape. In the 2024-2025 academic year, WORT again received support from the UW Madison Center for the Humanities in the form of one paid, half-time graduate student to join our staff. This individual is responsible for enhancing and expanding our Spanish-language news, information and music programs.

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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.

WORT's cultural programming is often cited as a reason for Madison's diverse and vibrant culture. The station regularly wins annual awards from the Milwaukee Press Club and the Wisconsin Broadcasters' Association, competing in the large market category against media outlets that are often five to ten times our budget. In 2024, we received four awards from the Milwaukee Press Club: silver medals in best short soft feature story, best use of audio within a report, and best-regularly scheduled audio program. We also received five awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association with awards in best newscast, best spot news, best feature, best news writing, and best hard news/investigative reporting. WORT's music department also took home a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2023 from the Madison Area Music Awards for our support of the local music community. WORT was recognized for our 20th, 25th and 30th anniversaries with proclamations from the City of Madison and the State of Wisconsin and had a commendation read into the US Congressional Record. Our Labor News show was recognized in spring of 2024 with an additional mayoral proclamation for their 25 years of service bringing local labor news to the listening public. Local and national figures have noted WORT's contributions to Madison's cultural and political life.

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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.

WORT airs numerous programs produced by and for minority audiences. All of these attempt to be responsive to the needs and requests of community members both on and off-air. Several of our daily talk programs reach out to various minority communities to get guests on topics relevant to those particular communities and the general listenership. Many of the hosts are themselves members of various minority communities. Some programs are a mix of music and information in English geared to specific communities, particularly south-Asian, African-American, and Latinx. We offer two programs in foreign languages - Spanish and Hmong - of particular importance to those communities, offering news and public service announcements in their native language and a refreshing mix of music from home. We also provide two music programs solely in Spanish. Spanish speakers are the fastest-growing population in Dane County, Wisconsin (our listening area), and WORT continues to expand the services it provides to this sector of our community. Several music programs play material not available anywhere else on the dial, and all of the programmers regularly receive telephone requests for specific musical pieces or styles. WORT 89.9FM airs the longest-running locally produced LGBTQ radio program in the area, Queery. It also airs a weekly news program for and by women, Her Turn. WORT is a promotional partner for Madison Pride and staffs an outreach table. In addition, it is listed in the OutReach LGBTQ Directory and enjoys a promotional partnership with OutReach, Madison's LGBTQ Center.

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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 the event of total elimination of federal funds, a great deal of additional on- and off-air fundraising would be required even to approximate the loss, risking donor fatigue in an uncertain economic time. Valuable international and national news services would also need to be discontinued. Our already overloaded staff would be squeezed and possibly cut, meaning we would be less able to serve as a training ground for our hundreds of current and future hosts. Our equipment and production capabilities - and our programming - would suffer. These cuts would seriously decrease our ability to serve unrepresented and underrepresented community members with an essential news source, information, and culture.

Comments

Question

Comment

No Comments for this section