2022 Annual Local Content and Service Report for KPCC-FM

As submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)
February 2023
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.

The mission of Southern California Public Radio (SCPR) is to strengthen the civic and cultural bonds that unite Southern California’s diverse communities by providing the highest quality news and information across multiple platforms. SCPR is a public forum that engages its audiences in an ongoing dialogue and exploration of issues, events, and cultures in the region and the world, seeking to provide greater understanding and new perspectives to the people of these communities and their leaders.

This year, through radio station KPCC, website LAist, and podcast division LAist Studios, SCPR provided broadcast, digital, and on-demand audio stories on various topics and issues to the region, with news updates throughout the day as well as longer produced pieces. The station also offered multiday coverage to tell stories about topics that have had a large and universal impact and that affect many in the broadcast area. LAist Studios continued a daily news podcast, launched a new regular public affairs and culture podcast with a daily newsletter, and released several journalism-based limited podcast series or seasons covering such topics as divisive housing issues in Orange County, the death of a student leader and Chicano activist, the controversy surrounding the former LA County Sheriff (a reelection candidate at the time), and devastating wildfires with tangible safety tips.

The newsroom takes an audience-first approach, with engagement producers dedicated specifically to early childhood, pathways to college, and civics & democracy as well as a larger engagement team to directly answer community questions about a wide range of topics. The organization offers multiplatform programming to reach audiences that no longer listen to radio. This year, the KPCC and LAist websites offered news and information, while podcasts and mobile apps for iPads, iPhones, and Android smartphones attracted new and younger audiences who do not consume news through traditional sources.

The events team produced a mix of virtual and in-person programs that examined current topics with community leaders and panel experts. Audiences could watch events live, follow the conversation through social media posts, or access archived video later. Event topics included pregnancy and childbirth, children and COVID, mental health and student activism, and surviving in the age of megafires. This multiplatform approach—on air, online, and via live events—ensures that KPCC/LAist is embracing new audiences while keeping its existing audience informed and engaged.
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.

The 2022 elections were critical for Southern California, highlighted by a hard-fought mayoral contest and key races for two LA County Supervisor district seats, City Controller, City Attorney, City Council and LAUSD Board of Education seats, local measures, and state propositions. SCPR’s newsroom created a comprehensive Voter Game Plan site that featured election FAQs, a personalized sample ballot (in partnership with Voter’s Edge), and voter guides for city, county, and state races and measures (the latter in partnership with nonprofit newsroom CalMatters). Ahead of the June primary, KPCC/LAist collaborated with fellow Los Angeles public radio station KCRW to livestream separate one-on-one interviews with three candidates for LA County Supervisor and five mayoral candidates. As part of a coalition of media and private partners the Los Angeles Times, Univision 34, the Skirball Cultural Center, the Los Angeles Urban League, and Loyola Marymount University, in September KPCC/LAist held back-to-back live virtual debates, first with mayoral candidates Karen Bass and Rick Caruso and then with LA County Sheriff candidates Alex Villanueva and Robert Luna.

The events team also produced a unique collaboration with the Library Foundation of Los Angeles’ ALOUD series and the Los Angeles Public Library to examine Los Angeles history by sourcing archival material to inspire new artistic interpretations, reflections, and conversations. In addition, a yearlong “Public Radio Palooza” event series welcomed nationally syndicated programs and hosts with live tapings and discussions, featuring Alan Cumming & Ari Shapiro, Terry Gross (“Fresh Air”), Maria Hinojosa (“Latino USA”), Meghna Chakrabarti (“On Point”), Jenn White (“1A”), Daniel Alarcón (“Radio Ambulante”), Reema Khrais (“This Is Uncomfortable”), Ira Glass & Jad Abumrad (“This American Life” and “Radiolab”), and Farai Chideya (“Our Body Politic”).

Finally, SCPR worked behind the scenes to support the public media ecosystem. In partnership with the Knight Foundation and the American Press Institute, the organization continued to lead Operationalizing Engaged Journalism, a mentorship program aimed at making the practice of engaged journalism in local public media newsrooms integral to the nonprofit business model, with a cohort consisting of WBEZ (Chicago), WBUR (Boston), and MPR (Minneapolis/St. Paul). The newsroom also moderated webinars about funding local journalism with “The Current” in partnership with the Poynter Institute, the Public Media Journalists Association, and Gather.
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.

This year, in addition to vital election coverage, KPCC/LAist produced several impactful special projects from the Education Desk. The early childhood reporting team published a pregnancy guide and launched a text-messaging service to answer community questions with help from a review committee of experts in pregnancy, maternal health, and mental health issues. The pathways-to-college reporting team created a series on the “hidden curriculum,” the often-elusive resources and help needed in order to succeed, which featured students who successfully navigated higher education while faced with particular challenges because of their background and life circumstances. The entire Education Desk contributed to a series investigating how California’s education system—from early childhood to college to adulthood—can help the vast majority of students with dyslexia learn to overcome academic challenges and rise to the reading level of their peers through the proper interventions and instruction.

KPCC/LAist also published investigations that spurred legislative action, including:

- “Medical Parole Got Them Out Of State Prison. Now They’re In A Decertified Nursing Home.” After our investigation, a state lawmaker dropped an effort to expand a program that releases people who are permanently medically incapacitated from prison and places them in nursing homes.
- “Health Workers Say Deputies Discourage Vaccinations and Deface COVID-19 Signs in LA Jail.” Following our investigation into conditions at the Twin Towers Correctional Facility, the head of the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission requested an immediate investigation into the “alarming” reports in our story.
- “This LA Jail Program Is A Huge Success. So Why Can’t It Take On More People?” A little more than a month after SCPR’s story on how LA County’s flagship housing program, Office of Diversion and Re-entry, cannot take in any more clients because they reached their funding cap, Supervisor Holly Mitchell wrote a motion to provide recommendations to expand funding for the program.
- “Why Are LA Probation Officers Still Pepper Spraying Kids?” After we reported that probation officers sprayed detained youths at two juvenile halls more than 400 times between June 2021 and June 2022, the LA County Probation Oversight
Commission released a report on the situation and the Board of Supervisors voted to require its Probation Department to devise a plan for phasing out pepper spray in certain juvenile hall housing units.

These activities generated positive responses from audiences, policymakers, and experts. Below are some examples of their comments and feedback:

2022 Elections
“I listened to ‘Air Talk’ yesterday and heard one person’s comment that she spent five hours preparing to vote. My husband and I sat down with the Voter Game Plan and spent a total of twenty minutes determining how we would vote. The Voter Game Plan is so inclusive and user friendly. Want to see endorsements for each candidate? It’s included in the VGP. Want to see the ratings given to judges? It’s included. The Voter Game Plan was so helpful in our making an informed decision. Thank you so much. KPCC and LAist enrich our lives.”

“I have a busy schedule and KPCC saves me the time of researching all the candidates and propositions. I can trust that the information is accurate and fact-based, so I can vote on what is important to me and my family. Thank you for the LAist voting info!”

“After a year of unemployment, finally picked up some gig work. Time to renew and support public radio! Aside from great entertainment coverage, ‘AirTalk,’ and listening to Nick Roman, KPCC will be invaluable with the upcoming election. I depend on the station and their partnership with LAist.com for unbiased and transparent coverage of candidates—not the least of which is getting to hear candidates speak for themselves. Feel so lucky to have such a dedicated and thorough team. Keep up the amazing work.”

“It is very important for the people to obtain factual and balanced news information. Democracy cannot thrive without journalism of the type provided by public radio. Thank you for your service.”

Investigations and special projects
LA City Attorney Mike Feuer on the role that a KPCC/LAist investigation played in charges filed against a landlord: “We included a reference to your reporting in our complaint because it provides the court with very important background on the nature of the defendant, highlighting with great specificity the record when it comes to conditions at his properties throughout the state. Your reporting has been extraordinary. I was born and raised in San Bernardino, so it really hits home. You’re doing really important stuff.”

"Please continue the great investigative news reporting and truth telling."
University of Virginia history professor Peter Norton on an LAist story about pedestrian tunnels and traffic violence: “Thanks so much for taking the time to share this superb article. I hardly ever see journalism like this: an in-depth examination that recognizes that everything we face today is historically constituted, and that does not just accept the versions of history that have been packaged for our consumption but uncovers what the packaged histories have neglected. Your piece is also superbly illustrated—and with archival photographs that have been out of view for about a century. Superb job!... and Dan Carino’s illustration is breathtaking!”

Member testimonials
“We have applauded KPCC’s expansion of coverage in local communities, bringing more diverse voices and communities to all of Southern California. Your coverage of local issues (something I appreciate having spent 17 years in LA City government) shows depth and perspective. Local programs especially their availability via podcast has been a great asset for information, entertainment, and news! In sum, we have grown with the station and applauded its many initiatives!!”

“KPCC has served as an early morning intellectual ‘springboard’ for me as I transition to work. I am a Neonatal ICU nurse at Desert Care Network in Palm Springs. Often what I learn in my commute becomes part of the dialogue with my co-workers as we work our shift side-by-side!”

“I became a KPCC sustaining member today because of the ride-along service you provide. When I drive to my office in the morning, Larry Mantle rides along with me and tells me what’s going on around the world, in California, and in Los Angeles. If it’s a complicated subject, Larry calls up experts on his phone—doctors, scientists, public officials—and they patiently explain things to me so I understand.”

“I moved to LA 20 years ago and KPCC was my guide to all things LA. I feel like I know the hosts and reporters at personal level because our relationship goes back two decades. Today, I read the LAist website daily and it’s amazing to read stories that reflect my experiences as an Angeleno.”

"I am a new immigrant. KPCC helps me to understand the politics and culture, lets me see the world from a total different point of view. It is my everyday connection to the country and the world."

"LAist is an invaluable resource to our community."
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 2022, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2023. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

Southern California is defined by its role as a magnet for people coming from other states or countries to seek a better life for themselves and their families. This quest for the American Dream has created a truly multiethnic population. The definition of American is elusive, however; in a city shaped by generations of immigrants, it does not refer to a race, ethnicity, or birthplace. This year, the newsroom examined this concept with community essay series “Being American” soliciting “stories about your families and how they built their lives here, about your struggles and successes, about the things that make you American and the ways in which you feel your Americanness is questioned.” In the first submissions, the son of Ecuadorian parents described playing street baseball as a child, a Black Californian traced her Great Migration roots, and the Salvadoran American daughter of immigrants reflected on their sacrifices.

KPCC/LAist’s daily news reporting and programming is informed by the region’s multitude of ethnic cultures and communities. For example, Immigrant Communities Correspondent Leslie Berestein Rojas reported on continued unity among Black and Latino community leaders and groups following an LA City Council racism scandal and Indigenous leaders pushing for better representation in its wake, the formal designation of a “Little Arabia” neighborhood in Anaheim, an early look at a future Armenian American Museum in Glendale, the opening of actor Cheech Marin’s Chicano art museum in Riverside, the struggles of Afghan refugees who fled to Southern California, and an exposé about Latino workers for stone countertop fabricators diagnosed with accelerated silicosis. Asian American Communities Correspondent Josie Huang reported on San Gabriel Valley Asian residents shaken by racist attacks and discrimination during the pandemic, persecution fears of Taiwanese immigrants following a church shooting, the rise of Asian American progressives in LA politics, the LA County Registrar adding vote centers in Koreatown and Chinatown after public outcry, a project to name every Japanese American incarcerated during World War II and an augmented reality app allowing users to “witness” their removal, ICE targeting Cambodian communities for deportations and a Vietnamese man from Orange County suing immigration authorities after repeated attempts, local Tongan Americans organizing disaster relief for their homeland, Cal State facing legal threats over its stand against South Asian caste bias, and wage theft in elder board-and-care homes, particularly among Filipino caregivers.
This is considered normal daily reporting, but it is not the only coverage that SCPR provides. With other reporters and correspondents addressing their beats in a way that reflects the region’s diversity. In addition, public affairs show “AirTalk,” which offers in-depth conversations on local, national, and international topics, aired segments that cover the melting pot of Southern California and address critical local issues such as the racial justice movement and anti-Asian hate. Discussions last year included how Ukrainian refugees at the southern border are shedding light on the inequities of US immigration policy, understanding and redressing decades of injustice inflicted on Black land owners and residents, food disparity in South LA before and after the 1992 LA Uprising, how monkeypox was disproportionately affecting Latinos in LA, breaking down LA County’s latest hate crime statistics, and how multilingual speakers blend languages and choose their words.

“How to LA,” the newsroom’s new flagship local news brand, was built as a hybrid concept with multiple expressions: a podcast three times a week, a daily newsletter, regular radio segments, and a strong presence on social media. As such, it is equally consumable through podcast apps and smart devices as well as through a traditional broadcast platform. This effort is building loyal listeners and resonating with the younger, increasingly diverse audiences of Southern California. The show highlights the region’s diversity through segments such as “Growing Kale in Compton,” “Brown & Gay in LA,” and “Discovering Community at Black Market Flea.”

KPCC/LAist has made efforts to better serve the large Spanish-speaking population of Southern California, with online translations of guides on voting, pregnancy & childbirth, and pathways to college. The latter was also printed in English, Spanish, simplified Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese distributed through LA County Libraries and LA Public Libraries. In addition, election content was posted in in community, in-language, and ethnic media such as CALÓ News, and 12,000 flyers, in English and Spanish, were distributed on how to vote when unhoused.

The newsroom’s journalists work daily in the diverse communities of Southern California, and this staff has the technology, training, and ability to produce timely coverage for SCPR’s platforms: broadcast, digital, podcasts, and events. Several members of the news staff are fluent or conversational Spanish speakers, and news and production staff have skills in a variety of other languages spoken in the LA metro area.

Southern California is one of the most diverse regions in the nation. In 2023, SCPR is committed to continuing to tell the stories of its people—whether they have been here for a few days, their whole life, or anywhere in-between.
5. Please briefly assess the impact that your CPB funding has 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?

Continued funding from CPB makes possible the kinds of on-air, online, podcast, and event programming described above. Without this support, SCPR would not have had the resources to produce a daily discussion program and two daily news podcasts and to broadcast stories from our newsroom last year. The organization would be forced to make cutbacks in other areas that would be detrimental not just to the station but also to the broadcast audience. Almost as important, CPB’s support makes it possible to have this information available on multiple platforms: websites, mobile apps, podcasts, and social media. Finally, CPB’s continued support also makes it possible for SCPR to create partnerships with other institutions in the community and to leverage these partnerships creatively to improve the depth, breadth, and quality of its programming and public service.