

Local Content and Services Report

Fiscal Year 2024

1. WICN Public Radio demonstrates its stated values as “the voice of arts and culture in Central Massachusetts” throughout the year on-air, online, and in person. WICN’s robust public affairs lineup serves the needs of Worcester County’s diverse population with programming focused on equity and inclusion for underrepresented communities and programs that explore local business, arts, and culture at a deep level. This is evident in WICN’s social media feeds and website, with artist profiles, concert reviews, cultural acknowledgments and celebrations, podcast iterations of our public affairs programming, and event listings. WICN's partnership with Worcester Public Schools enables the station to collect and send over 300 donated musical instruments to local public school students that otherwise would not have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument. Students from South High School in Worcester play live on-air every December during WICN’s annual Holiday Jazz Jam live concert broadcast, with those used instruments at this signature annual event. Supporting other local nonprofits by serving as a media partner has allowed WICN to provide additional awareness and event participation for organizations including The Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District, Massachusetts Broadcaster’s Association, Worcester Cultural Coalition, Crocodile River Music, Notre Dame Healthcare, the Chamber of Commerce Women’s Conference, United Way's Power of the Purse event, and ArtsWorcester, among many. Our collaboration with the historic Mechanics Hall (nonprofit organization) allowed for the 41st season of the free Brown Bag Concert Series in March and November, broadcast live on WICN from Mechanics Hall. WICN’s Business Beat and Culture Beat programs focus on urgent local business issues, support local nonprofits, and highlight the myriad cultural offerings available year-round in our community, increasing community participation.
2. WICN Public Radio continued its longstanding partnership with Worcester Public Schools throughout the fiscal year to collect and donate over 300 used musical instruments from our listeners to students; served again as the United Way Women's Initiative's media partner for their annual events; supported The Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District’s “Out To Lunch” concert series, Holiday Tree Lighting event, and Winter Festival by serving as media partner; supported the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition’s annual fundraiser with PSAs and inclusions in the weekly email newsletter; and provided PSA support for the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition’s eBike program. WICN's membership in the Worcester Arts Council has kept the weekly "Culture Beat" program a very popular outlet for local arts and cultural events listings and an interview vehicle for local artists and nonprofits to amplify their voices and missions. WICN also partners with prominent nonprofit organization MusicWorcester to support their world-class concert events throughout Worcester with on-air promotional announcements, email newsletter inclusions, and listings on WICN.org.

3. With more than 300 instruments donated every year to local public school students across Worcester, WICN has had an ongoing impact on the creative lives of these students and their school music programs. Donated instruments range from guitars, drums, and saxophones to keyboards, clavichords, and accordions, to name a few. A group of student recipients performs live during the station's annual Holiday Jazz Jam concert broadcast from WICN Studio 50 Performance Space & Recording Studio, allowing them to showcase their skills and experience a live radio performance. The Brown Bag Concert Series entertained thousands of local residents at Mechanics Hall for each of these free concerts, with thousands more listening to the simulcast on WICN. WICN's partnership with Crocodile River Radio has led to an increasingly popular Saturday night radio show called "Crocodile River Radio" that provides music and cultural connections between the large African diaspora in Greater Worcester with WICN. Supporting the nonprofit organizations listed previously by serving as their media partner helped improve awareness of their organizational missions, event attendance, and resource gathering, while our public affairs programming and its hyper-local focus has given voice to marginalized communities, particularly in diversity, inclusion, LGBTQ+ issues, housing and criminal justice reform.

4. WICN offers three bilingual music programs, "Latin Jazz Now" (English/Spanish), a long-time staple; "Mediterranean Music" (English/Arabic); and "Crocodile River Radio," a show featuring music of Africa and the African diaspora, with host Thierno Camara speaking English, French, and occasionally a Senegalese dialect; and airing Spanish-language PSAs for Vocero! (nonprofit Spanish-language news operation). WICN's public affairs programming, most particularly "Public Hearing" and "Infused Influence," which give voice to historically marginalized voices in the LGBTQ+ community and equity and criminal justice reform in the context of legalized cannabis, with the latter show hosted by a minority-owned legal cannabis dispensary.

5. Although WICN's grant funding and Underwriting revenues have stabilized, the station's ability to operate and evolve would be severely limited without CPB funding. Most of the current grantors fund specific program and infrastructure needs; CPB grant funding provides the operating capital necessary for WICN to manage all of the day-to-day fundraising, grant development, and Underwriting outreach necessary to operate efficiently. Without this CPB funding, WICN would struggle to operate as presently constituted and the impact would be felt by the staff, volunteers, and most especially, the loyal community that supports WICN every day.