

Local Service Initiatives

Name of Initiative: Civic Space

Station: WHYY

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Briefly describe the initiative and be as specific as you can be about the products or services that the initiative includes.

One way in which WHYY is putting our local community first as we prepare for the changing media landscape is Civic Space. WHYY's Civic Space creates unique off-air civic engagement opportunities which: 1) are frequently related to on-air programming; 2) have intrinsic, stand-alone value (timely, newsworthy, of interest to the community), and 3) support broader organizational goals and initiatives, including membership recruitment and retention and major donor cultivation. We videotape these events to develop original programming for air on WHYY's digital television channels. We also tape some events for broadcast on 91FM, and very occasionally, televise events on TV12. Initiatives that fall under the Civic Space rubric often include significant, on-going partnerships with community groups and organizations who are also working in the same substantive area. Civic Space events and initiatives are an extension of WHYY's on-air program service and provide a tangible opportunity to work with community groups. In the first five years of its inception, more than 100,000 people have participated in WHYY's Civic Space initiatives, both at WHYY and in the community.

How does this initiative fit into your "portfolio" of other Local Service Initiatives? Is it one of many initiatives and projects, or does it take the bulk of your "Local" resources?

The Civic Space initiative is an umbrella under which other station outreach and service initiatives fall. Examples of initiatives include:

- WHYY's Wider Horizons Service in partnership with the Caring Community Coalition in producing a series of health-related town halls and television productions;
- WHYY's Children's Service's *In the Spirit of Family* series of community events which address various parenting and child-related issues which are taped for broadcast on 91FM;
- An *American Family* Latino Health Fair in conjunction with a WHYY TV12 production *Latina Salud* which was held at the annual Latin Day Festival with a number of community partner organizations;
- A series of events on immigration and globalization, with partners The Community College of Philadelphia, the Nationalities Service Center, and the American Friends Service Committee
- Screenings of youth media and community productions created with help from the Learning Lab.

Community service activities are chosen and pursued with careful consideration to WHYY's larger strategic initiatives.

What station assets, competencies and/or relationships does the initiative build upon?

WHYY's strands (Children's Service, Arts and Culture, News and Public Affairs, Adult Learning Services and Wider Horizons) are well-positioned in the community to identify salient issues for constituents and likely community groups with which to partner in order to address identified needs. WHYY's Civic Space facility is on-site and can accommodate live audiences from 25 to 250 people. The space is adjacent to WHYY's largest television studio, was planned and equipped for ease in capturing content, and is conveniently located in downtown Philadelphia. Civic Space events can also take place at other locations if it makes more sense to do so from an outreach or logistical perspective.

How would you describe the community benefit of this work? What needs are being addressed?

Through Civic Space, WHY Y is able to serve numerous individuals and partner organizations through a large number of events and a wide range of topics. The community benefit is that we help raise awareness on topics of focus, bring individuals and groups together to network and connect with one another, work to encourage behavior changes when appropriate, shine a spotlight on the work of our community partner organizations. Events help WHY Y to engage the community in a more personal way and enable the community to see us as a community partner, rather than just a TV and radio station.

Who is the “customer?”

Each initiative and event has a separate targeted group for the live audience component. Recent initiatives have directly served seniors, healthcare consumers, parents, immigrant groups, and those individuals interested in news and public affairs and arts and culture. The broader customer is the viewer or listener who accesses the recorded event at a later time on TV, radio or web broadcast.

How do you know or measure if the customer’s needs are being met?

Different measures are implemented, depending on the nature of the event. For example, we survey audience members after many of our events and initiatives. Other measures include unsolicited feedback and testimonials, and the number of repeat visitors to Civic Space events.

Who benefits from the initiative?

Audience members/viewers and community group members benefit from information received at events. Community partners benefit from the heightened profile in the region that working with WHY Y provides. WHY Y benefits in a number of ways:

- expanding its contacts with individuals who are consumers of WHY Y programming who can be pursued for financial support
- Providing a venue for pursuing major donor cultivation and member recognition.
- Creating original content for TV and radio
- Enhancing station marketing efforts to support targeted shows and branding initiatives

How do you measure the benefits?

Financial benefits can be measured by identifying if event attendees either become members or renew their memberships. Content benefits can be measured in number of shows produced, aired and watched. Other intangible benefits are harder to quantify. These include the audience’s perception of WHY Y as a community partner, as well as changes in internal culture that allow us to engage the community in new ways.

Describe the financial model for the initiative, being as specific as possible. How much does it cost? What are the sources and amount of revenue? How does it fit into your station's overall economic model?

The core budget for WHY Y's Civic Space program allows for 2.5 FTE's and approximately 4 – 6 events a year, averaging \$2,500 each. Outside funding from outreach grants and underwriting supports additional events, outreach initiatives and programs. Those WHY Y departments and strands that plan outreach initiatives as part of their departmental strategy also plan for events within their departmental or grant request budgets. In addition, WHY Y's Marketing department, Public Information department and web component all provide in-kind support for events in helping promote and advertise them. Civic Space production for digital TV is outside of WHY Y's collective bargaining agreement, which helps keep costs down. As more community members see the station as a valued community resource, the hope is that more members will give on an institutional rather than transactional basis. If this holds true, the station should see greater membership retention year after year.

Could other stations use this idea or model? Would it work for any size station or licensee type?

Other stations could use this model and reap the benefits of expanded community involvement as long as there is sufficient buy-in from the station's production, marketing, and membership departments. Creating meaningful community-based initiatives, events and partnerships thereby being able to capture original content for other purposes is time-consuming and labor-intensive. The success of such an initiative hinges on interdepartmental support in terms of ideas, resources, and community connections.

***Please send this information to Brian Edstrom: bedstrom@tpt.org**