

Local Service Initiatives

Name of Initiative: What Is This Meth Thing?

Station: Pioneer Public Television – Appleton/Worthington, MN

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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.

Approached by local law enforcement organizations, Pioneer was asked to assist in educating the region about methamphetamines. Rather than focus on the use of meth, the program's intent was to inform the general public about the drug. This entailed a broader picture explaining what the drug looks like, materials needed to produce it, identifying possible users and impact on our communities.

Utilizing the stories of two parents (whose son became a user) and a recovering user, a common thread is provided for the programs. Graphics and interviews are used to support those stories and provide additional expert segments from law enforcement, social services and the judiciary system.

The two one-hour programs were then distributed to twenty-six rural hospitals, school districts, law enforcement entities and any other civic/church group that requested copies for use.

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?

As the only television station headquartered in western Minnesota covering an area roughly the size of West Virginia, "What Is This Meth Thing?" was an important opportunity for Pioneer to fulfill our mission statement. Pioneer has produced several other programs highlighting the needs, concerns and celebrations of our rural communities. None of the other programs has had the negative impact of methamphetamines or such a positive response from the communities.

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

Levels of trust, relevancy and being perceived as a public asset were all enhanced by this project. It is always encouraging to be seen as a source for groups like law enforcement officials to educate the region.

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

Perhaps most surprising to Pioneer was the fact that the programs provided one of the first opportunities for the various agencies dealing with the meth problem to communicate. We knew we would be able to produce and present a useful program to our viewers, but were honored to create a dialog within the region.

Who is the "customer?"

As mentioned above, two customers emerged. The viewer who needed to be educated on the entire meth situation and the official organizations attempting to coordinate services.

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

“What Is This Meth Thing?” is still being used by discussion groups nearly a year after the on-air debut. D.A.R.E. has asked to use the show in their training seminars.

Who benefits from the initiative?

The partner and the community are both beneficiaries. The station received an incredible amount of attention that has opened other doors.

How do you measure the benefits?

There is no measure available to quantify the true results. The fact that requests continue to come in for copies of the program would unquestionably provide antidotal evidence that the program has filled a local need.

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?

“What Is This Meth Thing?” was not a budgeted program. The production proceeded on the basis of fulfilling our mission statement and promise to our rural communities. The studio and production time were allocated at \$8,000 to complete the project.

Surprisingly, word-of-mouth discussion about the production generated funding from 26 hospitals from Medi-sota to cover the production cost. A grant from the Southwest Minnesota Foundation took care of the reproduction and distribution of the copies.

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

Yes. “What Is This Meth Thing/” is a sterling example of what a small public television organization is capable of doing. Pioneer has seen a similar response, both financially and in viewership, in a number of similar activities.

While the scale and expense may be altered for larger markets the ability to meet specific needs and provide the local service is valid anywhere.

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