2020 Community Outreach and Service Programs
Narrative from Annual Report to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting
March 3, 2021

The following questions and answers were part of a full grantee report submitted online. Because the CPB’s online form is difficult to export in an easily readable format, we are providing the material in this more user-friendly document.

Telling Public Radio’s Story

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 2020. Responses may be shared with Congress or the public.

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.

In the unprecedented year of the pandemic, KMFA completed construction and moved into our brand-new state-of-the-art facility while maintaining the health and safety of our construction crew and station staff. The new space, located in an economically and demographically diverse section of Austin, with studios and meeting rooms available for community use, provides a permanent home where we can increase engagement with diverse audiences.

In the face of COVID-19, KMFA also doubled down on its primary mission of delivering the beauty and diversity of classical music to a community in need of calm, inspiration and healing.

At the same time, unable to host or present in-person events for 10 months, we strengthened local community bonds with innovative digital and on-air offerings, among them the following:

* Created a digital educational series for home-bound students
* Produced a series of “at home” interviews with musical leaders whose organizations were not able to stage live performances
* Made our on-air talent available to local groups -- giving educational talks for virtual concerts, and reading children’s stories for a local children’s theater.

* Continued our longstanding "Listen Local" series, broadcasting archived performances by local music groups for the public’s enjoyment and to help maintain these musicians’ presence in the community.

While engaged in this major initiative, we have also continued our longstanding community service programs during 2020, among them the following:

* Broadcasts of our well-received "Listen Local" series, showcasing local classical music concert broadcasts. This broadens community access and awareness of local arts organizations, and connects these resources to those who are housebound or unable to afford tickets.

* Continued, for the eighth straight year, to sponsor and promote an annual musical instrument drive to meet the needs of underserved young music students. This has become a signature event in partnership with Austin Soundwaves, a youth orchestra serving minority and economically challenged students. (Our new studio is named in memory of a member of the orchestra, Draylen Mason, who was killed by a package bomb in 2018.) Our partnership has resulted in over 1,000 instruments being donated for schools across the Austin area.

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.

We continue to seek out new partnerships and community alliances.

* Our new facility is intentionally placed in the East Austin area, in an economically challenged, culturally underserved neighborhood with little access to classical music experiences. We have created a partnership with a neighboring senior community, the RBJ Senior Center, and several area public schools to launch the "Star Notes" initiative, an intergenerational broadcast project to bring young and old together through music. Our partner in this is the St. David’s Foundation, a health and social service foundation that is interested in fostering intergenerational activity to enhance quality of life. KMFA was one of a handful of local nonprofits receiving a pilot grant for our proposal.

* Expanded our relationship with Austin Soundwaves Youth Orchestra by hosting an outdoor, "drive-by" concert in three different locations around the new
building, enabling young students to display their musical accomplishments for family and friends in spite of the ban on indoor performances.

* Joined with United Way and dozens of Austin media organizations for a one-day drive, "All Together ATX," to raise more than $3 Million for COVID relief providing immediate aid to individuals and families.

* Took part in National Nurses Week by running spots encouraging participation in nightly salutes to first-responders, and by programming special music, John Williams "Enter the Heroes," to kick off the week.

* After schools were closed, partnered with seven local artists and musicians to create "Sound Ideas," a Facebook Live series of 1-hour at home lessons aligned with school curriculum requirements (TEKS). Students and families could learn the art of singing with Armstrong Community Music School, conducting and composing (in Spanish/English format) from Chorus Austin, where to find free software to write your own tunes with noted film composer Graham Reynolds, building your own instruments with musical sculptor Steve Parker, etc. The lessons have been archived and can be viewed on KMFA's web site.

* Partnered with "I Live Here, I Give Here," an area nonprofit encouraging local philanthropy, to produce "KMFA Notes of Gratitude" at Thanksgiving. The campaign spots, testimonials, and web pages highlighted the Austin arts community. The local FOX affiliate interviewed a station representative about the project, further informing the public about the impact of COVID on the arts.

* In response to the crisis for many small local retailers, we partnered with area artists and artisans to produce "KMFA's Favorite Things Gift Guide" as a holiday feature. Radio spots and digital material showcased local community artists and merchants offering hand-crafted gifts or fair-market crafts from around the world. Many of the artists also donated a portion of their sales to other worthy causes.

* Made our new studio space available to performing groups including Austin Chamber Music Center, Austin Symphony, and the Miro Quartet, enabling the production of their virtual concerts during the pandemic lockdown. In turn, they are spreading the word about KMFA's new facility in advance of a formal opening.

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
KMFA’s impact as a connector and strengthener of the local Austin cultural scene is one of our key strengths. Here are a few examples.

1. In December, we initiated moderated conversations on music and meaning for our "Star Notes" project between RBJS Senior residents and local high school students from two Eastside schools. Our new senior neighbors noted that the project is especially welcome because seniors are so isolated during the pandemic. We look forward to building on this in 2021.

2. At our "drive-by" concert event with Austin Soundwaves, we were delighted that in addition to the 75+ friends and family who attended, locals from the neighborhood came spontaneously, as one attendee said, “drawn in by the sound of beautiful live music, which I hadn’t been able to enjoy since the pandemic started.” This bodes extremely well for our future impact in the community when we are able to invite larger audiences in.

3. KMFA has continued to enthusiastically support HAAM (Health Alliance for Austin Musicians) with a regular series of PSAs to let musicians know about free health services. This information is even more critical during 2020.

4. We have noted an uptick in the number of appreciative calls and emails sent to the programming department during the pandemic. This affirms the impact our classical format is providing to the community that has supported it faithfully for 54 years. Here are selected examples:

   "In the midst of this protracted quarantine, I rely on KMFA to help alleviate my anxiety. You all do such a wonderful job of providing a diverse package of high quality music to Austin!"

   "Every day that we (me, husband, 8 year-old son) have been stuck at home during this time, we listen to KMFA (8 am to midnight). It is the audio backdrop for our home. We sincerely appreciate the dedication to music without any commenting on the news!"

   "Enclosed please find a small gift to further the vital work KMFA is doing to sustain us in a time of great unknowing. There is not a time during the day when I do not listen to the beautiful, heartening and often deeply inspiring music you are curating for us each day."

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 2020, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

1. The Draylen Mason Music Studio. KMFA’s new building houses a 130-seat, state-of-the-art music studio where broadcasts, performances and community events will be offered. Draylen Mason was a Black, 17-year-old double bass student active in the Austin Soundwaves Youth Orchestra with whom KMFA partners frequently. He was killed by a package bomb in 2018, when several prominent Black Austin families were targeted. His loss was a tragedy for our community. KMFA has named our studio in his honor, and we will be hosting programs there of the Draylen Mason Fellows, young minority students studying the role of music in social justice. They will perform at our grand opening of the facility.

2. As we seek to expand playlist diversity, we note the lack of classical recordings by Black composers. Accordingly, our plans for the new studio include recording and broadcasting music by Black composers who are often overlooked in the classical canon.

3. We also continue to seek out and emphasize existing recordings by Black composers, with particular attention during Black History Month, and do the same with music by women composers during Women’s History Month.

4. Noting a lack of local broadcasts featuring minority performers, we continue to broadcast the annual Black History Month concert of Historically Black Huston-Tillotson University, held in conjunction with the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas.

5. KMFA’s weekly feature, Staccato presents 90-second stories about happenings in the world of classical music. It is hosted by Judlyne Gibson, who is Black, and pays frequent attention to the role of minorities in the music world. A story about Black opera composers and another about where to find resources about Black composers are just a few examples of this type of coverage.

6. Given that the Austin population is now heavily Hispanic, we have sought out Latino talent as well. Thus, two of our six on-air talents are Latino, which aligns well with the large Hispanic population of Austin. It is unusual to find a young, classical announcer of Hispanic origin in a major daypart, and KMFA is excited to be leading in this area.
7. We also continue to carry the bilingual syndicated program "Concierto," which introduces and back-announces each musical work in English and Spanish, and "Feminine Fusion," which provides an exclusive look at female composers and artists.

8. Research conducted by the music streaming service Deezer reports that more young people are listening to classical music to reduce stress during the pandemic. While COVID forced us to cancel our "New Music Mixer" series at a local brewery this year, KMFA is planning to resume these musical happy hours in our new building once it is safe to do so.

9. KMFA’s efforts to meet the needs of minority audiences will be greatly enhanced in our new building. Through planned school visits, creative learning programs, free concerts for senior citizens, and free family days, we will be able to serve an entirely new portion of our community and introduce young underserved students to possible musical and radio careers.

10. In January 2021, we will host a virtual grand opening of the Draylen Mason Music Studio with the unveiling of a portrait in his memory by Black artist Nikkolas Smith, and performances by a number of musicians of all backgrounds. We hope to be able to bring live events to the space later in 2021.

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?**

The CPB Community Service Grant, provides a "seal of approval" which enhances our ability to fundraise successfully within the local community and with foundations. Without it, KMFA’s ongoing outreach efforts would be severely limited. We are an independent community licensee with no larger parent organization. The grant enables us to retain an adequate number of staff to serve core functions. It will help us to conduct outreach and develop programs for nearby minority students in our new location. Hosting and producing the instrument drive for needy music students, and providing fellowships and broadcasts in honor of the late Draylen Mason, are among the projects that would be diminished. Without the CSG, our "Listen Local" broadcasts would also have to be severely curtailed because of the time involved in planning, pre- and post-production. Without this vital showcase for local talent, the community would lose access to arts performances. Additionally, CPB funding makes possible our airing of national programs such as the bilingual "Concierto" which is key to our Hispanic outreach, as well as "Performance Today," which is of great value to the educational institutions of Austin such as the Butler School of Music and Armstrong Community Music School.
The CPB grant gives us the increased capacity needed to deliver these programs and services -- making KMFA much more than a service that just plays classical music. It makes us a true community and cultural partner for all of Central Texas. Without CPB funding, we would be a one-way broadcasting channel, not fully connected and engaged in important dialogue with the community we are here to serve.