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

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 2021. 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.

KMFA takes the view that as a classical music station, we must reach out tirelessly to our growing local community to develop relevant programs and engage new audiences. We challenge the notion that classical music is elitist by offering programs that are free, fun and accessible. We look for organizations with whom we have not partnered before to see if we can expand our community alliances. In spite of continuing limitations imposed by the Delta and Omicron variants of COVID-19, KMFA was able to grow audience and increase its service to its local community during 2021. We began holding live activities in our new home, completed the year before, designed for community engagement and participation. The new facility, located in one of the most economically and demographically diverse sections of Austin, features the Draylen Mason Music Studio, a 130-seat recording, broadcast and live performance space. The space honors the memory of a young Black musician, killed by the Austin package bomber. One of the major issues facing arts and nonprofits in Austin is the rising cost of rent. Many community arts organizations have lost their leases. KMFA’s new studio enables us to help fill this void. The new studio is enjoying significant use by arts and educational groups for their performances, recordings, and streaming. Public meeting and gathering rooms are also available for community use, providing a much-needed resource where we can increase engagement with diverse audiences. We are also able to invite in our listeners to experience live interviews and studio concerts, a chance to view radio in the making.
The year kicked off in January 2021 with a music and arts festival intended as a community open house. Because of the January COVID spike, we transitioned to a virtual weekend, with live musical performances by diverse artists streamed from our studio, as well as free videos of over a dozen local classical music groups. (An in-person community Open House, "KMFA Day," is scheduled for April 2022.)

In addition to musical performances, the 2021 festival featured the unveiling of a portrait of Draylen Mason, commissioned by KMFA from nationally acclaimed Black artist Nikkolas Smith. At the unveiling, Nikkolas gave a talk on "Artivism," his term for using art to improve lives. The talk was streamed during the festival and was also offered during classroom hours for Austin area students.

KMFA is actively focused on increasing diversity. Our new strategic planning process, begun in 2021, identifies growing a younger and more diverse audience as a top priority. We have launched a minority composer-in-residence project (further discussed in question 4) so that we can actively help create new content written by artists of color.

As a classical music station, KMFA regularly meets with musical and educational organizations in Austin to discuss how we can work together to strengthen our community. These discussions come through our CAB as well as individual conversations and local arts gatherings throughout the year. We have continued our ongoing programs that respond to these community needs:

- Regular weekly program, "Classical Austin," featuring interviews with local artists and educators about upcoming programs and topics of interest such as music and healing
- 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 as pre-concert speakers and event emcees
- 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 ninth straight year, our sponsorship of "Fall Into Music," 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 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. In spite of the pandemic, we were able to launch an initiative called "Star Notes," 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. The "Star Notes" program allowed a senior citizen to partner with a young music student to share favorite pieces and reflect on the impact music had on their lives. New friendships were formed, and their conversations were produced as a radio special in December 2021.

* We expanded our relationship with Austin Soundwaves Youth Orchestra by hosting two student concerts in our new Draylen Mason Studio. One of them was a capstone performance by the Draylen Mason Fellows, a group of students who use music to explore issues of social concern. We make the studio and building amenities available for these programs at no charge.

* We partnered with a local law firm and the Central Texas Food Bank to provide a Food Bank donation from the law firm for each contribution made during our fall 2021 pledge drive.

* 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.

* In response to the ongoing challenges to local retailers, we partnered with area artists and artisans to produce "KMFA's Favorite Things Gift Guide" as a holiday feature. KMFA staff selected a favorite local artist, vendor or company and these were featured on our web site. Radio spots and digital material showcased local community artists and merchants offering hand-crafted gifts or fair-market crafts from around the world.
During times when safe to do so, we presented broadcast events in our studio. A major appearance was by the renowned Kronos Quartet, who gave a rare live-to-tape concert performance hosted by a KMFA announcer. We broadcast this the following day. The quartet's program explored works of Black composers and poets.

To support the excellent local Austin Opera, whose productions we broadcast live, we once again created a special auction package for their annual fundraiser. “DJ For A Day” allowed a local opera lover to come to KMFA and guest host an hour of music that they themselves selected. This item has become a popular way to help the opera while also promoting KMFA to their audiences.

In our new building, we were able to partner with the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas to present two free Midday Music concerts in the fall of 2021. One was an hour of opera arias by the Butler Opera Center; the other was a contemporary experimental jazz show given by talented jazz students. We promote these events over the air and they are free to all.

Other area groups who have been able to use our space for their own concerts and programs include: Austin Chamber Music Center, Austin Opera, Austin Shakespeare, the contemporary ensembles Inversion and Density 512, and the Austin Symphony. The acoustics of the space are unique in Austin as perfectly suited to small-group acoustic performance and recording. The artistic director of LOLA (Local Opera Local Artists), which has performed and recorded in the new space, shared in an interview: “The Draylen Mason Studio is such a gift to the Austin community.”

The building also offers spaces for meetings and exhibits. A newly formed Latin Art group has used the space for fashion shows; a local Women’s Book Club has held its meeting there; and we were pleased to provide the space to the KIPP Austin Art and Guitar program for an evening of music and visual arts. These events bring young people and teachers to our space, making them aware of all the resources KMFA has to offer. In early 2022, we will launch a new initiative: a Career Night with nearly 100 music students from the University of Texas. They will tour KMFA and visit tables set up by arts and related organizations to explore job opportunities including broadcasting, communications and fundraising. This is another way in which our new facility is becoming a resource for the education community.

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.

* Our "Star Notes" initiative confirmed the enriching experiences to be had when young and old community members come together through music. Their sessions were edited into a special broadcast that aired on December 10 and remains archived on our web site. The young students expressed enthusiasm and gratitude for their experience of content creation and learning about radio. One said "Even if I was coming from school and busy going back and forth and here and there, I really looked forward to the conversation. You could call it the highlight of quarantine, so thank you." Another wrote "Before, I hated talking about myself. I think that you guys have definitely helped grow my confidence... It’s really important as a musician to have that confidence!" In 2022, we will continue this program in a live studio setting. The St. David’s Foundation has renewed our grant support for this program for the next two years based on our successful pilot effort.

* Our pledge drive campaign for matching gifts to the Central Texas Food Bank resulted in a gift of $1,000 to the Food Bank from our corporate sponsor --one dollar for each of the 1,000 pledges we received during the drive.

* Our annual instrument drive has produced more than 1,000 donated instruments for underprivileged students over the past 8 years. Community members now bring instruments to KMFA throughout the year, confirming that the fall drive has built ongoing awareness. Patrick Slevin, the executive director of Austin Soundwaves, wrote this: "Each year as Austin Soundwaves collects needed instruments for local schools and nonprofits, KMFA provides a space to collect instruments in East Austin, a venue for our kick-off concert, as well as marketing support through radio spots and social media posts. Together, we have collected over 1,000 instruments, and many instrument donors let us know they heard about the drive on KMFA. KMFA regularly opens their doors to the station and the beautiful Draylen Mason Music Studio to our students and their families. It is truly a special radio station--and gathering place--where everyone feels welcome. We could not be where we are today without the ongoing support of KMFA Classical 89.5 and their terrific staff."

* During the pandemic, KMFA has experienced an overall increase in listeners and members as people had more time to listen during quarantine. This strengthens our mission and mandate, to make classical music accessible to all in our community. This was confirmed by this message received from a listener: "I’m just calling to say I love your station. I wish I could donate literally everything to you. I have a two-year-old, and I am a day care teacher and this is the only music
I can get my kids to sleep with or to calm down. I’m so grateful - thank you so much!"

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 2021, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2022. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

In the wake of George Floyd’s death and the rise of #BlackLivesMatter, Austin, like many cities, experienced its share of violent protest. KMFA has determined that one of the most important ways we can enhance DEI as a classical radio station is to expand the pitifully small catalogue of broadcast-quality recordings by composers of color, too often overlooked by the mainstream commercial record companies, who have historically focused on Western European composers. Therefore, in fall 2021 we established the Draylen Mason Composer-in-Residence program and have commissioned a rising young Black composer (from Dallas), Quinn Mason, to write three new works which we’ll record and disseminate to classical stations around the country. We will premiere the works in 2022 in the Draylen Mason Studio, with the composer in attendance. During his residency he will meet with young minority students who are interested in learning how to compose classical music. As part of our ongoing commitment to DEI, KMFA sponsors the Draylen Mason Fellowship program, named for the young Black student killed in 2018. The Fellowship is an initiative of Austin Soundwaves, the youth orchestra of which Draylen was a member. Each year the fellows explore how to use art and music to address social change. In 2021, KMFA hosted their capstone performance for the first time, as our new facility is designed for such programs. The fellows asked the question "Why doesn’t classical look like me?" addressing the lack of minority representation among classical music artists. With our ongoing sponsorship of this fellowship program, and our new annual composer-in-residence program, KMFA hopes to help answer that question by bringing more BIPOC artists into the classical world.

* Over the past two years, KMFA has added two Black members to its board of directors, and we plan to recruit for a larger Hispanic representation from our new neighborhood for our board and CAB. In addition to this important initiative, KMFA continues its ongoing efforts to make its programming and events inclusive.

* We continue to seek out and emphasize existing recordings by BIPOC and women composers. While we pay particular attention to special programming during Black History Month, Women’s History Month, and Hispanic Heritage
Month, KMFA includes a diverse repertoire of recordings featuring minority artists throughout the year.

- 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.

- KMFA's weekly feature "Staccato" presents 90-second stories (on-air, with longer form on our web site) 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.

- The largest minority population in Austin is Hispanic, so 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.

- 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.

- Research conducted by the music streaming service Deezer reports that more young people are listening to classical music to reduce stress during the pandemic. In 2022 we will launch a musical happy hour in our new space targeting young professionals.

- During the pandemic, our efforts to initiate K-12 programming our new space were curtailed. However, we have continued to develop school contacts, and in early 2022 we will begin an after-school project with Martin Middle School, an economically challenged school across the street from our new building. We will offer a weekly tour of the station for students, introducing them to classical radio and technology. The first tour is set for February 2022.

- One of the largest legacy Hispanic neighborhoods in Austin is on our block. We have connected with these neighbors and helped sponsor their annual Halloween block party by providing candy for the kids, and we plan to provide musical entertainment for the event in 2022. The chair of the local block association is a Latina who has accepted a position on our CAB.

- In fall 2021 KMFA began a new strategic planning process. We have committed to increasing the diversity of our audience, our playlists, our staff and boards as
a priority goal in our planning, with targets to be set for each of the next three years.

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, as would our free midday concerts. 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. This was even more important in 2021, when the pandemic resulted in a loss of City of Austin cultural funding, because those funds come from tourism, which was significantly down. 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.