

Stories of Transformation

**Reports on the 12 CEI Stations
for The Corporation for Public Broadcasting**

Stories of Transformation

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What follows are reports tracing the efforts and transformation of the 12 CEI stations over the past 2 years. We have pulled these reports together in this section to give a sense of coherence to the changes within each of the stations and across the group. The stories and changes included below are not an exhaustive list, in fact stations continue to report new changes and new innovations even as this report is being published. The transformations in these initial 12 stations provide a powerful example of the kinds of impact and change that this work can produce.

KBPS, Portland, OR

Pried open new community spaces and norms for interaction. Brought Portland’s fragmented classical music community together to forge better norms; this had never been done. Effort has led to the creation of “GOClassicalPDX,” a brand-new group collaborating on arts awareness and activities.

KBPS, an all-classical station, is creating an informal network among arts groups with little or no history of working together. This network now meets monthly to see how they can build audience for the arts by building community.

This is a perfect role for KBPS, according to the participants, who say the station fills an important community void. Previously, there was no “neutral ground” for these organizations to get together. The group includes smaller organizations like The Portland Opera and the Portland Youth Philharmonic, and larger ones like the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. The groups say they need a neutral space to talk, one without “baggage.” This neutral space helps the group focus on seeking and addressing community needs instead of always beginning with their organizational needs.

Because of the trust built up at these monthly meetings the groups have begun to work together in small but important ways. An example: they used an existing event—the annual “Waterfront Classics” outdoor concert that features the Oregon Symphony Orchestra—to create an interactive space for the public to interact with musicians and their instruments. While this is not a new idea, the way it came about is new in Portland: “The groups are all in the same place, at the same time,” according to Andrea Murray, who is KBPS’ point-person for CEI, “working on this together.”

Indeed, KBPS benefits from this work by building stronger ties in the community, becoming more of a player in the arts world and building relationships that it can leverage to build audience, donors and relevance.

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The monthly meeting group has become “GoClassicalPDX”—a group with identity and brand to share connections. This emerged from the discussions about needing a neutral brand and space to share information and do unique projects. At first, it will work to create a citywide on-line arts calendar and plans to add additional projects like the interactive space at the Waterfront Classics.

New projects

Additionally, station staff are using KBPS’ relationships and connection to create pilot projects that connect non-traditional classical music performers with traditional classical music audiences. Their vision is to be a bridge to provide access to classical music for broader audiences and to strengthen the classical arts community through partnerships.

The station has also been invited to participate in other community collaborations, including the mayor-elect’s “Creative Capacity Initiative,” aimed at providing a better local climate for the arts and artists. It also has been asked to participate in the “Right Brain Initiative,” which seeks to return meaningful arts education into the public school curriculum. Each of these is a new opportunity created through the station’s work in the CEI.

CEI has been critical in helping KBPS change its profile and relevance in the community while also promoting changes within the station as well:

- Began discussions on devoting its unused High Definition channel to serve unmet community needs, particularly in the realm of music education.
- Began discussions with a new Web designer about how to add interactive components to its Web site, particularly user-created videos.
- Opened up relationships with arts organizations outside of the classical music world, including the “Reel Music” film festival.

KETC, St. Louis, MO

Putting the community at the center of all its work. Completely transformed the station. Its actions are now, first and foremost, about the well being of the community. Recent national model, *Facing The Mortgage Crisis*, is just the latest example of the station taking the mandate of “community first” to heart.

KETC has turned itself “inside-out,” placing the community at the center in all of its work. “We no longer see engagement as a nice thing to do,” says Amy Shaw, KETC’s Vice President of Education, “we see it as a must-do. We look at it as a key driver for future funding for public media.” The station is becoming an increasingly critical community asset while as it positions itself on a larger stage as one of the nation’s premier public television stations.

KETC’s *Facing the Mortgage Crisis* project is an example of the fundamental change that the station has undertaken as part of CEI. Using CEI principles, KETC created a unified effort that genuinely engages people and that can be spread to other stations. Rather than simply creating an informative program about the mortgage crisis, KETC chose not to try to become an expert in mortgage help—but instead to connect people to those who are. This freed the station to mobilize its assets along with others’ assets to have a dramatic impact on the health of the community.

This is just one of many examples of KETC’s deep-rooted shift—the station’s efforts have exploded across many fronts bringing real benefits up and down the line.

Practicing new approaches

The *Facing the Mortgage Crisis* initiative provided a chance to put a number of ideas into practice at once. KETC initiated Community Conversations on the mortgage crisis, hosted by groups that had relationships in neighborhoods with housing foreclosure issues. It built a 20-person partnership advisory panel with members from housing and non-profit community organizations.

In practice, playing the role of a connector and not an expert involved changing how the station approached its work, and making new decisions. For example, instead of creating its own hotline for people to call—thereby using scarce resources by trying to be all things to all people—KETC drove calls to the local United Way’s “211” mortgage hotline. KETC knew it could not help people renegotiate their mortgages; but it could connect them to needed resources.

Another key partner in helping the community address the mortgage crisis was the *St. Louis Beacon* online newspaper. KETC saw its job as illuminating the story, helping people understand the issue and pointing them to help, while its relationship with the *Beacon* allowed for harder-hitting journalism on the same issues.

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The intensity of its mortgage crisis efforts solidified KETC's new work practices. "We learned you can't just talk about this shift," says Shaw, "you have to actually do it." The pace necessitated daily 8:30 am team meetings, including senior leadership across teams. That morning meeting became a CEI-led Innovation Space and became the key leverage point to reinforce and connect the idea of "turning outward" to the day-to-day work of a project. This became the meeting everyone wanted to attend—because it was where substantive issues were being discussed.

"Then I saw your show"

KETC worked with an assessment team from the University of Wisconsin to formally evaluate its mortgage crisis efforts and the results were unequivocal and dramatic. They include:

- The effort spurred a dramatic increase in mortgage-related calls to 211—between 5,000 and 10,000 additional calls in the 2.5 months of the effort
- People were 35.9 percent more likely to share information or resources to assist others
- The show increased people's understanding of the scope and severity of the mortgage crisis by 10.5 percent
- People who saw the show were 22.6 percent more likely to support and connect with KETC

Perhaps an even more telling example of the station's increased local significance comes from a viewer:

*"I had been crying all day, praying for help.
Then I turned on the television and I saw your show."*

Turning outward toward the community has had bottom-line impacts for KETC. "Locally and nationally over \$2 million has been invested in KETC as a result of this work," says Shaw. "If you were looking for evidence of impact, you would have to say dollars flowing into our community is a pretty significant piece of evidence."

A literal space

A centerpiece of KETC's new approach is more than \$1 million in new funding from The Dana Brown Charitable Trust to create a community space housed at the station. Participation in the CEI has spurred station leaders to approach this space, called "Nine Network," in an entirely different way. Before, they would have asked, "How should we set this up so the station can best use it?" Now their focus is, "How can we best make this the community's space?" Shaw summarizes the change in this way:

We are committed to redefining ourselves—going beyond being merely a public television station that develops and delivers content . . . We believe that KETC is the best candidate to respond to the need for a public media hub in the region—a media entity that is imbued with all the essential values held by public broadcasting, including:

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integrity, trust, respect, quality, responsibility and innovation.

We are proposing to dedicate the as-yet unfinished space in the Dana Brown Communications Center, the home of KETC, to complete Channel 9's mission of becoming the primary hub for public media in St. Louis—to be the center for public forums, dialogue and communication that can strengthen civic life.

Another way KETC is acting on these goals is through its partnership with the *St. Louis Beacon*, a new online journalism effort involving former *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporters and editors, and now housed in “Nine Network.”

KETC has also embedded community engagement into its new strategic plan, explicitly identifying it as one of the four “pillars” of the station’s work. The change brought about by CEI has infiltrated and transformed the station’s culture such that the station management is now pushing staff throughout the organization to deliver results that demonstrate that the station is playing a significant role in the community. In routine meetings, as well as, strategy sessions, staff now ask, “How can our work move the community forward?”

KNPR, Las Vegas, NV

*Positioning station as the public media source for Southern Nevada. Transformed flagship show, *State of Nevada*, to refocus on local concerns. Redesigned Web site into community portal and boosted traffic on *other* non-profit Web sites. Redesigned *Community Connections* nonprofit showcase program so it now starts with community needs instead of just profiling an organization. Led to new networks and relationships in the community and a larger audience with high expectations for programming that will drill deep on local issues rather than just offer interesting content.*

Las Vegas is a highly fragmented, isolated, disconnected community. Through the Community Engagement Initiative, the station asked, “How can KNPR help people gain a sense of connection?” In answer to this question, KNPR has positioned itself as The Public Media Source in Nevada—transforming itself into a gateway to community knowledge and connections.

The station continues to deepen and strengthen its core assets and content platforms to support this community role.

KNPR leaders say that one of the single most important elements growing out of the CEI is to have a new language that gets people in the station talking about “what we mean to [the community]—not just what we put on the air.” This has an impact on how KNPR does its work, and how they make their case to funders, individuals, corporations and foundations.

In an effort to institutionalize these ideas, the station reworked its three-year strategic plan based on CEI ideas and Harwood Institute frameworks. KNPR used CEI tools to set up a strategic planning retreat with its board. This plan now has complete buy-in from the board of directors and is a clear roadmap for key decisions.

The CEI tools also are transforming KNPR’s Community Advisory Board (CAB). KNPR expanded membership on the CAB to be more reflective of the community. Then, KNPR asked CAB members to evaluate the station’s work through the lens of community significance. CAB members no longer feel self-satisfied about KNPR’s undeniable success; instead they are invested in helping the station think about ways to stretch its potential.

KNPR has also used CEI tools and frameworks to help restructure job descriptions and staff evaluations. Changing job descriptions and evaluations helped engage and spur station staff to think more seriously about KNPR’s effort to be The Public Media Source in Nevada. For example, staff members are now expected to identify how they are contributing to improving a set of community impact indicators as part of their annual review.

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Changes in assets

KNPR used CEI tools and ideas to change three of its most high profile assets:

- Its flagship daily public affairs show, the *State of Nevada*. KNPR's daily public affairs show, *State of Nevada* now focuses on this basic question, "What does it mean to live, work and play in this region?" The first hour of each show is now a feature called "Be-Longing in Las Vegas," which "report[s] on people creating their own sense of community, finding people making connections in a region where it's well documented that people feel isolated and disconnected." In-studio guests complement these profiles and spark discussion about how people strive to create a home in Las Vegas; how the built environment and culture impacts those efforts; and possible pathways to building a sense of community. The station has become more disciplined about making explicit local connections with this show, as a direct result of using the Harwood Significance Barometer with its Community Advisory Board. These changes have impacted listener involvement and expectations such that listeners have begun to keep the show much more on task—when more "national" guests are on, even when they are interesting, the host will get complaints that the show is losing sight of its local angle.
- Its Web site. The station is transforming its Web site into a community portal rather than just an adjunct to its on-air programming. The site now enables listeners and others to connect with community groups and one another to further explore community issues. The site also encourages community members to evaluate KNPR, using the Harwood Institute's 3A's of Public Life.
- Its award-winning nonprofit program, *Community Connections*. In the past this program spotlighted "good works" by area nonprofits, but its work as part of CEI convinced KNPR to do something different with the show. KNPR convened a number of nonprofit leaders at the offices of Wells Fargo, the program's main funder to learn how the show could be most valuable to the community,. During the meeting the leaders used CEI tools, sparking a discussion that surprised station staff. These leaders suggested that KNPR should reframe the show; leading with a community issue and only then spotlight different groups working on the issue. This was a good example of how the station's convening power enabled community leaders to see how they, too, need to put the community first. KNPR is partnering with United Way and the Association of Fundraising Professionals to identify specific issues to feature on this redesigned program.

KNPR leaders say that this process was transformational for the station and for many of the non-profits at the table with them. The funder also was enthusiastic about the change of course. In a difficult fund raising environment, KNPR reports that Wells Fargo announced to its grantees that they should expect funding cuts. And yet, KNPR has increased funding from Wells Fargo in the next round due in part to its focus on community connection.

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KNPR is applying CEI principles to its news coverage and other services, as well. For instance, the station's coverage of the 2008 presidential primaries was more than just straight-ahead political coverage reporting from the perspective of campaigns and candidates. Instead, KNPR focused its coverage, explicitly asking, "What does it mean for Nevadans to be connected to a high stakes primary process?"

During the run up to the election, KNPR partnered with KCEP Power 88 in series of very successful simulcasts pairing host Dave Berns with Patricia Cunningham in discussions of race, politics and the economy. This partnership reached both KNPR's audience and the younger, predominantly African American audience of KCEP. The station immediately heard a new set of voices on the air and is continuing this project.

KNPR also used CEI principles to evaluate a service for the blind and visually impaired. The station hosted a Community Conversation on the subject and uncovered very different perceptions of the way the service could be of more value. One immediate change is that KNPR now posts the readings online as podcasts for younger users who are more accustomed to downloads than with listening via a special receiver.

Measurable progress

KNPR has seen measurable progress due to its CEI efforts. *State of Nevada's* audience has grown more than 20 percent in the last year with much of the increase coming from a key sector—non-white listeners. According to Arbitron, in the summer of 2007, 12.5 percent of the show's audience was categorized as non-white, and by last summer (2008) it was 20.3 percent.

The new approach to *Community Connections* has generated notable press interest, and more importantly, has had a decided impact on the participating non-profits. Web visits have gone from 9,000 per month in 2006 to 15,000 in 2008. These are the specific pages of organizations, not the KNPR homepage. Listeners are able to use a searchable database to connect with the specific needs of an organization—donations, volunteers, supplies, etc.—in which they have interest.

KRCB, Sonoma County, CA

Positioned to be a local resource and leader. Becoming a trusted partner for bringing the community together. Programming reflects more authentic understanding of community needs. Station is taking a leadership role in a divisive local issue involving a new prison and how and whether to build it. Others are now asking the station to increase this role on other issues and bring these issues forward for community discussion.

In 1985 KRCB became the first public broadcasting station with a regularly scheduled Spanish language program in the nation. Fittingly, it began the Community Engagement Initiative with a single project: *Tengo La Voz*, targeting Latino youth.

Station leaders soon saw that the station needed to work more broadly within the community and not just focus on one section. As they deepened their knowledge of the community they saw that it was too fragmented and that to create impact their work would have to include an emphasis on connecting these disparate pieces.

To do this, KRCB has repeatedly reached out to other organizations throughout the community, creating connections without preconceived ideas about what would arise from them.

Creating a four-legged stool

General Manager Nancy Dobbs describes the station's mission this way, "Our core mission is to use telecommunications resources to strengthen community involvement and community discourse. We are bringing people back into the community square."

KRCB is using what it calls a "four-legged stool" to get this done: television, radio, Web and community engagement.

This vision has come to define the station. For a small station dealing with competing, overlapping station signals, turning outward toward the community has been important in helping KRCB distinguish itself locally. Its outreach effort *The Big Read*—when the whole community reads the same book—has been an opportunity for the station to expand its role as a storyteller about the community. The station redesigned its Web site and has used CEI ideas to build online tools for transparency and openness. For example, the local programming producer regularly blogs and seeks comments, and the station is highlighting the work of others as much as itself.

Two key programs were influenced heavily by the CEI effort, as well. The first was the broadcast of and associated efforts around the documentary *Rolling* about people with disabilities. KRCB producers came to the outreach team to suggest the program as a candidate for a community-driven approach after

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an Innovation Space meeting. This was a turnaround in attitude by staff.

The Department of Public Health contacted KRCB requesting a partnership in local programming to accompany the national broadcast of *Unnatural Causes*. KRCB used CEI principles to help shape the partnership, suggesting additional partners, specifically organizations dealing with health issues in low-income communities—Community Action Partnership (CAP) and County Health Centers. The scope of the partnership grew and developed into a locally produced piece for broadcast, launching numerous local conversations and a major community meeting after the broadcast. KRCB and CAP have now been invited to a national poverty conference in New Orleans to discuss the project.

Desirable partner

All this work is paying off. The station has been invited to meet with key decision makers and to actively share the knowledge it has gained about the community through its Community Conversations.

For example, Sonoma County's Chief Administrative Officer, Rob Dice, was concerned about growth in the jail population. Faced with the need to build a new prison, he wanted to spur a conversation in the community about how best to deal with the issue, and asked for a meeting with KRCB leadership and the local community foundation to begin the conversation. In the past, KRCB would not have been a player. Now, its community focus helped KRCB become a desirable partner in mounting such a communitywide conversation.

The effort stalled as government officials became fearful of the lack of control they might have over community conversations on justice. But despite this, the station says it will likely undertake the conversations on criminal justice regardless of the government stance. The station is exploring the possibility of working with the local newspaper, *The Press Democrat*, to raise the criminal justice issues.

The station has also developed new partnerships with the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County and with the Community Foundation of Sonoma County, as part of the effort to mount a project on justice. The station is determined to make it happen and is filling a key role of instigator and connector—helping hold people to their commitments.

KUSC, Southern California

Opened a new market. Pushing for another. Assigned development staff as point people for the Community Engagement Initiative (unique to this initiative) to establish a repeater station in the Coachella Valley, using the CEI to map out the strategy. Used brand strength to bring the local arts community together to address local issues. Resulted in outpouring of affection for station where there could have been resistance and resentment. Went so well, the station is repeating approach in a new community—San Luis Obispo.

KUSC is unique among the Community Engagement Initiative stations. In a sense, it is growing a new station from scratch. While KUSC is already the dominant classical radio station in Los Angeles, establishing a repeater station in a separate, remote community, the Coachella Valley represented a daunting task.

KUSC's involvement with the CEI helped it choose a different path for establishing this new station. It could have easily won local support by offering a handful of public service announcements to a few local organizations, and investing heavily in identifying local major donors to support the new station. Because of its work with the CEI, the station instead held Community Conversations that brought together arts groups and community members to learn about the issues of concern in the community. This approach clearly demonstrated the station's commitment to listening to the community, and enabled KUSC to emerge as a locally significant player where before they were invisible.

Furthermore, the approach has gone so well that KUSC is now using it to launch another new station in a different community.

“Thank you for caring about our community”

KUSC's CEI-inspired approach has proven wildly successful. The local arts groups have developed their own identity. The Malcolm Theater, a significant local arts organization with a history of “going it alone” because of its fundraising prowess, has asked to be a part of KUSC's conversations. Working directly with community members, KUSC gained an understanding of the region's arts community that few other institutions have.

Furthermore, KUSC is no longer seen as an outsider coming into the community, but rather as a member *of* the community. In the words of one staffer, “We are suddenly a viable part of the community. We are actually a leader, convening people.”

“I just want to thank KUSC for caring about our community enough to make this happen,” said one arts patron recently. After a beat, the assembled group of arts organizations erupted in applause. Says KUSC President Brenda Barnes about this, “It was one of those moments where you realize you're not

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an outsider coming into the community; you've become a part of it.”

Of course, not everyone is ready to get on board. Recently, Barnes met with a large statewide funder to pitch the idea of a community calendar for the Valley. The foundation denied the request, prompting Barnes to her coach the email below, explaining the extent of her transformation through the CEI process:

“I reiterated that the people who live in the Coachella Valley need their own identity. They are no longer willing to be identified as a vacation resort for LA and they definitely do not consider themselves to live in the Inland Empire . . . [I]f no one is going to drive from San Bernardino to Palm Springs for an arts event, are the two cities realistically in the same region? I told them that my information comes from spending time in the community and talking to people who live there.

I could tell that my arguments were making sense, but in the final analysis, I saw the minds close and the pre-existing boundaries lock into place because if they opened their minds to what I was saying, they would have to challenge their board, change their policies, reconsider funding criteria etc. Admittedly, that is a lot to take on.

[Our coaches] told us that we would find ourselves in a place like this but I was still shocked to hear someone say that the voice of the community is irrelevant. I guess that means I have become a true community engagement convert because I cannot imagine going back to doing it a different way.”

KUSC did not give up; it remains committed to playing an ongoing role in the community without necessarily needing to occupy the *central* role. As it moves forward on efforts like a Valley-wide arts Web site/calendar KUSC is bringing its knowledge, experience and support its new partnerships.

KUSC's success in the Coachella Valley has station staff members thinking about how they can better connect with local neighborhoods and donors in Los Angeles. In this way, the lessons from the CEI and its work in the Coachella Valley are filtering throughout the station. The station now plans to convene more Community Conversations with the goal of occupying a much more significant space in the LA community and better connecting with potential and current donors.

KUSC's efforts in the Coachella Valley have also demonstrated its capacity and potential, spurring the station to purchase a defunct radio station in San Luis Obispo, far removed from the Los Angeles basin. It's a town where the station has no connections. But KUSC is confident that using the same approach—listening to, and being a true member of the community—can work here as well, so that by Spring it plans to become the only classical broadcaster in the community. To this end, the station has already begun identifying partners.

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A new approach to development

The benefits to the community are clear, but for KUSC's development staff their work on the CEI is also generating new and more committed donors. The involvement of the Malcolm Theater is an important marker in this regard. And the staff note that researching and cultivating major donors is far easier when you are known and trusted as a community leader. CEI has driven new relationships with major donors. Development staff says that the station is better positioned to apply for new grants.

This, for them, is a new model of development—as community connector who knows what the community is doing and what its aspirations are.

Likewise playing the role of community connector has helped drive a new model for creating programming. Development staff are in Coachella Valley far more than production staff and have a deeper understanding of the community. This deeper understanding of the community has helped give production staff insights that they would not have otherwise.

Maryland Public Television

Building new practices in engagement to enhance the station. A large statewide broadcaster, the station brought engagement into several of its biggest efforts including its annual *Bay Week*. Now this effort goes well beyond broadcasting and gets the community involved. New projects continue to emerge through close attention to public knowledge gained through regular Community Conversations.

Maryland Public Television (MPT) now sees public service as its “competitive edge” over other media sources. Even so, like many of the Community Engagement Initiative stations, MPT found unexpected opportunities by turning outward towards the community.

A major donor learned that MPT was involved with the CEI and that the station was focused on creating community impact and local significance and was so intrigued that he gave MPT \$1 million to establish a New Initiatives Fund to further this work.

The station has a new focus that is both a discipline *and* a result of the work that station has done in listening to the community. For General Manager Rob Shuman the key outcome of the CEI is the knowledge he has gained from Community Conversations. He feels he knows the top issues of concern in the state and can use this insight to keep the station on track. He says he “keeps these on his desk,” so when new opportunities arise he can see if they match up.

“We should do this with all our shows”

MPT initially started the CEI with a focus on improving its highly-respected *Bay Week* program. The station wanted to better reflect and take into account community concerns. Through the CEI, the station chose to reinvent not just refine *Bay Week*. One way it did this is by adding a “volunteer-a-thon.” Even though this element was not funded, station leaders thought it important to try to turn “viewers into doers.” Many new volunteers took part. The station didn’t just seek call-ins and donations for themselves or others, rather the station worked to galvanize people around these issues. It actively worked with its partners to connect people to service opportunities related to the Bay. These partners credit the new approach to *Bay Week* for increases in their volunteers, members and donors.

MPT continued looking for opportunities to reshape and improve its approach, experimenting with a 30-minute call-in segment as part of a special program on gay teens. This program focused on local organizations working with gay teens and featured interviews with their leaders. Normally, the station would use regular volunteers to answer the phones. But, because of its work with the CEI, MPT asked many of the leaders featured in the segment to take calls. Now, viewers could call for more information about an organization and talk to a representative right away—often the very person they saw on TV—and MPT could help connect people directly with those organizations. It was immediately successful, leading production staff to adopt the approach even prompting one previously skeptical producer to

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declare, “We should do this [bring the community into the programming] with all of our shows.”

Beyond creating better programming, MPT’s community-centered approach is having an impact outside of the station, too. Many of the organizations brought together around the gay teens documentary had *never* been in the same room together—simply volunteering to help out on the show helped to establish a network that did not exist before. MPT is not only using its assets to produce good content, but to build community and its own local significance.

MPT’s approach to a new show about youth foster care, again illustrates the station’s commitment to placing community first. The station asked key state organizations how it could best help raise awareness of foster care issues, beyond simply airing a program. The organizations said they needed help putting on events to discuss the subject *before* the show aired—with the goal of raising the profile of the issue statewide. Now, the station is working with these community partners to convene local events around the state, using clips from the upcoming documentary as a way of framing the discussion.

MPT also has a financial literacy project in the planning (built on previous work called *Dollars and Cents*), which it sees as a chance to strengthen partnerships and its role in community.

Impacts and changes

According to station management, the financial literacy, foster care and *Bay Week* projects are all attracting funding “way out of proportion to other work.” In fact, on the financial literacy project, Vice President of Institutional Advancement Joe Krushinsky says, “We don’t even have a product yet and two foundations have committed money to move this thing forward.”

Overall, according to Krushinsky, MPT is adjusting its organizational orientation:

- *From* fulfilling requests of other organizations . . .
 - *To* aligning efforts where appropriate with other organizations’ missions
- *From* arranging assets into a program . . .
 - *To* designing programs that address defined community needs
- *From* “outputs” . . .
 - *To* outcomes such as improved civic health, better connections, and improved fundraising

Changing its orientation has driven a number of concrete internal changes:

- New mechanisms to gather knowledge. Community Conversations have become a standard way to bring community thinking back into organization. Project review sheets require that new projects be aligned with identified priorities.

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- New staff interactions and engagement. Regular staff meetings with 80 or more people are devoted to examining other ways to meaningfully engage with the community. Rather than sneaking out of such meetings because they are “not about programming,” which was the norm before the CEI, station managers report that staffers stay engaged throughout.
- Asking new questions. The general manager, production staff and others now ask different questions about programs, such as, “How do we create a local connection to this issue if we are going to broadcast it?” That is, “How can our association with this issue have the greatest impact in the community?”

Vermont Public Television

Realigning content, services and partnerships to involve and engage Vermont communities and broaden leadership within the state. Working with other statewide organizations that also are doing community listening and engagement. Brought together statewide organizations that were duplicating one another's work to leverage resources. Taking issue programming beyond "policy leaders" and connecting it to community concerns.

Spurred by the Community Engagement Initiative, Vermont Public Television (VPT) is moving its programming away from "insider" policy-oriented topics and instead focusing on issues that are more meaningful to a wide array of Vermonters. This is part of an ongoing effort to reframe the station's purpose. An oft quoted statement that illustrates this new community focus is, "Broadcasting is something we *do*, it is not who we *are*."

VPT focused intently on creating change within the organization to realign the station as a public media organization that supports and strengthens Vermont communities. CEI-inspired Innovation Spaces are now a critical focus within the station and a critical vehicle for doing this internal work. Moving forward, the station's Innovation group will continue to meet and evaluate progress using the Community Impact Indicators tool to guide their work and measure the progress of the station.

Changing the station and the attitudes and habits of its staff is a daunting task—and VPT has stumbled from time to time in these efforts. Embedding new habits, and staying on track, remain daily challenges for leading the transformation at VPT.

While organizational changes are still evolving, they have the potential to help VPT create the necessary change in work habits and, more important, they are an opportunity for station staff to understand that community engagement is a core operation at VPT not just an afterthought or an add-on. It is an essential element.

Working differently with partners

As part of its work on the CEI, VPT sought to create opportunities for catalytic organizations to strategically collaborate to advance positive change and impact in Vermont. VPT also has made a commitment to fostering more diverse leadership within the state.

These goals have led the station to think differently about how it works with current and potential partners. Before the CEI, the station approached such relationships by simply dividing up tasks and figuring out how to share publicity. Now, the station asks, "How do we partner with people who can leverage what we want to do and vice versa?"

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For example, VPT identified and is working with several organizations that, like itself, have been conducting community listening efforts and surveys to identify the challenges, needs and aspirations of Vermonters. The groups include the Vermont Community Foundation, the Vermont Council on Rural Development and the Vermont Business Roundtable. The organizations worked together to host joint listening sessions and follow-up debriefings.

VPT asked participants to come be prepared to identify the top three-to-five issues or opportunities facing the state, with the focus of the conversation on, “What are we learning about essential issues in the state?”; “What do we know about what is being done?”; “Where are our gaps in knowledge?”; and “What does that imply we should do?”

The station has committed to bringing the knowledge it gains from the public into its programming, making its shows and other initiatives more relevant to the community. One such change is its Web site. Through the CEI, the station created opportunities for people to work and participate with state and local organizations. This is part of VPT’s overall effort to put people first and to give a boost to statewide catalytic organizations.

During its last fiscal year, VPT worked with more than 200 organizations to carry out its community engagement work, it expects that number to grow moving forward.

Not just “the issue of the month”

VPT is slowly reworking *Public Square* its flagship public affairs program as well as *VPT & You*, a monthly on-air and online community service spot, so each better addresses resonant community issues.

There have been significant changes in the station’s work over the last several months. VPT has been working on new ways to engage the community before, during and after broadcasting *Public Square*. The station has a new content team that includes staff responsible for community listening sessions and Web content; and the *Public Square* producers are charged with making on- and off-air content more relevant to community concerns. The station is moving away from the “issue of the month,” to a more focused approach that addresses one issue more deeply over time.

VPT still has work to do. Station staff see a critical need to find community partners, community leaders, individuals, staff, board and community council members who can be more involved in the creation of content and scope of project beyond the broadcast. VPT often stumbles here. Like many other stations, VPT struggles with allowing people into their process and maintaining editorial judgment.

The CEI has pushed VPT to be more disciplined about evaluating its work. Now, in evaluating programs and initiatives, staff asks: “Are we having the community impact we are striving for?”

WILL, Champaign-Urbana, IL

Transforming from a broadcaster to a catalytic organization, informing and inspiring community action Bringing together multiple coalitions of organizations instead of just working independently on stand-alone projects. Convening and learning from the community in order to leverage community work on issues like African American youth, childhood obesity and education. Has inspired groups that typically are fragmented and separate to work together and collaborate. Providing support so that other groups can act with greater community knowledge.

WILL came to CEI wanting to expand its high school training program, the Youth Media Workshop (YMW). YMW is a program done in partnership with public schools in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, that teaches about a dozen African American youth how to make radio and television documentaries that link the hip-hop generation to the civil rights and black power generations. But, driven by the Community Engagement Initiative, WILL saw that YMS' limited reach would result in limited community impact. The station made a dramatic shift to focus on African American youth throughout the entire community by bringing together a diverse group of organizations that serve these young people.

This shift helped WILL staff to clarify a new role for the station: a catalyst for community change.

WILL now explicitly starts with "community impact" rather than its own interests as the focal point of the work, asking, "How will we impact the community?" According to General Manager Mark Leonard, this reorientation has fundamentally changed how the station does its planning and approaches its work. "Now our projects start in the community, not in our conference room," he says.

Recalibrated efforts

WILL has consistently pushed to be more "outward looking"—even amid initial uncertainty. The effort began with a conviction that, in Leonard's words, "We can't be just 'push media' anymore." As the station made changes to its programming and approaches, it clarified this general statement, "We start with community rather than start with ourselves. We try to see how we can use our assets to create community impact." This has grown into a simple idea, summed up by director of Internet development Jack Brighton: "We're a media organization that changes our community for the better. We're about making an impact."

Across the board, WILL has continually retooled and revamped its efforts to create an impact on the civic health of the community.

This has led WILL to adopt new practices as standard procedure. Community Conversations are now seen as essential for initiating and extending projects.

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As an outgrowth of their shift, WILL saw the need to hold a conversation among the nonprofits and other community-based organizations working with at-risk, African American youth. Most of these groups work in highly fragmented and isolated ways in the community. As a result few if any of these leaders knew one another. Through WILL's effort to build a platform for conversation they are deepening their shared knowledge of the communities they serve, understanding one another better, and beginning to take action together.

The groups discovered that not only were they disconnected from one another, but from the very youth they sought to support. Now, they are working with young people to create a community asset map to generate new knowledge and create stronger connections between African American youth and those trying to serve them.

Recently, WILL convened doctors, educators and public health experts to discuss childhood obesity, using CEI principles and its work with African American youth as a model. According to Leonard, the new effort sought to “deepen our collective understanding of the breadth and depth of childhood obesity in our service area, the organizations and individuals working to prevent childhood obesity, and the assets each of those organizations brings to the table.”

This group is kicking off a \$365,000 initiative that it hopes to fund through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on childhood obesity with a series of Community Conversations to ensure that it is aligned with community aspirations and concerns. WILL is training moderators from several organizations using CEI tools to convene and lead these conversations. The conversations will also serve as a means to support each organization in its own work as well as support the *joint* work of the organizations. Thus, WILL is spreading CEI tools and assets to other community-based groups, creating a new critical mass of organizations seeking to improve civic health and deepen their own local significance.

WILL has even extended the idea of Community Conversations to its Web site. The success of conversations among nonprofits serving African American youth prompted staff from the local school district to ask for WILL's help as part of its Great Schools initiative which includes a series of community listening sessions to inform the district's strategic plan. Seeing a chance to bring its unique assets to the table, WILL attended these sessions with cameras posting the footage on the web for community members to comment—extending the conversation beyond the school district's capabilities.

WILL is still learning how to apply what it learns in Community Conversations to its on-air programs as well as to its ongoing engagement work. Part of what WILL is working on is developing the systems and processes to facilitate this effort.

The lessons learned over the past 18 months will make it easier to extend and improve efforts when taking on other initiatives.

WILL's transformation is so complete that staff are now expected to consider how their work will impact the community and built its civic health before implementing new projects.

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Aligning for impact

WILL's results are a result of internal diligence and a willingness to change course. It wasn't easy. Some of the changes implemented at WILL include:

- New spaces. The station stuck with Innovation Space meetings even though early meetings seemed to be less productive than anticipated. Over time they have become key spaces for staff to try out new ideas, evaluate progress, and learn from experience.
- New incentives. Production plans must now meet the “community impact” test before receiving budget funds.
- New conversations. The General Manager and Outreach Coordinator met with departments and individuals to help them imagine how they might impact community.
- New resource allocation. The station re-examined long-standing work to see if it met the test of community impact. Some staff were reassigned to new departments, while others who did not want to be part of the new approach were let go (often of their own accord). Budgets were realigned to further the station's role as community catalyst, meaning the end of some long-time programming, such as a classical program that was replaced with a satellite service.
- New job assignments. WILL took advantage of a longtime on-air personality's desire to retire and moved the announcer, Roger Cooper, into a community reporting role of “senior community events liaison” to include relevant community content on the air.
- New reporting relationships. People with engagement responsibilities have more authority to supervise and manage content producers.
- New partner relationships. When embarking on a new initiative, WILL now is better able to make clear its role and the assets it can contribute. This makes negotiating partnerships easier and has led people to see WILL in a leadership role.

To further help the station align its efforts for impact, WILL's Innovation Space Team identified four “big questions” that they use to guide their ongoing decisions. These questions are:

- Is there programming we need to rethink (in what way)?
- In what ways can we build stronger connections between off-air and on-air?
- In what ways can we build stronger connections in the communities we serve?
- What work practices do we need to adopt to be catalytic?

WILL is now working to insert these “big four” questions into all station conversations as a way to institutionalize the mindset and practices of the staff's work.

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Impact

“We had no idea that this was going to have the impact on the station that it has had,” says WILL’s general manager. The impact he saw from the CEI includes:

- The station staff is “exponentially more engaged” in its work. CEI frameworks and tools have helped the station “maintain the discipline to see our way through ambiguous situations.”
- The station has seen a 28 percent increase in funding from local contributors.
- Local entrepreneurs who previously would not return his calls are now donating to the station, because of its greater relevance to the community.
- Major donors are becoming an information source for station decision-making. Danda Beard, Director of Major Gifts, says, “I ask donors this question: ‘If money were no object and you could solve any problem in our community, what problem would that be?’ We have had very revealing conversations as a result of that.”
- Three organizations have sought to be part of grants and partnerships with the station in just a few months time. The general manager attributes these changes to a new way of talking about the station. Rather than just looking for money to do good programs, the station starts with the community need, and shows how it has a unique ability to meet it.
- The initial project WILL brought to the CEI, the Youth Media Workshop, received a grant of \$120,000 from the PBS Foundation.

WNPT, Nashville, TN

Helping the greater Nashville community address issues involving the region's growing immigrant communities. Producing four documentaries on specific immigrant communities; working together with diverse partners to bring many diverse Nashville residents into dialogue. Making progress in encouraging other organizations to take on responsibilities for community dialogue, rather than just advocating their own positions. Gaining attention of large underwriting employers who are looking for ways to better understand communities and engage employees on diversity issues.

WNPT is an example of what can happen when you are willing to take risks and experiment with community engagement. Starting with a series of Local Services Initiative-funded (LSI) documentaries called *Next Door Neighbors: Immigrants and Refugees*, WNPT used the Community Engagement Initiative to develop a new way of creating programming that is more relevant to the community, and which strengthens the capacity of other community organizations.

WNPT started the CEI with a very traditional outreach program. The station planned to do four documentaries on new immigrant groups to Nashville and extend this broadcast through four follow-up forums at Vanderbilt University, *after* the programs aired and hope people showed up. Involvement with the CEI led WNPT to abandon this plan, albeit slowly. Past experience suggested that these events would have minimal attendance but initially WNPT had difficulty imagining new possibilities. However, after holding Community Conversations they saw the power of a new approach and, began to say, "That old way isn't very worthwhile."

Turning the process on its head

According to Producer, Kevin Crane, "The CEI has had a profound impact on our documentary research process for the *Next Door Neighbors* project...Station producers are confident that the practices put in place for these documentaries will continue to be used for other topical and public affairs programs."

What practices? Rather than the documentary work being done separate from and prior to engagement, WNPT now integrates work on both. For *Next Door Neighbors*, the station organized a series of small Community Conversations with a wide variety of groups. Documentary producers attended these conversations to listen and learn rather than rush out to the community to report.

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The success of *Next Door Neighbors* led the station to fundamentally alter its documentary production process. Now Community Conversations are used to help the producers prioritize the issues related to each documentary based on the aspirations and concerns of the community. Throughout the production process, the producer meets weekly with other CEI team members to discuss Community Conversations that the producer might have missed. As work on each documentary nears completion, the producer works with the rest of the CEI team to arrange and attend Community Conversations, and seek out groups relevant to the next documentary.

This turns the normal documentary process—production first, outreach second—on its head. WNPT believes it gives the documentary team a much richer set of sources to inform and feature in the documentary.

The knowledge gained from this approach dramatically shifted the tone and focus of the first documentary in the series on the Kurdish population. CEI principles and tools led the station to see the Kurdish community in a fundamentally different way, which led them to seek out fundamentally different sources. It was only through Community Conversations that the station learned of a key source, a Kurdish refugee who came to Nashville before other Kurds, and is now a successful car dealer. His dealership is one of the essential informal gathering places in the community that allowed ideas and insights into local issues to surface.

Unlike other CEI stations, WNPT put a producer in charge of its engagement work, rather than keeping production and outreach separate. Having the lead producer for the documentary series responsible for leading its engagement work accelerated the station's ability to connect on- and off-air work.

New partners, new challenges

To broaden its reach in the community, WNPT set out to recruit a different set of partners. Rather than work solely with Vanderbilt University, WNPT reached out to groups that were committed to extending conversations throughout the community.

Working with new partnerships has been challenging at times. The groups most interested in promoting conversation also have advocacy agendas. WNPT has had to find a comfort level when working with these groups, and to negotiate clear parameters for how the partnership would work. The station learned that to create real impact it often had to consider working with more energized groups rather than the usual suspects—familiar, benign, but less robust organizations. WNPT also found that most partners are willing to work within their own comfort zones but are less prepared to reach out to the community beyond that.

The lesson about partnerships that WNPT has taken from this work is the need to be more ruthlessly strategic. WNPT learned that it needs to be more careful in selecting partners and be more focused on questions such as who will add authority and authenticity to this work.

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New funding sources

WNPT's development department was initially quite skeptical of the new strategy of starting with community conversations: "I don't want to go to underwriters and tell them they need to sit in a room and talk about this," said one staffer. "This is a hot-button issue, I don't think they want to do that. Don't ask us to put these people on the spot."

But serendipitous things often happen when a station turns outward, and this is the case for WNPT. Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), the underwriter for the first documentary, learned about WNPT's Community Conversations and asked the station to put on a forum at the company as part of its ongoing diversity training for its staff. HCA was eager to use the documentary to drive discussion among its employees. After implementation, HCA was thrilled with the quality, depth and power of the conversation. Now Nissan Corporation, an underwriter for the second documentary in the series, has expressed interest in a similar program for its employees.

Building upon the success of its work with HCA WNPT is entertaining the possibility of seeking funding to package the Community Conversations along with the documentaries into tools that other organizations could use to gain better understanding of immigrant groups.

The CEI experience also is changing how people in the station think about working with funders. It used to be "safe" to promote on-air content but "risky" to get caught in a contentious community conversation. Because of the success with HCA and Nissan's interest, WNPT is now considering even more ways to involve funders in engagement work.

Can't imagine another way

Now, as WNPT prepares for its next documentary, this one about Somali immigrants, it is learning even more lessons. For example, it held Community Conversations in partnership with the local Habitat for Humanity, which is building a number of homes for Somali immigrants and African Americans who will share the same neighborhood. WNPT's community conversations uncovered these African Americans' deep frustrations with their new neighbors, based on perceived inequities and indifference toward their concerns from the wider community. Because so many Somalis are settling in African American areas, neighborhoods are developing rifts that can't be seen by an outsider. These conversations not only helped inform programming, but illuminated an issue of concern for Habitat of Humanity and a dynamic it will need to address.

The producer of these documentaries says:

"[I] can't imagine doing a documentary without first doing community conversations ... In the community, if things unfold the way we would like them to, in nine months we would be able to get on the phone with some of our partners and say, 'We want to have another community forum,' and they are in lockstep with us. They say, 'We agree, we've got conversations going on

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over here, and conversations going on over there, there's very interesting group in this area, they've been talking, you just tell us when it is and we'll make sure people are there.' Longer term, down the road, we are forging relationships with some of these community organizations. We could [then] say, 'Now let's talk about something else.' “

WNPT still has work to do within the station. It has established a beachhead of sorts among the documentary production team and the community engagement team. More work needs to be done, they say, to extend engagement principles throughout the station.

As WNPT looks forward, station leaders anticipate challenges that will require diligent attention. WNPT must be very deliberate in the planning phase of new initiatives to incorporate the CEI strategies. It is tempting to revert to previous ways of implementing projects and it can be tempting to apply for grants even though they may not be directly in line with current goals. These potential pitfalls are why WNPT staff say it is imperative to consciously build in CEI strategies from the beginning.

WPBT, Miami, FL

Creating a new platform for community engagement and diverse audiences. Accelerated an existing video-sharing initiative called *uVu*. Before the Community Engagement Initiative, this video-sharing site was an addendum to on-air material, rather than a community resource. Now, the *uVu* platform is an innovative centerpiece of station's relationship with the community. People in the community are now using *uVu* to create and post their own content, engage community in dialogue and build social connections.

The Community Engagement Initiative has accelerated *uVu*, WPBT's video-sharing initiative. Before the CEI, this video-sharing site was simply an adjunct to the station's on-air material. Now, *uVu* is the centerpiece of WPBT's relationship with the community.

Through the CEI process the station shifted its view of the site, now it explicitly sees *uVu* as belonging to the community. So, when local organizations contact the station about sending camera crew to cover their events, WPBT instead offers to lend the group simple digital video cameras to create and post its own video to the public shared site. At every turn, WPBT reminds the community that *uVu* is theirs.

WPBT is also retooling the site to make it easier for people to comment, add audio or video content, and share with others. So, while *uVu* is hosted by WPBT, CEI helped the station realize that it could be a way for others in the community to connect and interact.

WPBT had to change the scope of its efforts, too. "We came into this with a misconception that we had to recalibrate," says vice president of programming Neal Hecker. "We created a mini project on the arts community in the [Florida] Keys and we tried to force that into too many moving parts." Plans initially called for pursuing the project in The Keys as a test bed, then bringing it to Miami.

But closer to home, WPBT found much more readiness in Miami. While not abandoning The Keys, the station has shifted its focus to these Miami partners. For example, a group called Imagine Miami is making *uVu* a key component of its work in the community and using material on *uVu* as a "starter" video for Community Conversations.

The role of *uVu* as "community resource" has taken hold. Other organizations and community partners, like Imagine Miami, see *uVu* as "their" platform to broadcast and connect with the community. Through *uVu*, WPBT is seen as a partner who provides opportunities to reach into the community that didn't exist before.

This shift has had a demonstrable impact on many of the organizations featured on *uVu*. One organization head wrote the following shortly after *uVu* featured a *Day For Children*, which resulted in tens of thousands of people attending the event:

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Have you any idea of how you have touched the lives of so many families and SO MANY children in our community? Many of these children would never have had the opportunities they had this past Sunday.

In the past, such an event would have been too “small” to make it to air—but the community platform and conduit *uVu* creates is a perfect place for it.

Significantly, *uVu* viewers are different than the station’s typical viewership. The platform taps into a different constituency and creates relationships with a younger, more diverse demographic than their typical viewers.

In addition to creating a platform for community discussion and content, *uVu* also spurred investment in WPBT by the Knight Foundation, which recently asked the station to submit a proposal to renew funding for between \$80,000 and \$100,000. This is an important vote of confidence.

WSKG, Binghamton, NY

Using broadcasting assets to enhance the impact of existing community efforts. Working in partnership with several community coalitions on issues such as aging; wellness; and science, technology, engineering and math education. Refocusing the community on possibilities for future action rather than nostalgia for a lost past. After being dormant, the station is now being sought out for partnerships and is a valued community partner, leveraging the work of local organizations and even bringing new national funding into the area.

WSKG has redefined its role in the community in a profound way. In the past, the station saw itself a source of quality non-commercial programming and in return, it was seen as “nice” but a bit stodgy. Now, through the Community Engagement Initiative, WSKG has become a trusted partner in the community and is using its unique assets to support and extend the work of the community.

The results of this simple shift have been dramatic. As one community leader, the head of a large community foundation, said, “You’ve come a long way baby.”

A vital asset

After a long period of economic contraction, Binghamton’s story about itself is that it is a “down-and-out” community. Spurred by the CEI, WSKG chose to address this negative narrative, which they believe undermined the community’s confidence and held it back. WSKG sought to use its public media assets to help the community see the forward-looking work already underway by groups throughout the community.

But, before the station could speak credibly about stories of change and hope, it had to raise and redefine its profile in the community. It had to establish itself as a vital community asset.

The CEI prompted WSKG to think about the space it wanted to occupy in the community. WSKG sought to reposition itself as a trusted partner within the community leading station leaders to reach out to groups throughout the community to make clear its desire to be an active partner in their work. WSKG explicitly “put itself out there” to the community in ways it had not before, a fundamental change for the station.

Groups in the community took notice. Instead of WSKG calling to ask for permission to attend local meetings, groups now invite the station. Recently, the Aging Futures Project a nationally recognized aging consortium group asked WSKG to participate in a major national grant to integrate public service media into the project, strengthening the proposal and its reach throughout the region.

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Another effort made possible by WSKG's new focus was its partnership with the local chapter of the League of Women Voters and the Chamber of Commerce to produce candidate debates. But rather than host run-of-the-mill podium exercises, these debates included on-air Community Conversations the night before and the night after each debate.

More recently, WSKG worked with several local organizations as part of the Working on Wellness (WOW) initiative to promote better health habits in the region. WSKG secured \$150,000 in funding from the Conrad and Virginia Klee Foundation to move this partnership and program from concept to reality.

The station's new connection to the community is even being recognized by those outside of Binghamton. WSKG recently won grants of \$25,000 and \$10,000 through a partnership with a large local corporation to work on First Robotics, an initiative on science, technology, engineering and math issues. As part of this work, WSKG was selected to be part of the CPB STEM Community Engagement Initiative. First Robotics initiated the partnership after conversations with WSKG and after it learned how the station was repositioning itself in the community.

Stories of hope

In the past, the station's programming was dominated by a reverent, historical tone, focusing on the greatness of Binghamton's past. This actually contributed to the narrative of decline—and to the view of the station as stodgy.

WSKG has developed interstitials called *Chasing Change*—spotlighting stories of hope from community members.

The station consciously decided to focus on people's efforts *now* rather than continuing to produce programs that celebrate only Binghamton's history. This strategy came directly from the theory of change outlined in the CEI, which hinges in part on authentic storytelling in the community. Such stories cannot just be stories of "heroes" or boosterism—they need to be real and relevant to today.

The CEI pushed WSKG to think about its programming in a new way and examine who should be involved in its programming. It also challenged WSKG to think strategically about the roles the community can play. So, instead of seeing citizens as passive viewers, WSKG is asking students to give reports on health as a centerpiece of the show and placing community members, their work and concerns at the center of the initiative.

This new focus has forced WSKG to redefine its "education" (i.e., outreach) department to focus on "engagement" and hired a new staff member, a former United Way executive, to lead it. This staffer has a long history in the community and brings an approach that starts *outside* the walls of the station, another facet in the emerging success WSKG is having. Two additional staff people have been hired to work in this department, reflecting an investment in engagement and an endorsement of this potential this new approach has to reposition WSKG as a key player in the area.

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Like many stations, WSKG had to confront long standing organizational culture and habits in order to reorient the station into a trusted community partner.

The CEI has helped provide station leaders with the language, methods, tools and measures to push forward this change. Progress has not always unfolded as rapidly as station leaders would like. Some CEI-related initiatives, for instance, have not developed as quickly as intended. Station leaders are working to balance deliberate pressure to change—with an understanding of people’s capacities to change.

WSKG has more work to do to further institutionalize the evaluative norms and practices necessary to sustain these efforts. But, the signs of progress and possibilities are clear.

WTIP, North Shore, MN

Convening community to identify and solve problems in positive ways and strengthen informal links throughout the community. Carving out a safe space. Created new monthly broadcast as a platform to launch community dialogue which is then followed up by off-air conversations. This programming inspired a group to organize to improve the region's broadband infrastructure and helped to defuse long-standing tensions between organizations that need to work together more effectively.

WTIP is addressing what everyone in the community whispered about but no one would confront—a series of taboo issues. The Community Engagement Initiative drove the station to uncover this and gave the station the tools to it needed to reinvent itself.

Like many emerging resort communities, WTIP's service area, the North Shore of Minnesota, has a set of "old-time" residents and "newcomers." Underneath the idyllic landscape is a changing population, economic dislocation and the need to adapt to new times and new people. The initial CEI Community Conversations revealed to WTIP that people were eager for leadership on these issues. The Community Conversations also demonstrated to WTIP that it was uniquely positioned to take this leadership role.

The general manager now describes the station as the community convener, and source for civil discourse and essential information on pressing community concerns. WTIP now intentionally approaches its work with the goal of fostering conscious community conversation and developing informal networks and links that will help to spur action on community concerns.

One example: WTIP recently moved the station to a new building. Designed with the idea of being a community convener in mind, the new building includes a meeting space that can be one of the forums for community conversation.

First Thursdays

WTIP's efforts to foster conscious community conversation and develop informal networks and links pushed it to bring together groups that rarely interact in Community Conversations, such as motor sports enthusiasts and environmentalists. But from conversations new programming ideas arose.

One such program is the *First Thursday* show, which specifically focuses on issues identified in Community Conversations. The show is designed to demonstrate that people can talk about tough issues even when they passionately disagree and remain civil. Guests for *First Thursday* are selected with the twin goals of informing the community on an issue and helping to build connections between diverse groups *within* the community.

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This led WTIP to expand the impact of its on-air programming by extending its work in off-air convenings. After each *First Thursday* show, the station hosts a follow-up Community Conversation to spur further progress on the issue and inform future programming decisions.

WTIP plans to expand this broadcast to a bi-monthly program in response to community feedback. All of the programs are archived on WTIP's Web site.

Connected community

One of the economic issues WTIP identified in its early Community Conversations was Internet access, in particular broadband access. The community is remote and few people have access to broadband. After a *First Thursday* show on this topic, about 30 people attended the follow-up face-to-face conversation. The topic became the “buzz” in the community and inspired the county commission—with new funding from several private sources—to launch a feasibility study about creating countywide broadband access.

In the spirit of bringing diverse people from the community together for constructive dialogue, WTIP also is using the show to host groups that may have tense relationships. For instance, one show featured public and charter school officials who have publicly clashed, though never met before. WTIP set up the conversation to focus on the future of education in the area, rather than on current hot button issues. The two parties began meeting together after the show, and continue to do so their own.

Another change at WTIP comes in the questions asked in the station's long-running segment, *Behind the Work*, which profiles various local people and their work. The goal is to help people learn about the jobs and careers of the diverse range of people who call the region home. Through the CEI, the show now asks a different set of questions with the goal of illuminating, “What does it mean for me to be part of the community?”

Recently, the community lost one of its two local weekly newspapers. Also lost to the community was a forum for three popular columnists. WTIP stepped up to maintain these community voices by integrating them into the station's programming. These columnists cover news in three different areas of WTIP's listening area. Their columns are posted weekly on the station Web site, with an edited audio version airing once a week on the *Community Calendar* program. According to WTIP General Manager Deb Benedict, “We have received accolades locally and from around the country from subscribers” for this move.

Aligning staff to create change

As WTIP has gained credibility in the community, people increasingly see it as a trusted, neutral convener. But the path of progress has not always been easy for WTIP. A lead staff person moved away from the community midway through the CEI. The first replacement did not align well with WTIP's community leadership goals and was let go. These types of personnel issues are a particular challenge to a

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small organization. However, WTIP chose to make it an opportunity. When the CEI began, one person was assigned primary responsibility for the project. Now, this work involves the entire staff (four full time; two part time). WTIP's institutional commitment to be the place that brings together this increasingly diverse community help the station make it through these rough spots.

WTIP also had to deal with the challenge of being overly ambitious. The excitement of kicking off the CEI led the station to plan for, and begin to take on, too many initiatives. This came to a head when the personnel issues arose. WTIP is becoming more disciplined at checking potential projects against station goals and capacities.

WTIP staff has developed a much deeper appreciation for the needs and interests of the community. As a small, rural, volunteer-based community station, WTIP staff felt they were already engaged with the community. However, through Community Conversations the staff learned more about their community members; their needs, desires, issues and goals; and the diversity within the community than they could have imagined.

Real Results

After a few short months the *First Thursday* show has quickly become a community institution. But even more than that, WTIP itself now occupies a new space—and not just its new building.

Through the CEI, WTIP has come to see the kind of space it can occupy in the community and how to take practical steps to achieve it. The community has taken notice of its efforts. Staff routinely hear that the station is seen as an avenue for safe information and idea sharing and as a source of energy to help the community move forward.

These perceptions have translated into something concrete. WTIP completed its most successful membership drive ever this fall, incorporating a theme that reflects the station's relationship with its listeners—"WTIP's 'More than Radio' Membership Drive." The drive featured listeners, community leaders and non-profit managers proclaiming their partnerships with WTIP and expressing the station's value in the community.

Since starting the CEI, WTIP's membership has increased from 591 to 833 households.

VII. About The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation helps people imagine and act for the public good. For almost 20 years, we have been evolving both the ideas and the practical approaches for changing the negative conditions in society that too often divide people and keep them from making progress in their neighborhoods, communities, and the nation as a whole.

At The Harwood Institute, we seek nothing less than to spark fundamental change in American public life—so that people can tap their own potential to make a difference and join together to build a common future. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works within a long tradition of small, catalytic, and public-spirited organizations in American history that have sought to improve public life and politics.

Central to these efforts is our work to cultivate new public innovators and build new Boundary Spanning Organizations that will serve as catalysts for change and hope in communities across the nation.