



WERU Project Plan: *Share the Air*

Project Description

The goal of WERU’s Community Counts Initiative, “Share the Air!”, is to develop and implement a plan for expanding engagement with the people of our listening community. The plan will provide a road map for recruiting and cultivating a new generation of behind-the-scenes volunteers, volunteer programmers, listeners, members and ultimately station leaders and lead donors.

“Share the Air!” will include: audience research that engages a new generation of listeners and volunteers; two events designed to reach a younger demographic; outreach at non-station events that appeal to a younger demographic; new partnerships with other community organizations (for events and programming) to engage with a broader constituency; a new local music showcase program; individualized and small group conversations with potential new volunteers and listeners; a new mobile app; and rebranded station marketing.

Station Overview

WERU Community Radio is an independent, noncommercial, educational media organization, founded in 1988, that engages with the local community to provide diverse music, independent news, public affairs and cultural content that connects, informs, and inspires. WERU broadcasts at 89.9 FM in Midcoast, Downeast and Central Maine, and provides an assortment on content online at weru.org. We offer a wide selection of diverse music and public affairs programs, produced largely by volunteers, supported by listener donations and managed by a small staff and board of directors. WERU is a highly respected community institution and is a “voice of many voices!”

Station Core Values:

Inclusivity and diversity; civility and respect; social justice; environmental stewardship; service to the community; and celebration of local communities. We strive to be of, by and for the community.

Project Overview

WERU's Community Counts Initiative Project will address two major opportunities in community media. First, WERU is motivated to ensure that this treasured community asset remains relevant and sustainable, so that it can be shared with new generations of listeners and volunteers. Second, in an environment of rapid technological change in the media industry as a whole, community media has experienced significant impacts as many more choices for media consumption have become available. So that listeners continue to choose WERU, we intend to continue to provide local and diverse programming via technologically current platforms, such as a mobile app. In five to ten years, WERU aspires to be well-positioned to serve an even broader spectrum of our community, including younger generations. As a meaningful local media resource we will provide listeners with relevant programming that they cannot find anywhere else. One way we will accomplish this is through partnerships that increase our ability to engage with more community constituents. Working hand-in-hand with our existing core of volunteers and donors, WERU aims to recruit a new generation of engaged listeners and supporters.

Project Vision

WERU will become the go-to local media resource for people in their 20s-40s who are community-minded and have diverse musical tastes. Through content, partnerships, events and new media platforms, as well as through involvement in all aspects of the organization, WERU can become truly meaningful for more younger people. We will dovetail younger people's interests with those of current volunteers and donors, finding common ground to build upon and differences to celebrate.

Project Plan: Goals, Actions, Outcomes and Measurements

Engagement Section

Goals

- Make WERU relevant to a broader audience, especially younger listeners.

Actions	Outcomes/Measurements
Create and distribute a survey for our target audience of people in their 20s-40s.	Goal of 50 people age 20-45 to complete survey. (achieved 60 responses in the target demographic, survey completed as of April 1.)
Review and refine WERU branding to target a younger population.	Review and revise mission statement by March 1 (done).

	Re-brand logo, new bumper sticker and new brochures for outreach and recruiting (goal of June 1).
Conduct ongoing recruiting for new volunteers in their 20s-40s to be involved with outreach, engagement, and other WERU activities.	Recruit people in their 20s-40s to work on specific events (goal of 10 by December 1).
Increase the number and depth of partnerships with community organizations and particularly with organizations that engage younger people.	Create priority list of potential partner organizations to approach and community events to be involved with. GM/staff/board will meet with a current or potential partner organizations to evaluate current collaboration or explore new opportunities that appeal to people in their 20s-40s (goal of once a month). Conduct outreach at events/venues that appeal to younger people (goal of three new venues by August 1). Develop a new partnership for a new public affairs program (goal of one by year end).

Content Section

Goals

- Increase programming capable of serving a diverse audience in their 20s-40s with eclectic public affairs, music and other cultural content.

Actions	Outcomes/Measurements
Create a priority list of national programs that can be removed to make room for new local programs.	Implement plan (Track progress on number of programs removed and new local programs added).
Conduct ongoing recruiting for new volunteers in their 20s-40s to be involved with public affairs programming.	Recruit people in their 20s-40s to act as public affairs hosts (goal of 2).
Create live and local music program and other music programming (major interest in survey).	Train new volunteers to host and produce the program(s). Create plan for inserting new music programs into schedule. Develop new live and local music program (goal of 1 new program launched by June 1, 2019.)
Launch new mobile app to appeal to people in their 20s-40s.	Work with vendor, Public Media Apps, to develop and launch new WERU mobile app (goal of July 15). Market mobile app to people in their 20s-40s via on-air, social media, and events/outreach tabling. Track app usage (target monthly).

Revenue Section

Goals

- Strengthen and diversify revenue streams to ensure station sustainability.
- Utilize the new mobile app to create new revenue streams via membership and underwriters.
- Include people in their 20s-40s in fundraising.

Actions	Outcomes/Measurements
Create plan to grow membership, sustaining membership, underwriting, grants and event revenue.	Achieve revenue growth (track any impact of younger demographic engagement, content activities and mobile app).
Continue to focus on new members and sustaining members during pledge drive and add pitches that speak directly to listeners in their 20s-40s.	Track pledge drive progress of membership efforts (new members, sustaining members and those in their 20s-40s).
Recruit younger volunteers to fundraise on the air during pledge drives and with recorded promos.	Increase the participation of younger volunteers (goal of 5).

Organizational Capacity Section

Goals

- Increase engagement and listenership - Matter More to More People.
- Cultivate a new generation of volunteers and leaders in all areas of station operations.
- Utilize digital technology (mobile app) to better reach a younger demographic.

Actions	Outcomes/Measurements
Implement project plan with the goal of strengthening service to the community, fostering deeper connections and ultimately increasing listenership.	There is qualitative and quantitative information that points to positive project outcomes. Track impact of community engagement and listenership. Potential data sources include: station call logs, listener surveys, social media metrics, website metrics, streaming metrics, partner input, increased membership, funder input, increased financial support, etc.
Recruit volunteers in their 20s-40s for on-air programming, technical and operational roles (sound engineering, field recording, digital edited, etc.)	Strengthen WERU's organizational capacity by increasing the number of younger people in programming and technical roles (goal of 3 new programmers and 2 tech volunteers by December 1).
Strategically recruit volunteers in their 20s-40s to	Gain a sufficient number of volunteers in their 20s-40s to contribute in all phases or organizational operations,

serve on the board and committees	including leadership (goal of 2 new board members and 5 committee members in their 20s-40s by November 1.)
Develop and market a new mobile app	Leverage Mobile app to be connect with a younger demographic (goal of July 15 launch, track usage monthly)

Timeline

February-April:

- Conduct a brief survey of people in their 20s-40s.
- Have ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete the survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation with flexible scheduling for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.
- Develop mobile app with Public Media Apps and raise foundation support for funding and launch.
- Plan events with new and current partners targeted toward individuals and groups in their 20s-40s. These may include events in planning for people of all ages (i.e. WERU’s Reggae Fest on July 27).

May:

- NFCB/CCI site visit (meetings with staff and board and public event on May 6)
- All Roads Music Festival (via LaunchPad partnership), Belfast (May 18-19) (Live broadcast and outreach tabling)
- Have ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete the survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.
- Have re-branding discussion (staff and board) and find graphic designer.
- Contract with a graphic designer to redesign station logo and bumper sticker as part of rebranding work called for in the station’s Strategic Plan.

June:

- Launch new “live and local” music program hosted by volunteers in their 20s-40s.
- NFCB Conference, San Diego (June 18-20)
- Continue ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.

July:

- Blues Festival, Rockland (July 13-14) (outreach tabling)
- Mobile app launch party at Fogtown Brewing Company, Ellsworth (date TBA)
- Maine Celtic Celebration, Belfast (July 20-21) (Matt to emcee main stage)
- WERU Reggae Festival, Prospect (July 27)
- Evaluate engagement efforts and plan fall 2019 engagement activities.

August:

- Mobile app developed and ready to launch
- WERU (and partners) Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Ellsworth (August 17)
- American Folk Festival, Bangor (August 24-25) (outreach tabling and live broadcast with younger volunteers included in broadcast team and at outreach table).
- Continue ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation with flexible scheduling for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.

September:

- Common Ground Country Fair, Unity (September 20-22) (outreach tabling)
- Potential small event/gathering(s)
- Continue ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation with flexible scheduling for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.

October:

- WERU (and The 1932 Criterion Theatre) Maine Music Showcase, Bar Harbor (October 19)
- Potential small event/gathering(s)
- Continue ongoing one-on-one contact with individuals to invite them to complete survey and discuss volunteer opportunities and interests. Conduct ongoing new volunteer orientation with flexible scheduling for those who indicate that they would like to get more involved.



Final Story

The unsettling notion of “aging out” had been on the minds of the WERU Community Radio faithful for a number of years. In the fall of 2017 we began holding planning meetings to discuss the future of the station, at which time the advancing age of our listeners, volunteers, staff and board came into clear focus and with great urgency. At a variety of meetings (a founders gathering, listener focus groups, Staff and Board meetings, committee meetings, and Community Advisory Board meetings), we saw much gray hair and heard considerable concern about the increasing threat of becoming too old to manage and sustain the station. We serve a rural area in Maine, the eldest-populated state in the country, which makes the solution all the more challenging.

By fall of 2018 we had completed audience research and planning meetings sufficient to craft a new strategic plan. As the board and staff finalized action items it was apparent that attracting and serving people in their 20s-40s required special attention. Enter the Community Counts Initiative. Station management had applied and been accepted into the NFCB’s innovative project for station mission fulfillment and capacity building, which provided a vehicle for planning and implementing these efforts.

Through CCI, the station’s General Manager and Development Director began a journey of trainings on topics such as management and leadership, podcasting, development planning and much more. We surveyed and conversed with people in their 20s-40s about their media needs and interests. We worked with developers to create a new Smartphone App and logo. Grant funds were used to pay for events designed to engage younger audiences. We welcomed younger people to get involved as volunteers, to “*Share the Air*” with the older folks at the station. And more timely, flexible and individualized training was offered for new volunteers.

Younger voices are now joining us, including that of Zoe Sifnakis, who moved to Maine in the spring for a job at a scientific laboratory and soon spied the station along Route 1. Recently active with her college radio station, she jumped into WERU even though it’s an hour’s drive away. She was quickly trained and given opportunities right away. Within a month she was on

the air programming music, staffing an event outreach table and answering fundraising phones, and she's just getting started!

Phelan Gallagher returned to Maine after leaving the area for college and work. He contacted WERU and asked if there was any need for his audio skills and interests. After an orientation and training, he has recorded two nationally renowned writers speaking locally, a local Grammy Award winning musician, and a fabulous young singer home visiting from New York City. He'll soon be hosting a new music show as well.

A reggae DJ at WERU during his 30s, Ryan Swanson has built a reputation as a smart and enthusiastic member of the WERU volunteer corps. He was so excited about the CCI project's goal of engaging younger people he agreed to join our board of directors.

By reaching out both individually and collectively, providing training and opportunities to contribute immediately, and incorporating new media technology like an WERU app, we were able to attract younger people. As for the older volunteers, two years ago Phil Norris, one of our founders, expressed hope that the passion that existed at the beginning of the station could be somehow transferred to a new generation of volunteers. He was prophetic in that wish and we think it has actually begun happening. *"Share the Air"* is becoming a reality!



