

#PubMediaEducates



A Snapshot of Public Media's Education Work in Communities across the USA



Corporation
for Public
Broadcasting

Findings from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's
2020 Survey of Station Education Work
with Public Media Television and Radio Stations

FOREWORD

Each day, public media stations play an important role in creating educational and learning opportunities in their communities.

Today's students and lifelong learners have unprecedented access to informational and educational content. Technology has allowed learning to become much more interactive, with students now creating and sharing content and engaging and participating in their own learning experience in ways never possible before.

The nation's more than 1,500 independent and locally managed public television and radio stations provide universal access—for free and commercial free—to trusted, high quality content that educates, informs, and inspires.

Today, these stations have a reach not limited to broadcast alone. Americans can choose how they want to access public media's trusted content—through a website, mobile platform, social media app, on-demand, or on broadcast—the choices have never been greater. While content delivery options will continue to grow, the opportunities to increase the number of unique and diverse stories from the American people, particularly from underserved and unserved populations, will grow with it.

This report, based on a survey of 426 public media stations in December 2019-January 2020, affirms public media's educational mission and describes how public media stations carry out this mission in their communities.

Following similar surveys conducted with public television stations in 2008 and 2015, this survey includes public radio stations for the first time to analyze the who, what and how of all public media stations' educational efforts.

It should be noted that this survey was conducted just as the Covid-19 virus began to impact our nation. The survey results reflect a pre-pandemic world, but also demonstrate how stations were prepared to act quickly to meet the increased educational needs of their communities as schools began to close.

Today, stations are supporting distance learning, partnering with school districts and state education departments to make At-Home learning resources accessible for all, and serving as a local, trusted source for health information in their communities.

Public media stations, on air, online and engaging with their local communities are honoring their mission to serve the American people in ways of value to their lives.

Education is a core pillar of this service and an essential foundation for an informed and strong civil society.



Pat Harrison

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for Public Broadcasting*



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The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 charged public media professionals to produce media that would be used for “instructional, educational, and cultural purposes,” and encouraged “the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities.” While today’s world differs in comparison to the time when these charges were penned, the call for universal access to educational programming to benefit every American remains central to public media’s mission.

Public media is independently owned and locally operated across America. Nationwide, through universally-accessed technologies, public media professionals are working to educate and inform all Americans, including our youngest children learning to read or perform basic mathematical computations; young people preparing to enter the workforce; parents seeking to support the education of their children; and adults seeking information about today’s pressing issues.


Success requires a nimble cadre of education professionals responsible for assessing community strengths and needs, designing best-in-class education programs, forging and sustaining community partnerships, measuring results of this work, and using data to continuously improve the programs and services they offer. It is not surprising to find public media professionals deeply involved in the communities they serve.

This report highlights public media’s education work by describing the

WHO, WHAT, AND HOW of education-focused efforts occurring in communities and across our country each day.

Photo credits: Ideastream, KET, WHRO, Nine PBS, and WHY





**PUBLIC MEDIA IS
INDEPENDENTLY OWNED
AND LOCALLY OPERATED
ACROSS AMERICA.**

THE 2020 EDUCATION STATION SURVEY

Between December 2019 and January 2020, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting contracted to collect data to describe the educational work of public media stations across the United States. They collected and recorded 343 responses. In some cases, a single response was used to represent multiple stations (i.e., a jointly licensed television and radio station).

While similar education-focused surveys were conducted with public television stations in 2008 and 2015, the 2020 effort included public radio stations for the first time. The 2020 responses represent the work of 426 public media stations, and reflect a 76% response rate across the full public media system. Additional details about the data collection methodology can be found at the end of this report.

This report provides a snapshot in time of public media's current education work, as documented in January 2020. Results are reported for two groups of survey respondents: (1) television and joint television-radio licensees, and (2) standalone radio licensees. Together, the survey data has led to seven facts about public media's unique work in communities nationwide.



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DESCRIBING PUBLIC MEDIA'S EDUCATION WORK

WHO

Public media's audiences and stakeholders

- Public media stations serve a broad range of learners and stakeholders in their education work.
- Public media stations ensure equity through universal service and by targeting high-need, underserved populations.

WHAT

Public media's unique blend of national and local content, and community-based partnerships

- Public media's education work focuses on key disciplines including STEM, literacy, arts and journalism.
- Public media stations' education work illustrates its unique national-local structure.

HOW

Public media's dual expertise in planning and deploying technology for impact

- Public media uses a range of technologies and delivery mechanisms to reach audiences, sustain interest, and impact learning.
- Public media works with local partners to increase the reach and impact of education efforts in communities nationwide.
- Public media stations prioritize community needs, learning outcomes, and awareness when developing educational content and resources.

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DESCRIBING PUBLIC MEDIA'S EDUCATION WORK

The following seven facts provide a snapshot of the **who**, **what**, and **how** of public media's education work in 2020.

WHO

Public media stations serve a broad range of learners and stakeholders in their education work.

Who does public media serve? The answer to this question is straightforward: In the United States, almost every individual—or 99% of households—can access public media's free education programs and services.

In 2020, public media's education work continues to target a diverse range of audiences. From our youngest children through their parents and grandparents, public media's education reach is unparalleled among other media.

Young children are the most frequently targeted education audience for **television/joint stations**, with **91%** of stations targeting children ages 0 to 8 as a primary or secondary audience.

Tweens and teens are regularly targeted by public media, with **91%** of **television/joint stations** and **81%** of **radio stations** targeting youth ages 9 to 18 as a primary or secondary audience.

Parents of young children and parents of tweens and teens are also regularly targeted by public media, with **91%** of **television/joint stations** and **82%** of **radio stations** targeting parents of children through age 8, and **68%** of **television/joint stations** and **81%** of **radio stations** targeting parents of youth ages 9 to 18.

Grandparents (85%) and **parents of children ages 8-18 (81%)** are the two most frequently targeted primary or secondary audiences for radio stations' education efforts.

On average, **television/joint stations** target **12 of 19 queried audience** types (some of which are highlighted in the adjacent figure).

Radio stations, on average, target **11 of the 19 queried audience** types—with news-focused radio stations targeting an average of nine, and non-news focused radio stations targeting an average of 12.

These reach figures demonstrate public media's current work to reach “all citizens of the United States,” as charged by its original charter.

THE AUDIENCES TARGETED BY PUBLIC MEDIA'S EDUCATION WORK SPAN THE SPECTRUM IN TERMS OF AGES AND ROLES.

From the youngest viewers to their grandparents and most everyone in between, public media professionals provide programs and engage community members across the full age spectrum.

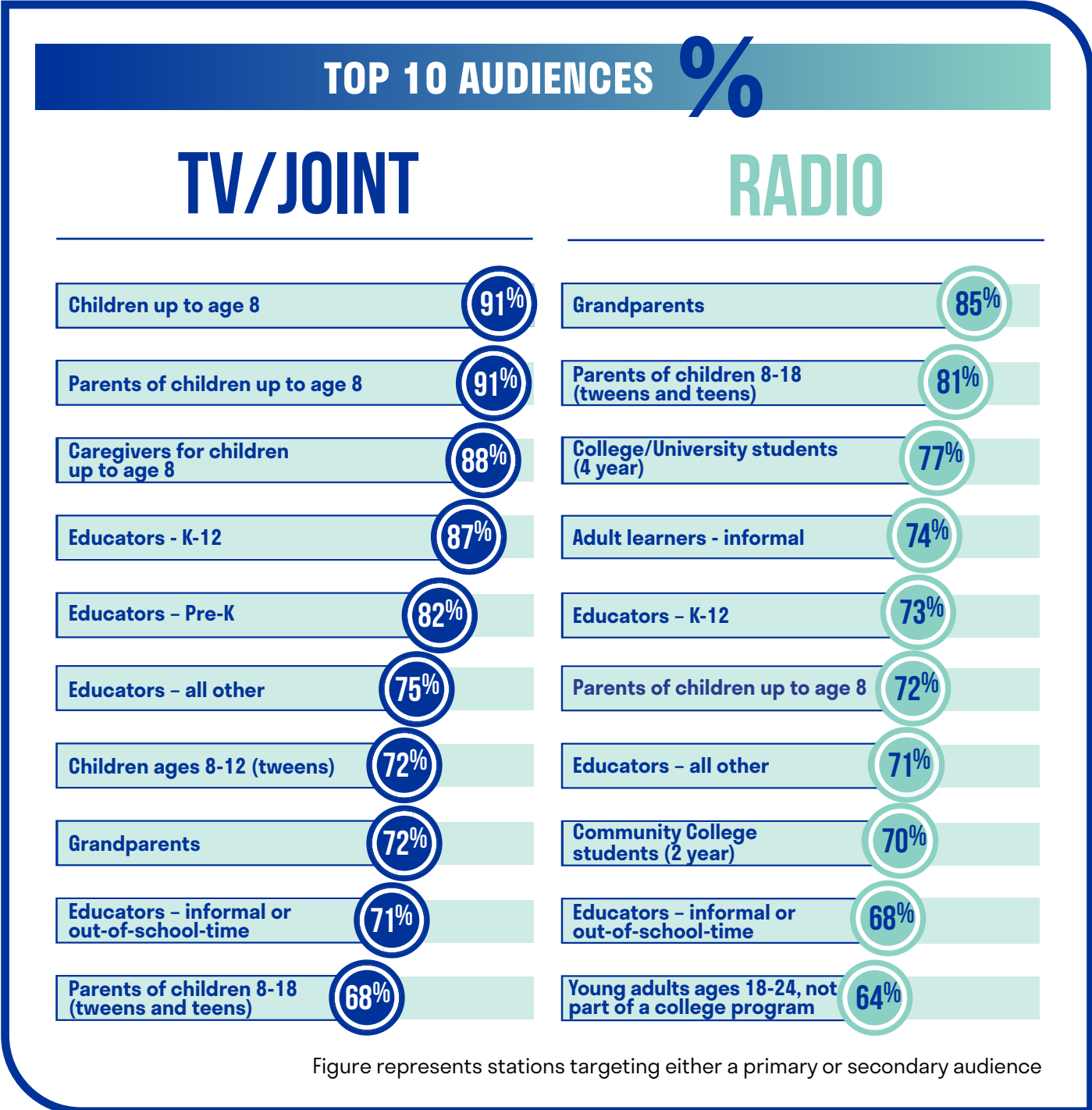


Figure represents stations targeting either a primary or secondary audience

WHO

Public media stations ensure equity through universal service and by targeting high-need, underserved populations.

Reaching **99%** of American households is a beginning—but access doesn't necessarily equal impact. Public media professionals must ensure that the programs and services people receive are well-matched to community-specific audiences and needs. Among the diverse audiences public media is reaching through its education efforts, the highest priority is high need, underserved populations.

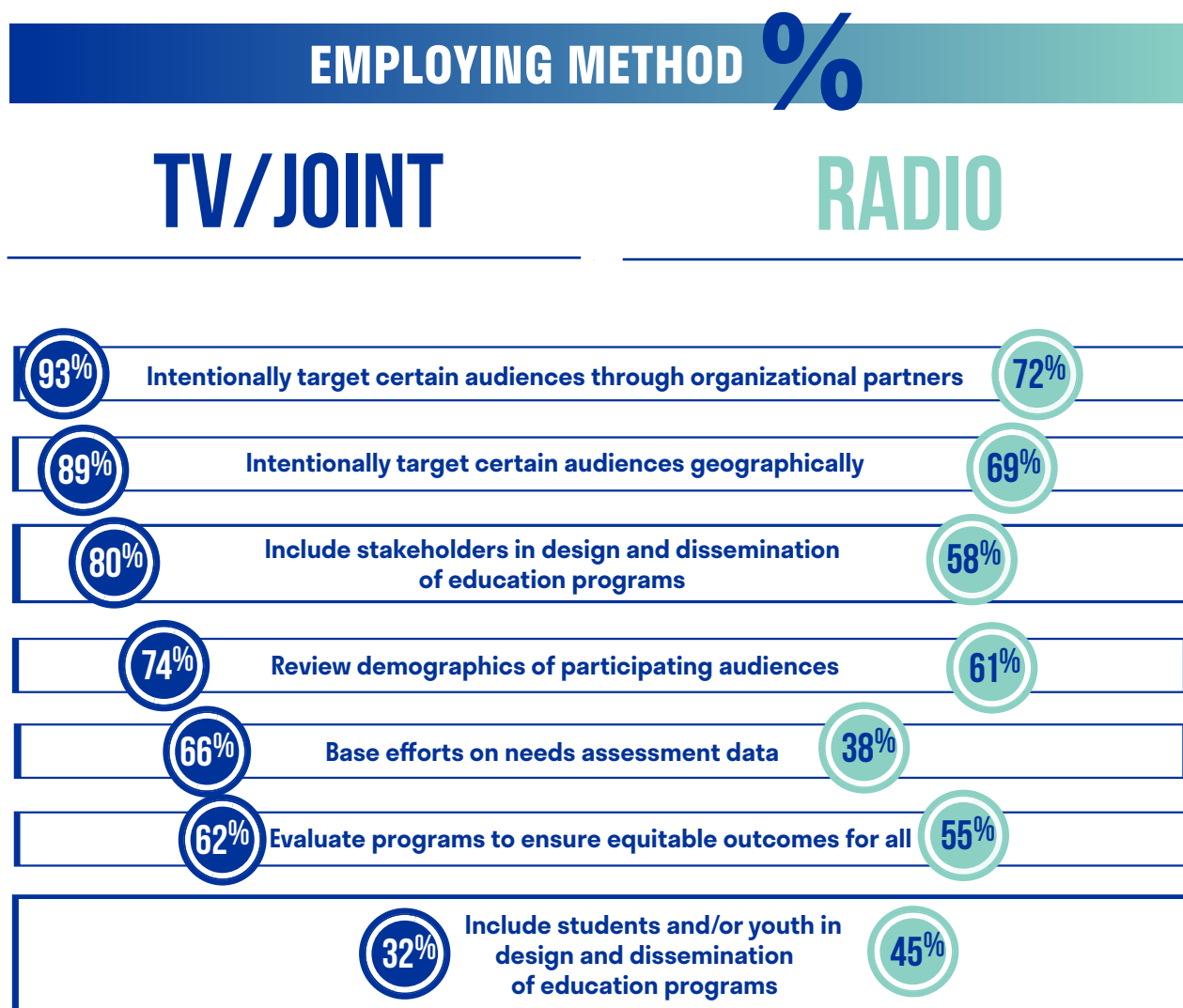
Guided by a complement of research-based strategies, public media professionals continue to evolve their practices as they study, serve, and support these audiences. For example, public media professionals regularly consult with individuals in these audiences to engage them in the design of new educational programs and products.

Needs-driven Efforts Continue

Television/Joint stations were asked to indicate the top three influences guiding their decisions about their education and learning-related work. In 2008, **48%** of stations reported that local, regional or national needs are among the top three influences that guide those decisions. That number grew to **59%** in 2015. Today, **66%** of stations report using needs assessment as a strategy to reach diverse and underserved audiences.



METHODS USED BY PUBLIC MEDIA TO REACH UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED AUDIENCES



Percentages reflect stations who indicated applying the strategy to their work either occasionally, regularly, or always.

WHAT

Public media's education work focuses on key disciplines including STEM, literacy, arts and journalism.

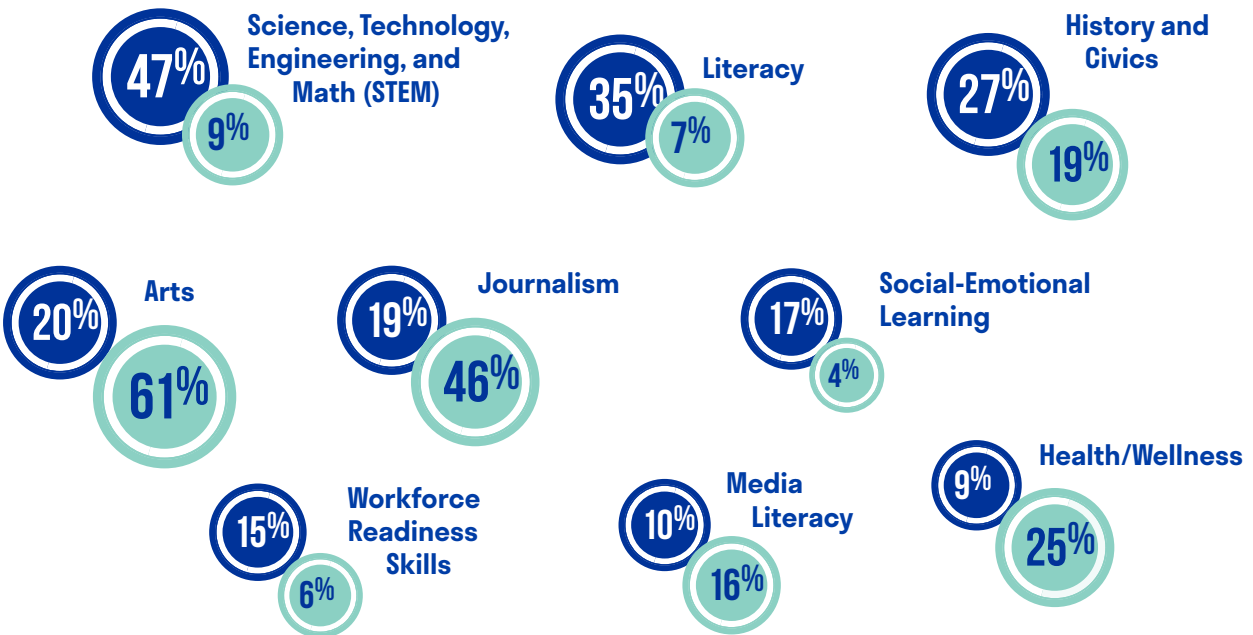
Public media professionals are expert when it comes to matching content to audience needs. Using inputs like the previously highlighted strategies—ongoing needs assessment, strategic partnerships, and continuous improvement through program evaluation—public media professionals successfully match audience and content, which heightens impact.

Survey respondents were asked to identify two content areas most frequently targeted by their education efforts. Results illustrate the rich diversity of content public media pursues—a diversity that acknowledges the complexity of human knowledge today, as well as the communities and audiences public media serves. It is not surprising that many public media stations are prioritizing around nationally-identified and locally-confirmed education content in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and literacy.

MOST FREQUENTLY TARGETED CONTENT AREAS %

TV/JOINT

RADIO





WHAT

Public media stations' education work illustrates its unique national-local structure.

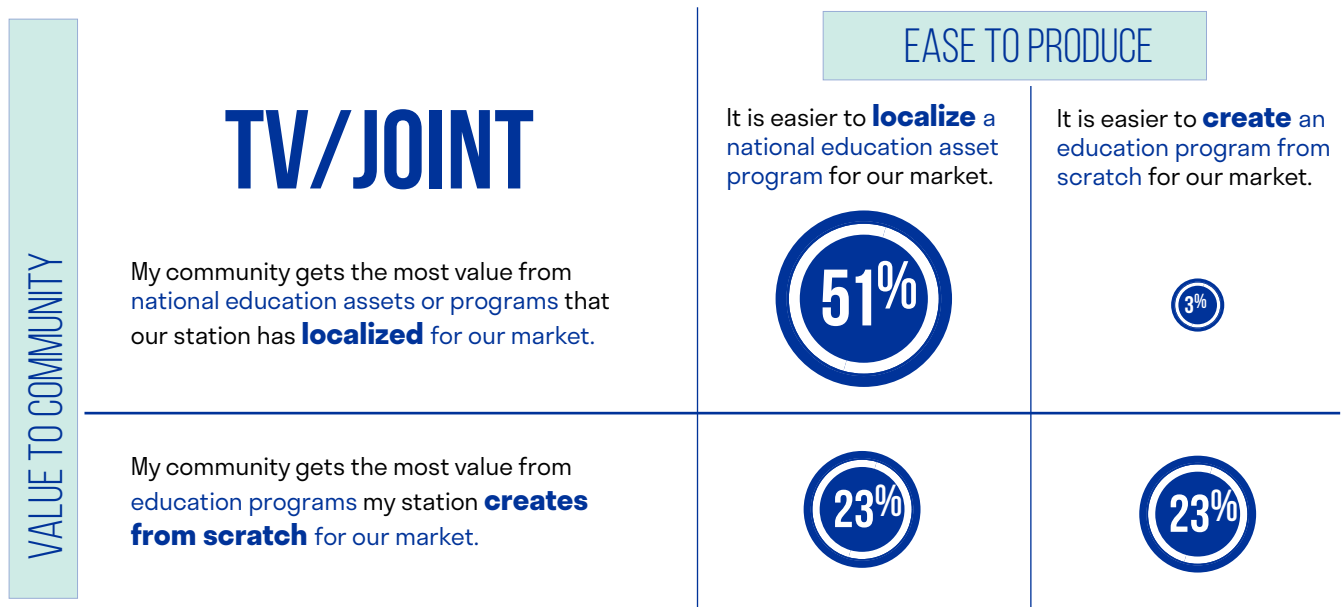
Programming that reflects the very community in which a public media station operates is what makes public media unique. Stations carry out this education work through diverse programs and products using a mix of technologies and delivery strategies.

Public media professionals rely on national education resources often localized by individual stations to best meet the needs of their targeted audiences. Complementing these nationally distributed resources are “home grown” programs developed within local stations.

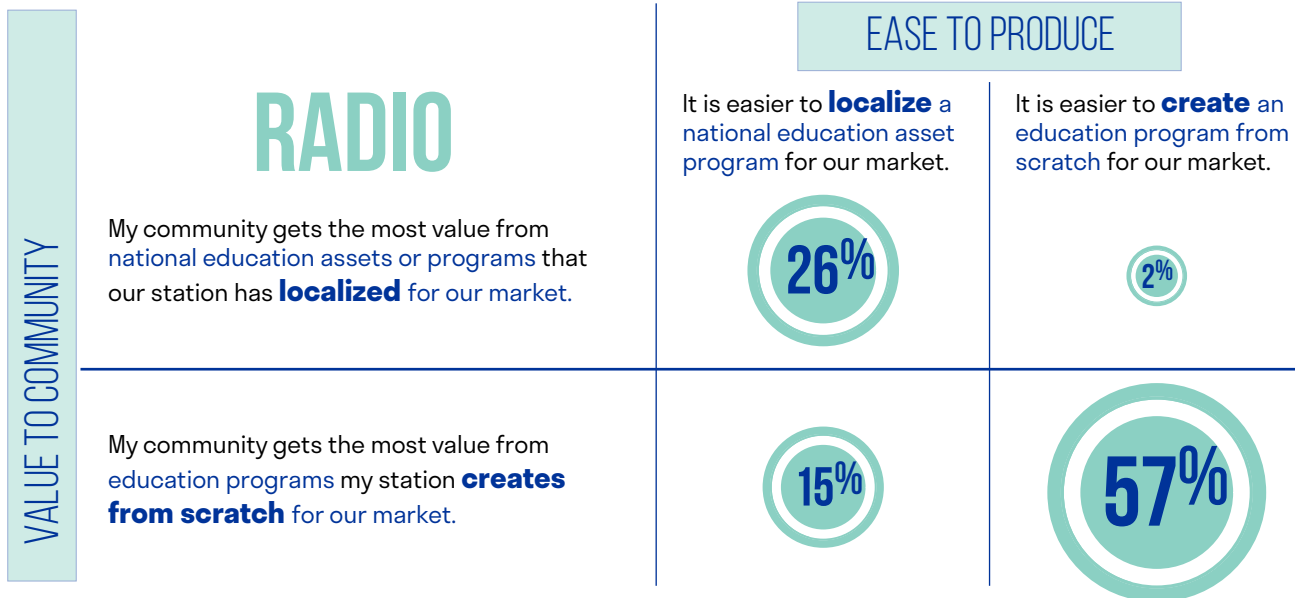
Decisions about whether to localize national content or create new education programming from scratch are based on community needs, available resources, and the opportunity to create new resources. By aligning programs to needs, public media professionals are working to address local challenges, and ensure the solutions delivered achieve the maximum impact.

Here again, success lies in finding the right “mix.” Public media professionals apply their community knowledge, education expertise, and delivery strategy savvy to find the right balance.

Respondents were asked to describe their primary practice in terms of localizing national education assets or producing content from scratch, and the community value derived from either practice. These figures depict the distribution of stations in each of the four possible quadrants.



Just over half (**51%**) of **television** and **television/joint** licensee respondents indicated it was easier to localize national content, and that this localized content provided the greatest value to the market. Almost all of the remaining stations indicated greater value from locally produced education programming (**46%**), but differed, almost equally, in whether it was easier to localize (**23%**) or produce education programs from scratch (**23%**).



Well over half of the **radio station** respondents (**72%**) indicated the greatest value comes from locally produced education programs. Here, most (**57%**) indicated it was easier to produce this content from scratch relative to localizing national content (**15%**). Just over one-quarter (**26%**) of respondents indicated it was easier to localize national assets, and that these localized assets provided the most value to their communities.



HOW

Public media uses a range of technologies and delivery mechanisms to reach audiences, sustain interest, and impact learning.

Today's broadcast technology reaches over **99%** of American households, ensuring equitable access regardless of location and socio-economic status.

Beyond broadcast technology, today's diverse complement of digital technologies provide unprecedented opportunities for public media professionals to reach established and new audiences alike. Blending technology with proven strategies that include training, events, and screenings, public media professionals are delivering education programming and services that are expertly tailored for a given audience.

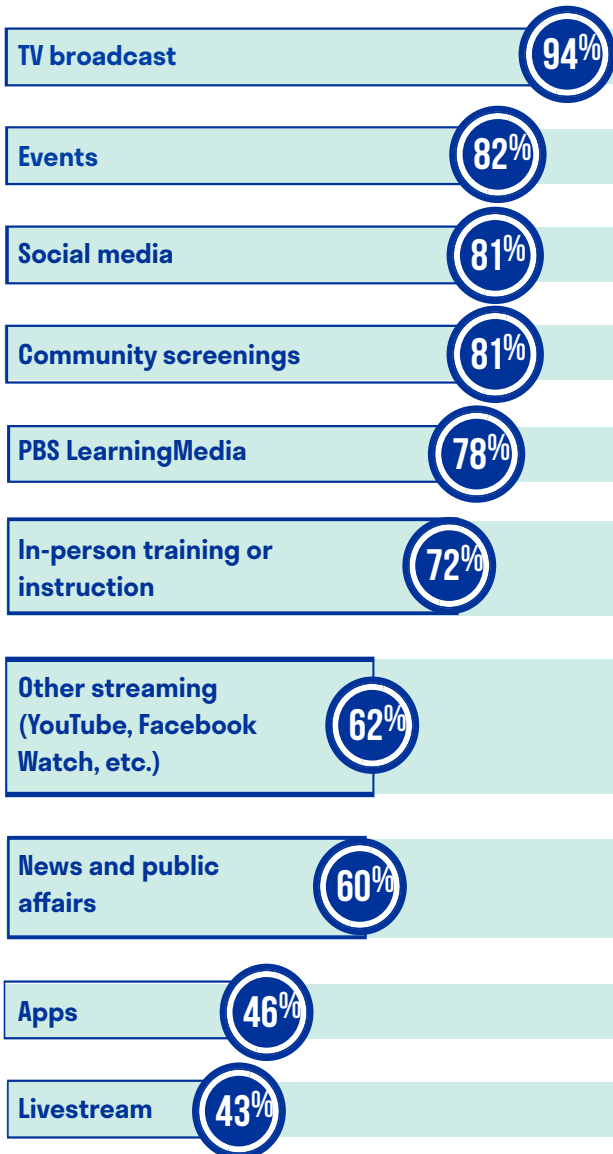
- **Broadcast** remains the most commonly used delivery technology, with **94%** of responding television/joint stations utilizing television broadcast, and **94%** of responding radio stations utilizing radio broadcast.
- **Television/joint (82%)** and **radio (60%)** stations are using in-person events to reach audiences and deliver education-related programs and services.
- On average, **television/joint stations** target **nine of the 19** queried delivery strategies (see adjacent figure).
- **Radio stations**, on average, target **five of the 19** queried delivery strategies—with news-focused radio stations targeting an average of six, and non-news focused radio stations an average of five.

Success in presenting effective education programs and services relies on the public media professional's expertise in diverse delivery strategies, audiences to be reached, and the careful blending of content and delivery to achieve desired results.



TOP 10 PLATFORMS AND FORMATS %

TV/JOINT



RADIO



HOW

Public media works with local partners to increase the reach and impact of education efforts in communities nationwide.

This report has described the research-based strategies public media employs to target diverse audiences and ensure education efforts result in meaningful impact. Public media professionals use strategic community partnerships for everything from helping to identify community needs, to collaborative program design and audience implementation.

K-12 schools or districts (**88%**), colleges/universities (**86%**), and public libraries (**83%**) are the three most frequently occurring partnerships that yield “some” or “high” value to television/joint stations.

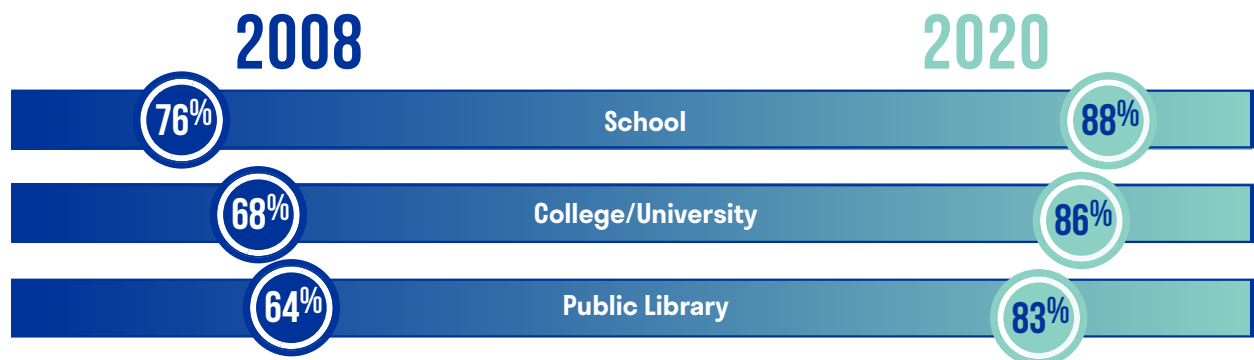
Arts organizations (**81%**), colleges/universities (**77%**), and state/local agencies (**61%**) are the three most frequently occurring partnerships that yield “some” or “high” value to radio licensees.

Of the 12 community partnership types listed on the survey, on average, television/joint stations derive “some” or “high” value from seven, and radio stations derive “some” or “high” value from six.

Partnerships amplify each organization’s contributions to the community and serve to increase the impact of the combined work.

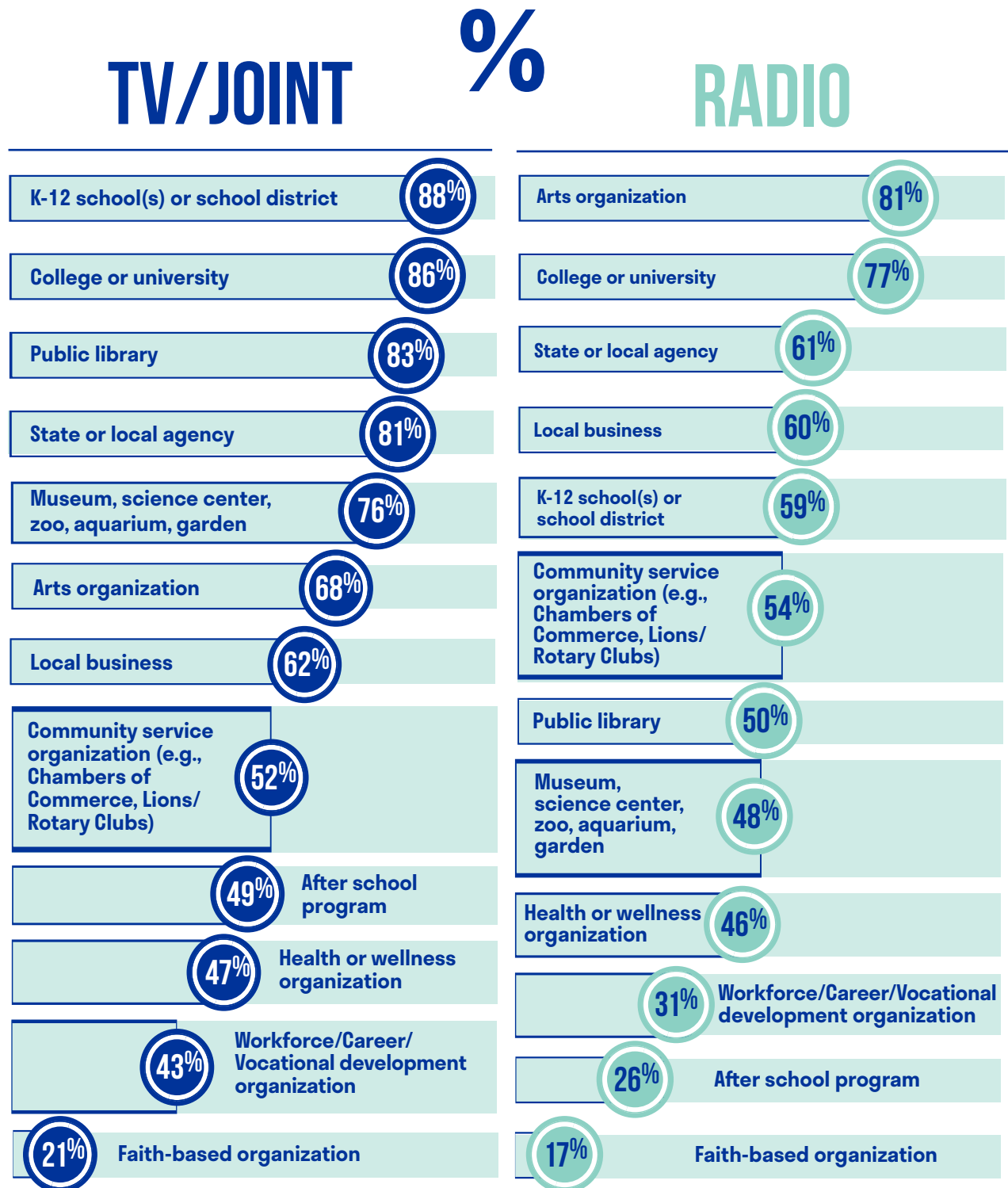
PARTNERSHIPS: THEN AND NOW

Investigating the prevalence of partnerships has been a key element in the education station surveys. The following table highlights the growth of three key partnerships over time, from 2008 to 2020, through data reported by television/joint stations.



PARTNERSHIPS EXTEND REACH AND AMPLIFY IMPACT

While this report focuses on the work of public media, it is important to recognize that this education work goes far beyond the station. This work demands deep collaboration with community partners, which allows public media to reach audiences, understand needs, provide programs, and amplify its impact.



HOW

Public media stations prioritize community needs, learning outcomes, and awareness when developing educational content and resources.

The success of public media's education work is dependent on many factors, including the commitment to understanding and being responsive to community needs and priorities.

While community needs strongly impact education efforts, there are additional, wide-ranging touchstones that guide and inform this education work. Funding, internal capacity, leadership within the station, and input from community stakeholders are among the many influencers that impact the design and presentation of any public media-produced education program or service.

But identifying a need and matching a program is only part of the process. Public media professionals are committed to understanding the impact of their education efforts and continuously improving the contributions they make to the communities they serve.

Station respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which various forces drive their education work. The most frequently indicated drivers were:

- To increase station's relevance/leadership in the community**
- To increase learning outcomes**
- To increase awareness of issues**

Public media professionals, above all else, are driven to sustain, and even increase, **their stations' relevance and leadership in the communities they serve**. This priority reflects the independently owned and locally operated nature of the work. Well-established across survey findings, local needs are a primary driver of public media's education work. Responding to each community's unique needs in measurable ways illustrates a key way public media works to remain relevant and provide leadership through its education work.

Increasing both **learning outcomes and awareness of issues** are also consistent drivers of public media's education work. This priority is well-matched to the original charge to develop public radio and television broadcasting for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes. For television respondents, education programs typically target learning outcomes, as reflected in content priorities that include literacy and STEM disciplines. For radio respondents, raising awareness of issues is reflected in stated content priorities that include journalism and the arts.



VARIOUS FORCES DRIVING EDUCATION WORK

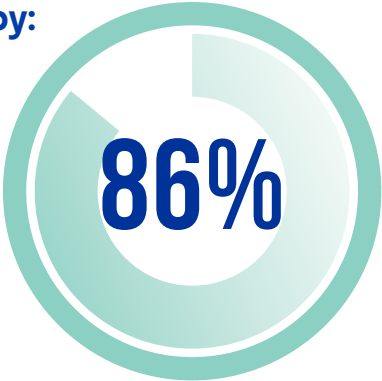
TV/JOINT

RADIO

Percentage of stations driven by:



- relevance/leadership
- learning outcomes
- awareness of issues



CONCLUSION

This report has presented a picture of public media's education work in communities throughout the United States. This includes, for the first time, an analysis of the education efforts of radio stations. Survey data has highlighted the **who**, **what**, and **how** of this important work, which can be summarized as follows.

WHO

The Who—reaching **99%** of American households, and educating people of all ages, and with a special emphasis on high need, underserved populations.

WHAT

The What—public media's unique blend of local/national content and community partnerships, expertly matched to audience need, and ranging from science and technology to journalism and the arts, and including both nationally-produced and locally-developed programming.

HOW

The How—Ensuring universal access through broadcasting, while blending existing modern technologies with tried and true face-to-face opportunities, orchestrated based on need, amplified by strategic partnerships, and in support of educating and informing.

Locally-owned and operated, non-profit public media outlets across America continue this education work in communities nationwide. A professional dedication to understanding community needs, quality educational content, and continuous improvement serves to increase the impact for each targeted audience.

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METHODOLOGY

The **2020 Survey of Station Education Work** documented the work of public media stations across the United States. The 26-item online instrument was developed in a collaboration between the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Dr. James Marshall of San Diego State University. The draft survey benefited from reviews by the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). Station general managers received an invitation and were asked to identify the person with the most knowledge of the station's education work to complete the instrument. Data was collected between December 2019 and January 2020.

A total of 343 survey responses were received, which represent a total of 426 public television and radio stations throughout the United States.



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