

The vision: A public media system that includes Latino voices, services and perspectives at every level of programming, production, distribution, leadership and management, and that includes and supports a strong Latino controlled public media.

■ 2007 Latino Public Radio Consortium

In the wake of several gatherings of public broadcasters concerned about under representation of Latinos in public radio's audiences, a small, diverse group of Latino public broadcasters assembled in Boulder this summer to consider strategies to significantly increase Latino use of public media. Those at the Boulder meeting convened by the National Federation of Community Broadcasters and supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, sought ways to build from today's public broadcasting record of limited initiatives directly relevant to potential Latino audiences.

The Boulder discussion recognized a number of realities:

- The underemployment of Latinos in the nation's public broadcasting institutions;
- The absence of Latino voices where decisions are made about the present and future of public broadcasting;
- The dearth of programming in English or in Spanish produced by Latinos or with a Latino focus in many of the nation's major markets, including some with high concentrations of Latino residents;

- And the resulting absence of Latinos among public radio's news and public affairs audiences.

The Boulder group reflected on the relevance of these factors to the future of public broadcasting: The nation's Latino population is diverse, burgeoning and youthful. Many public broadcasters – and the system as a whole -- cannot succeed in their public service mission if they fail to include Latino voices and perspectives. Locally, many stations cannot accurately reflect their communities if Latino voices do not populate their air.

The nation's Latino population, 44 million strong in 2006 according to U.S. Census Bureau projections, is no longer concentrated in a handful of border and industrial states. New frontiers of Latino population include states such as Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina and Iowa. Latino participation is essential to the legitimacy and success of the conversations about issues and policy that public broadcasters aim to foster at the local, regional and national levels.

"[Public broadcasting] should provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard... [And] help us see America whole in all its diversity."

■ 1967 Carnegie Commission Report

Four decades ago, Congress endorsed the Carnegie Commission's ambitious notion of creating a public electronic communications archipelago to reach out and serve all American communities.

Congress emphasized its intent when it declared in the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act that "it is in the public interest to encourage the development of programming that involves creative risks and that addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities..." When President Johnson signed the Act, the dream of unfettered access to a new democratic marketplace of ideas and storytelling seemed within reach.

Today, for tens of millions of Latinos nationwide, that conviction remains largely an abstraction.

The Boulder meeting participants agreed to form the Latino Public Radio Consortium, committed to seeking a national conversation around the vision of Latino inclusion at every level and in every function of the public radio system. The initial phase in that quest is to disseminate five precepts crucial to this vision:

1. Public Radio Must Accurately Target Latino Audiences

Latinos are a highly diverse population in the United States. Interest in cultural and informational programming among Latinos differs depending on primary language, country of birth, level of education, household income, and other factors.

Each of these segments must be served with distinct cultural and informational programming that is authentic – drawn from the reality of each of these communities, preferably by producers from within these very communities. Local, regional and national programming that serves such communities would be a crucial contribution to the strength of public radio. Such a diverse population necessitates the development and expansion of target-audience services in Spanish and in English.

To succeed, the public radio of the future must resemble a mosaic that reflects the diverse cultures and traditions that enrich this country and make it a model for all to emulate. The blueprints for creating a public radio system that integrates cultural diversity exist. Recognizing that about a third of the Latino population was under 18, some Latino public broadcasters have provided exceptional service to Latino youth audiences, recruiting and training producers and managers. The trained youth have been given access to studios as a platform to celebrate their culture and traditions while discussing issues and seeking solutions. These stations, led by Radio Arte in Chicago and including the indispensable models created by Puerto Rican public radio, are important resources for the public media system. National news and information services, led by Satellite Radio Bilingue, today cater to the needs of a diverse Spanish-speaking Latino community.

2. Spanish and English Programming Diversity is Necessary

Latinos in the United States cannot be universally served by any single format or in any single language. Their countries of origin exceed two dozen. Some have lived in the United States for decades and others are recent immigrants. English is the only language spoken by some Latinos. Others are bilingual, and others use Spanish as their sole method of communication. Latinos must be served by public radio programming in Spanish and in English.

Every week, well over one million Latinos are served by public radio. Some listen to National Public Radio's English-language news and information programs, including Morning Edition and All Things Considered. Some actively tune into Spanish-language news and information programs like Noticiero Latino and Satellite Bilingue, produced by Latino-controlled stations. Some are attracted to English-language audio magazines such as Latino USA, English-language music formats and music presented by Spanish-speaking DJ's. But most Latinos do not have access to public media in their community that directly addresses their needs and interests.

Many tools exist that can be part of a sophisticated strategy for increasing the numbers of Latino audiences in any given format.

- 1) Latino-controlled stations serving both Spanish-speaking and English-dominant Latinos have years of experience and wisdom to share.
- 2) Latino public radio professionals and producers are willing to share their expertise and programs.
- 3) Collaborations between general audience stations and Latino community organizations offer potential for fertile outreach.
- 4) Latino professionals have accumulated knowledge and experience in marketing to Latino consumers.
- 5) New technologies such as HD radio, pod casting and streaming offer portals in the quest for Latino audiences, which research has shown often are quick early adopters of new media.

The opportunities are as varied and diverse as are Latinos, so long as the doors to public radio are wide open to an environment that is inclusive and inviting.

3. Distribution is Key to Expanding Services for Latinos

The public radio system should support efforts to expand the reach of public radio by buttressing new meaningful streams targeting Latinos, using the same criteria -- free satellite distribution across our country -- that it supports with Satélite Radio Bilingue and Native Voice 1.

Support is needed for several streams of national and regional Latino programming. Satélite Radio Bilingüe has served as a model for providing national Latino programming, but just as for other demographic audience groups, additional

alternatives for production and sustainability need to be explored in order to address the multiple tastes and needs of this diverse national audience.

4. Increasing and Developing Capacity is Crucial

The public broadcasting system must afford the Latino community, starting with Latino controlled radio stations, the resources to enhance their capacity to serve their communities. It needs to value these institutions as valuable resources and accept them as partners in efforts to introduce Latinos to all of public broadcasting's roles.

The Carnegie Commission Report asserted that public broadcasting is responsible for "providing a voice for groups that may otherwise be unheard and help us see America whole in all its diversity."

The public radio stations that currently target Latino listeners generally do not fit the "mainstream" model in several important ways. Many serve primarily low-income communities and their financial support comes less from membership, major donors and underwriting and more from grants and events. Help is needed to develop funding models and methods that provide financial stability so that these stations can plan for and achieve growth. Support is needed to further develop the production and administrative capacity of these public radio stations.

A new generation of Latino producers must be trained. Research is needed to identify critical mass clusters within the Latino audience, such as Mexican or Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Central American, Cuban American and Latino youth, and to identify their unique preferences and concerns. Production centers at Latino controlled radio stations must also be organized and managed to be financially sustainable.

5. Community Engagement Gives Relevance to Public Radio

Public broadcasting should be a good listener in reaching out to the Latino communities if it's to serve them meaningfully.

Latinos feel underserved and misrepresented by public media. The current public radio system needs to recognize this with humility. In order to rejuvenate itself, it must energetically beseech diverse audiences to engage, not as listeners, but as participants who create programming that is reflective of them. Demonstrating a sincere desire to serve these communities will create acceptance among Latinos and engender among them a desire to support public radio.

Consistent with our public media mission, Public Radio should strive to be a significant institution

in the communities we serve, relevant to the major population sectors. In these largely underserved communities, public radio's brand of substantive cultural, news and information services has the potential for huge meaningful impact. A crucial first step towards making our institutions and our services significant to the Latino community is the ability to identify issues relevant to these communities. This requires an internal assessment of how public radio stations throughout the country can identify such issues, and external outreach activities focused on creating community engagement and participation.

Steps to a New Reality

Institutions such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, private foundations, corporations, along with individual philanthropists must make strategic investments that enable the public broadcasting system to respond meaningfully to these realities. Steps are needed to fund a public radio system that encourages diversity and that reaches beyond the audiences that have traditionally sustained public broadcasting. The public radio system needs to be bold in creating initiatives that establish opportunities for Latino managers, producers and youth. This investment will cultivate support by Latino participants and the larger Latino community.

With this document, the work of the Latino Public Radio Consortium enters a new stage. The group recognizes that a high level of leadership and coordination will be crucial to the future of its quest. Its next step, then, is to turn to CPB for support in helping public broadcasting evolve along with the nation's new realities.

Statistics to Consider

The nation's Latino population, with a growth surge of approximately 23% from 2000 to 2006, comprised 14.7% of the total population in 2006. And the Latino community is expected to continue growing steadily. The 50-million Latino population projected by 2010 by the U.S. Census Bureau is expected to more than double by 2050, when it is projected to comprise 28% of the U.S. population at an estimated 122 million individuals. The Latino population is no longer concentrated in a handful of border and industrial states. According to the Pew Hispanic Center's 2006 Latino National Survey, states such as Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina and Iowa "are emerging as the new frontier for the Latino population." Latinos are important players in just about every major public affairs and political challenge facing the nation – from immigration to education, employment, religion, housing, criminal justice and even the U.S. military forces overseas. Latino participation is essential to the legitimacy and success of the conversations about issues and policy that public broadcasters aim to foster at the local, regional and national levels.

- By 2010 the Latino population is projected to reach 50 million –16% of the nation's total.

- 56% of Latinos identify Spanish as their language of comfort.
- 23% of Latinos are bicultural.
- 67% of Latinos are Mexicans.
- The majority of Latinos are under the age of 25.

Increasing Latino Public Radio Audiences

As public radio seeks new territories from which to gather larger audiences, the current size and projected growth of the Latino population make it a potential target. Many tools exist that can be part of a sophisticated strategy for increasing the number of Latino audiences in any given format.

- Identify the segment of the Latino community you'd like to attract to your station
- Consult with Latino-controlled stations with years of experience serving both Spanish-speaking and English-dominant Latinos.
- Survey existing programming for, by and about Latinos to determine which serve your proposed segment.
- Consult with marketing professionals who are familiar with the Latino market. Latino professionals have accumulated knowledge and experience in marketing to Latino consumers.
- Seek out Latino public radio professionals, producers and consumers willing to share their expertise and programs.
- Collaborations between general audience stations and Latino community organizations offer potentially fertile outreach.
- New technologies such as HD radio, pod casting and streaming offer portals in the quest for Latino audiences, which research has shown are quick early adopters of new media in some demographic groupings.
- Utilize Latino professionals as spokespersons and expert commentators on a variety of issues, including "non-Latino" topics.
- Partner with Latino print media or television to cross-promote those aspects of your programming that may appeal to Latinos

Community Significance and Outreach: Engaging the Community

"Communications for social change requires community participation in identifying target audiences and in defining communications needs. It empowers people and liberates their ideas. It enables people to tell previously unheard stories. It creates ways to share information. It can foster long-term improvement in the lives of people and communities." (Forging Strategies for the 21st Century, Rockefeller Foundation.)

Consistent with our public media mission, Public Radio should strive to be a significant institution in the communities we serve, relevant to the major population sectors. This aspect of our mission is particularly crucial when serving Latino communities, which are woefully underserved by commercial broadcast media.

In these largely underserved communities, public radio's brand of substantive cultural and news and information services has the potential for huge meaningful impact. But this contribution to the civic life of these communities can be realized only if these services are offered in ways that are relevant to the community.

The kinds of activities that have successfully engaged Latino communities with their public media institutions cover a wide range. Here are some examples:

- Broadcast radio programs directly from community centers, libraries, museums, shopping centers, and other appropriate venues.
- Take folk, traditional and classical music to the community with free concerts.
- Create partnerships with local musicians and artists that reflect the cultural diversity of communities.
- Have radio personalities MC the events and promote radio programming on air and at the events.
- Provide workshops on topics such as script-writing, acting techniques, announcer's protocol, and allow the community to identify what their issues are and how best to address them.
- Work with local youth groups and schools by training them to become radio hosts and produce programming.
- Radio 101 – Invite the community to the station to learn more about how the radio station works and all the technology and manpower involved in order for the final product to reach the air waves.
- Contests – Offer the community the opportunity to be a guest of one of the productions by participating in a contest.
- Visits to Senior Citizens and Community Centers
- Culture 101– Invite professional musicians to offer small workshops on folk and traditional arts, classical and cultural music, famous musicians, history of folk and traditional arts, classical and cultural music, and the importance of keeping these traditions alive.
- Lend a helping hand, working with the community in painting their local park, planting flowers, providing them a platform to have their voices heard or other things.
- Show model Latinos in engaged in positive civic life
- Broadcast free Public Service Announcements or Community Calendars

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