

# CHARTING THE TERRITORY

---

## A Call to Plan

January 2001

In 2001 the Station Resource Group will launch a major initiative to chart public radio's public service opportunities across the coming years. Our intent is to develop a multi-year strategy that is anchored in service goals, that addresses financing issues, and that anticipates structural evolution. Our hope is that this effort, Charting the Territory, will inform and inspire individuals and organizations throughout our field and stimulate the private investment and public support needed to make the vision real.

### THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING

Many factors argue for this focus at this time. Principal among them:

- Steady transformation of the media environment in which we work presents both dramatic new opportunities for us to pursue and recurring challenges to public radio's role within our communities and the nation.
- A new administration in the White House and new leaders who are emerging on Capitol Hill pose both opportunities and risks in the federal funding and regulatory framework for public radio.
- Public radio's primary networks are evolving toward direct service to the public through satellite broadcasting, the Internet, and other channels, reshaping the delivery and economic architecture of the system.
- The start-up of Public Radio Capital is opening new methods to finance expansion of the delivery pipeline for public radio and the availability of more services across the country.

New technologies, rapid changes in the array of service options, and an almost exponential increase in opportunities for media use are contributing to a radical expansion of message and program service opportunities between the media and the public. Control and ownership of media are changing as well.

On the one hand, individual users and interest groups see an ever unfolding array of pathways through which to communicate and a steadily increasing range of options for

customizing and filtering the content they consume and disseminate. On the other hand, ownership and control of the nation's primary electronic delivery channels and the dominant sources of electronic content are collapsing into an ever smaller number of media companies. Consolidation in broadcast radio is but one example of this trend.

Public radio must craft its particular role over the next decade within the larger context of electronic media, both commercial and noncommercial. Ownership and control issues must be addressed in terms of public broadcasting's special obligations

SRG brings a fundamental assumption to this work: that locally-controlled, nonprofit media institutions are a necessary building block to assure diversity of services and viewpoints in our nation's public service media mix. SRG will examine public radio's place in the evolving media environment through the lens of the station community, a perspective that has been largely missing from discussions that look to future public media services and a perspective that must be incorporated into a viable plan for public broadcasting.

Public radio can look back upon three decades of growing service to, recognition by, and value for the public. Our successes to date, however, should neither define nor limit our vision of service for the future. As we look forward, SRG believes it is possible and necessary for public radio to draw on the combined strength of our national and local media institutions to serve more Americans with a greater depth of service.

SRG will assure that this initiative is closely matched to the planning needs of stations and other public radio organizations. We will consult broadly to identify core research and policy agendas before fully launching the effort. We will shape a planning process that will produce innovative thinking and credible outcomes to inform our collective future.