

Diversity

An Excerpt from
**Public Radio in the
New Network Age**

The Report and Recommendations of the
Public Radio Audience Growth Task Force

grow the audience
for public radio



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Public Radio in the New Network Age

PUBLIC RADIO IN THE NEW NETWORK AGE presents findings and recommendations from GROW THE AUDIENCE, a broad-based effort to shape shared strategies, compelling goals, and results-oriented plans that will deepen the value and widen the use of public radio.

GROW THE AUDIENCE was initiated and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The Station Resource Group provides ongoing leadership for the GROW THE AUDIENCE initiative. SRG assembled and supported the Public Radio Audience Growth Task Force, prepared this report, and will work to turn the recommendations into action.

George Bailey, of Walrus Research, served as research director for GROW THE AUDIENCE and prepared in-depth quantitative and statistical analyses that informed the Task Force and others in drafting the recommendations presented here.

Professionals and lay leaders throughout public media have contributed their views – in working groups and advisory teams, personal interviews, correspondence, and at conferences and board meetings of public radio’s national organizations. The project also sought views from academia, philanthropy, and public policy advocates. These many contributors are acknowledged at the end of the report.

Research reports, essays, and other project materials can be found at the GROW THE AUDIENCE website:

www.srg.org/GTA

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Station Resource Group is a membership organization of leading public media organizations. SRG’s focus is strategy, analysis, policy, and innovation.

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Diversity

Deepen the value of public radio for all its audiences by strengthening the diversity of voices and views in public radio’s news and music programming, by encouraging multiple, differentiated services that reach a wider range of listeners, and by making continued investments in stations and programming developed and controlled by people of color.

The founding visions of public radio – from antecedents in educational broadcasting and the Pacifica Foundation to the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act and the initial mission statement of National Public Radio – all spoke to pluralism, diversity, and inclusiveness.

Public radio will deepen its value to current listeners and increase its accessibility to millions of listeners now at the edge of its audience by increasing the inclusiveness of its work and the authenticity of the voices, views, and cultures it presents.

While there are many dimensions to America’s diversity and pluralism, this section of PUBLIC RADIO IN THE NEW NETWORK AGE focuses on race and ethnicity. We challenge public radio to commit to a greater inclusiveness of people of color in every dimension – the governance of stations and national organizations, the hiring of management and programming staff, and the voices, views, stories, and music of day-to-day programming.

Inclusiveness is an expression of public radio core values, such as reflecting our world and our communities, providing authentic voices and lifelong learning, and offering a spirit of idealism. We and our listeners should expect inclusiveness in all our work, especially our most important, most listened-to services.

One direction of momentum is toward an inclusiveness of views, voices, and perspectives in all that public radio presents. The Latino Public Radio Consortium’s *Brown Paper* calls for

“. . . a public media system that includes Latino voices, services and perspectives at every level. The public radio system needs to be bold in creating initiatives that establish opportunities for Latino managers, producers and youth.” *Florence Hernández-Ramos, Project Director, Latino Public Radio Consortium*

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Loris Taylor of Native Public Media writes:

“These are exciting times to repurpose our role as media architects for a new America and to redesign our Public Service Media in a way that sounds and looks more like you and me.”

Hernández-Ramos and Taylor speak to inclusion, at least in part, from a perspective of empowerment, and self-realization. Increasingly, though, inclusion is an expectation of the broader audience – it is the reality of how we live our lives.

Veteran public radio news executive Bill Buzenberg, who now heads the Center for Public Integrity, asserts:

“The best way to make sure the audience is as diverse as our nation as a whole is to build that diversity into everything public radio does: into every drive-time program, every program staff, and every story topic; in short, every input and every output. Getting that coverage right—from diverse angles with a diverse on-air and off-air staff—is the best approach. My view is that this can only strengthen the nation and public radio.”

A strategy for diversity *and* audience growth requires close attention to audience needs, behavior, and values, creative use of multiple services and formats, and a willingness to experiment and learn.

A more inclusive and diverse sound to public radio’s programming will lead to a different audience – perhaps in small ways, perhaps in larger ones. But different, that’s pretty much a sure thing. Whether the audience will also grow is a gamble that most of the system leaders with whom we have spoken are prepared to take – although most seem convinced that growth will be a result as well.

Relative to the proportion of African-Americans in the general population, African-Americans are only about 80 percent as likely to be found in public radio’s weekly audience. The comparable number for Hispanics is 42 percent. (Source: *Profile 2008*, NPR Audience Insight and Research). Asians are more likely to be in the public radio audience, 11 percent more than their presence in the general population. Data for Native Americans in this study are too limited for reliable statistics.

When GROW THE AUDIENCE drilled down to look more closely at the **amount of listening** by different groups and the performance of different formats, the disparities are more significant and the story gets more complicated.

As we look to create a public radio audience that “looks more like America,” it is important to consider the advice we heard from numerous researchers and analysts: that race and ethnicity are limited tools in programming development and that public radio should give close attention to values, lifestyles, and interests as it pursues goals of inclusiveness and diversity.

Sustain current investments in station operations and programming owned and controlled by people of color. Increase the number of stations controlled by people of color.

Public radio has made significant ongoing investments in station ownership and control by people of color as one strategy to assure a diverse overall service. Loris Taylor of Native Public Media writes passionately in support of “the self determination of our own media destiny as a people.” The *Brown Paper* envisions a public media system “that includes and supports a strong Latino-controlled public media.”

Many of the public radio stations controlled by people of color have limited visibility in the public radio industry. Yet these stations play a larger role than many realize in achieving public radio’s current overall level of diversity. Going forward, leaders from these stations can bring the knowledge and needs of their respective communities to a broader system discussion.

Our recommendations follow the lines of the three broad strategies outlined above:

- Inclusiveness and accessibility in public radio’s news
- Multiple stations with focused and differentiated service
- Ownership and control by people of color

Inclusiveness in Public Radio News

Public radio’s pursuit of greater inclusion must extend to the core of public radio’s identity – beginning with the most successful programs and stations in communities with the largest numbers of people of color. This requires a careful shift in the character and appeal of public radio’s most listened-to national programming, parallel change at stations (especially those with the largest audiences), and investments in innovative programming efforts.

The potential impact of realizing greater inclusiveness and diversity at our most successful stations in those markets with the largest communities of color is easy to grasp. Major news stations like WAMU (Washington), WNYC (New York), WBUR (Boston), KPCC (Los Angeles), WLRN (Miami), and KQED (San Francisco) already reach large numbers of African-American and Latino listeners, the only two racial/ethnic groups measured by Arbitron.

These stations have large overall audiences and are located in markets with large numbers of African-Americans, Latinos, and other racial and ethnic groups of significant size. If the appeal of their respective services tilted even modestly more in the direction of these constituencies, the collective results would be significant.

This is a bold direction for public radio and not without risk. It is our clear sense, however, that it is where the leaders of these stations and many others are ready to go.

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“It’s not just reporting *on* the story, it’s how we define what the story is and who we reference for a perspective. Even if our audience was the same tomorrow as it is today, we have to create these connections with our community to execute good journalism.” *Dean Cappello, Chief Creative Officer, WNYC, New York*

“We need more serious resolve and effort to recruit new voices to our organizations, to bring different views and skills into the station and onto the air. We have to diversify staff, especially on air, to better reflect our community and incorporate new perspectives on life.” *Robert Peterson, Administrative Manager, KWMU, St. Louis*

How does this change happen? The themes that surface repeatedly in GROW THE AUDIENCE conversations center on community connection, tone, and sensibility – the composite effect of how we tell a story and the stories we choose to tell; who we pick as experts and the reference points in our analogies and metaphors; announcing style, pacing, and vocabulary; the artists and songs we choose for interstitial music – all the things that make some people feel “this is me” and others feel “this is someone else.”

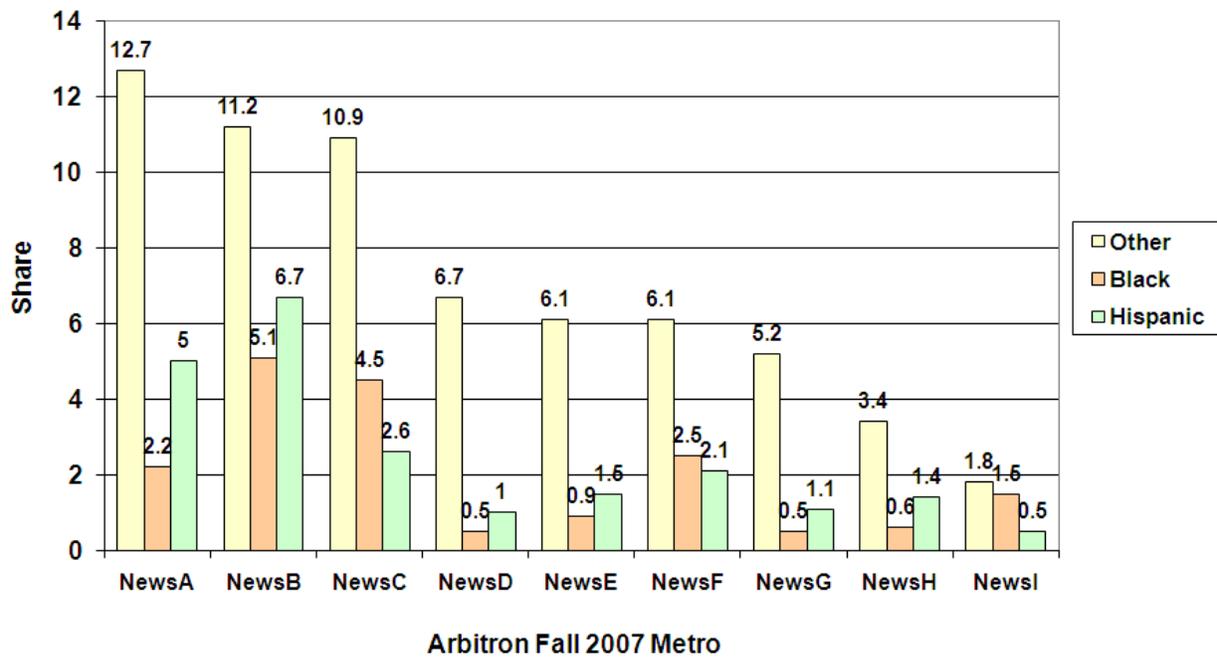
Loretta Rucker, of the African-American Public Radio Consortium, parsed the point this way:

“First and foremost is the issue of presentation. Second, even those educated African-American opinion-leaders who listen to public radio’s primary news programs feel that there are not enough stories and voices that reflect their communities in the mix. And third, there is the issue of perspective. People of color in general make a distinction between a generic host or guest (who may or may not be of color) and those with the express purpose of expressing the perspectives of their communities. Both are appreciated, but the distinction is clear.”

Beyond Tone and Sensibility. Henry Cisneros, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, recently spoke to Public Radio in Mid-America (PRIMA) about the critical role public radio can and should play in actively breaking down and through media representations of different racial and ethnic groups that contribute to persistent negative stereotyping in our culture. Native Public Media’s Loris Taylor writes, “In the absence of alternative representations and broadened news coverage, one-sided portrayals easily become the reality in the minds of our audiences. Public media is a medium of trust and a solid foundation upon which to expand a communications and information network that lifts up and educates audiences across the board of our rich diversity.”

Understanding Current Patterns. To understand where we begin, GROW THE AUDIENCE examined the pattern of listening across Arbitron’s three measured racial/ethnic categories – Blacks, Hispanics, and Others. Knowing that the strongest predictor of public radio listening is education, and that educational attainment differs by race and ethnicity, we “held constant” for education and examined listening by college graduates.

**Share Of Radio Listening – News Stations
Black, Hispanic and Other College Grads**



This chart shows the share of listening by college graduates to nine public radio **news stations** in the nation’s largest markets. For example, station “News A” at the left captured 12.7 percent of all radio listening by college-educated Other listeners in their market, 2.2 percent of the total listening by Black college grads, and 5 percent of the listening by Hispanic grads. There is a clear overall pattern: the share of listening among “Other” listeners (mostly White) exceeds the shares of listening among Black and Hispanic listeners by very large margins.

Within the broad pattern there are also important station-to-station differences. The share-of-listening chart above is based on a single survey period and we recommend further exploration and analysis before drawing conclusions about individual station performance. With more data and scrutiny of both the stations and the markets, it should be possible to identify key factors and successful tactics for inclusion and diversity that could then be shared.

Signature National Programs. The programming success and the audience appeal of public radio’s news stations and news-and-music stations reflect a partnership of local and national efforts. For most of these stations, a handful of national programs accounts for a huge portion of listening and profoundly shapes the stations’ appeal. In Los Angeles, for example, about half the total listening to both KPCC

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(news) and KCRW (news and music) is to NPR's weekday and weekend news magazines. For public radio's news stations to realize a shift in their appeal to more people of color, it will take changes in the national programming they present in their most important hours of the day.

Public radio's signature national programs not only generate a large percentage of overall listening for news and news-and-music stations, they also are the beneficiaries of perhaps 10 percent of public radio's total economy, with numbers approaching \$100 million flowing on an annual basis from stations, business sponsors, foundations, and individual donors.

New Programming. Different programming causes different listeners to listen. We recommend investments in program innovation at both the local and national level – prototyping, testing, and developing programs and formats that explore different styles and sensibilities with the aim of greater appeal to audiences of color. This effort must be mindful that race and ethnicity are limited tools in programming development and give close attention to the values, lifestyles, and interests that will define the programming and those who respond to it.

In designing and developing such programming, it is important to take aim at the most important times on stations' schedules as well as the more common strategy of offering options for off-peak hours. As discussed in more detail in the following section, "The News," public radio has opportunities to pursue meaningful differentiation of audience appeal *within* the broader news franchise. That will happen in the most meaningful ways as stations have strong, compelling programming with which to anchor their service in prime times.

New People. GROW THE AUDIENCE has heard time and again that success in achieving inclusiveness goals in public radio's programming turns on greater inclusiveness among those who create the programming. In New York, Maxie Jackson, WNYC's Senior Director for Program Development, designed an aggressive approach to match mission and the people in assembling the production team for the new program *The Takeaway*. WNYC advertised with organizations that included the Asian American Journalist Association, Spelman College, Native American Journalist Association, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, South Asian Journalist Association, and WNYC.org. Hires were made based on criteria that included journalistic expertise, work ethic, intellectual curiosity, and openness to new media. The result is one of the most diverse production teams in public radio.

"Coalitions of the Committed." We recommend a focused and collaborative initiative to increase the accessibility of public radio's major formats to people of color through institution-changing, appeal-shifting efforts by committed and ready stations with the largest audiences in markets with the largest populations of African-Americans and Latinos and similar efforts by national producers to increase their service and value to people of color. This initiative should include managed, multi-year projects that involve learning, change, and mutual accountability.

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Such efforts might be similar to the Station Resource Group’s Leaders’ Partnership that created public radio’s first collective efforts in major gifts fundraising. Or the Public Radio Internet Station Alliance (PRISA), through which a half dozen stations worked together exploring early online activities. In these examples, the participating stations shaped their agenda as the project unfolded, drew resources from both in the field and outside experts, committed to sharing what they learned, and presented their progress, problems, and results to each other in an atmosphere of mutual accountability.

Effective “inclusiveness coalitions” will require support for:

- Audience research to explore such issues as the current patterns of information consumption among target African-American and Latino listeners, broader patterns of media use, and responses to programming changes over time.
- Advisors from outside public media who can help with planning and implementing change in governance and workforce development, drawing on successful efforts elsewhere in the nonprofit sector and in business.
- Program innovations both at individual stations in their local efforts and for larger initiatives that could be used nationally.
- Managing the connections among those participating in the initiatives to realize efficiencies in finding outside knowledge and advisors and to foster a shared sense of work and accountability.

Multiple Stations, Differentiated Services

Increase the number of markets in which public radio presents its strongest formats over different stations, each with a focused and differentiated service.

Achieving changes in the inclusiveness and diversity of public radio’s large-market news stations would have an important impact on the overall field. But public radio has other strong options as well. GROW THE AUDIENCE also examined the patterns of listening by Blacks, Hispanics, and Others to public radio’s classical stations and jazz stations. These analyses produced significant differences in the response of the different racial/ethnic groups, but in different patterns than we saw for news.

- Among seven large-market **classical stations** we examined, the pattern is that the classical format, whether public or commercial, can attract Hispanic college grads along with Others – in some cases with near-equal shares – but its appeal to Black listeners who are college graduates is limited.

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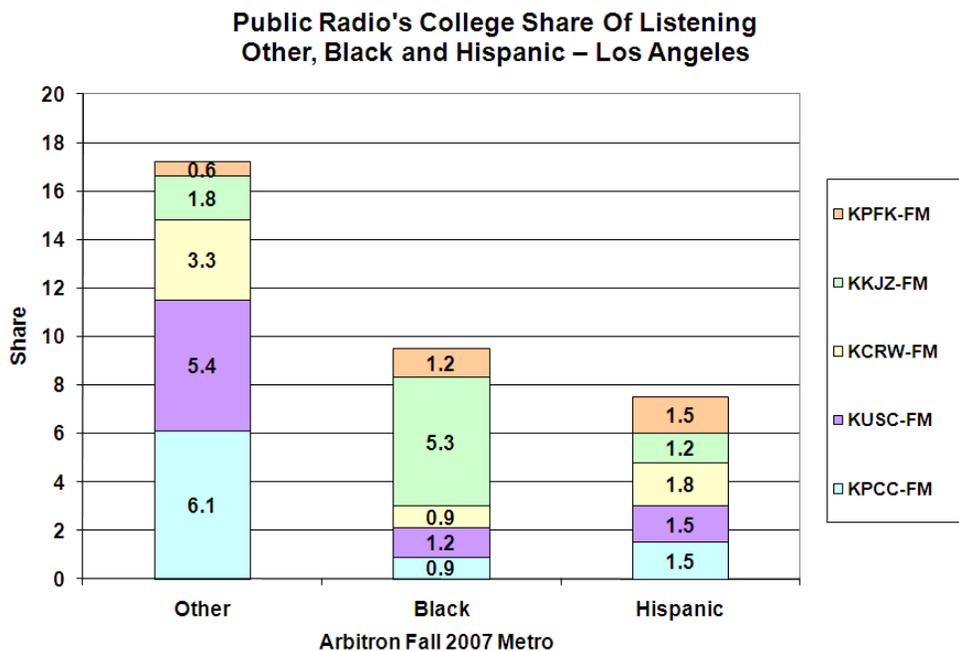
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- Among seven large-market **jazz stations**, the pattern is much higher shares among Black college grads than are found among Hispanic and Other college-educated listeners, with most stations claiming about equal shares of listening from the latter two groups.

Other music services, such as AAA, have their own distinctive patterns of audience appeal as well.

The classical and jazz findings point toward a second key element in an overall strategy for audience diversity – the **importance of multiple stations with different formats in realizing audience diversity goals**. Different programming causes different listeners to listen. Encouraging multiple public radio services in as many markets as can support them, and, equally important, encouraging meaningful differentiation of the services offered by each of them, will increase audience diversity.

This principle is illustrated in the following example from Los Angeles, one of the most diverse major markets in the country. It is important to note that this chart shows a single survey period, Fall 2007. Individual station data might look different if several surveys were combined and as more recent changes in the market are reflected. The important information is the broad pattern.



This chart shows the pattern of public radio's service to college graduates in Los Angeles through multiple stations and multiple formats in Fall 2007.

- Listening by college-educated Other listeners is driven by news KPCC, classical KUSC, and news-and-music KCRW.

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- Over half of all public radio listening by college-educated Black listeners in LA is to jazz station KKJZ.
- Listening by college-educated Hispanics is spread across all five public radio stations, with no one of them achieving a real breakthrough to this audience.

Another lesson from Los Angeles is that even with its different stations and different formats, and even focusing just on college-educated listeners, where we would expect public radio's performance to be strongest, shares of listening by African-American listeners and by Hispanic listeners are dramatically less than shares of listening by Others.

Public radio should also look beyond news, classical, and jazz to other formats that might hold a greater appeal for African-Americans, Latinos, and/or younger listeners. In Los Angeles CPB is currently supporting a project that aims to create a new sound and media resource that will appeal to a younger, urban, English-language and majority Latino demographic that itself is highly diverse in terms of education, class, home culture, and language. In Chicago, WBEZ's *Vocalo.com* is letting the listening community both define and produce the news. In Milwaukee, WYMS continues to refine a contemporary-music-based service under the banner "diverse music for a diverse city." These and other efforts at innovation are all at the edges of the current system and there are, as yet, no "breakthroughs" in audience service to report.

Diversity of Ownership and Control

Continue investments in operations and programming of stations owned and controlled by people of color, increase their number, and strengthen their programming performance.

A central, long-standing theme in public radio's collective work to shape a diverse service has been a commitment to station ownership and control by people of color. Over the years CPB and others have fostered development of 75 CPB-supported stations at which the majority of those governing the licensee organization and a majority of the staff are African Americans (31), Latinos (11), Native Americans (29), or a combination of the foregoing (4). With broad support from the public radio system, CPB provides these stations with larger basic annual grants than other stations and matches their local support at a higher rate, recognizing the particular economic challenges they face.

CPB has also made multiple investments in national programs that have been developed by and that are principally used by these stations, such as *Linea Abierta*, *Noticiero Latino*, *National Native News*, and *Native America Calling*. CPB has also funded several program initiatives developed by NPR and the African-American Public Radio Consortium that have been widely used by African-American stations as well as others, such as the *Tavis Smiley Show*, *News and Notes*, and *Tell Me More*. The Public Radio Satellite System provides, at no charge, a full-time distribution channel for both *Satélite Radio Bilingüe* and *Native Voice One*.

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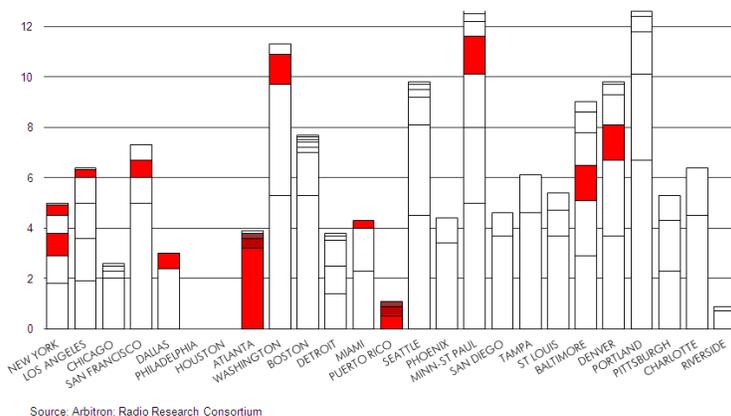
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These investments have produced measurable results.

- Seven of the ten public radio stations that generate the most African-American listening are controlled by African-Americans: WBGO (New York), KCEP (Las Vegas), WPFW (Washington), KMOJ (Minneapolis-St. Paul), KKJZ (Los Angeles), WBAI (New York), and WEAA (Baltimore). The other three stations in the top ten are WAMU (Washington), WNYC-AM (New York), and WBUR (Boston). Source: Arbitron as processed by AudiGraphics, average of Fall 07 and Spring 08.
- Three of the ten stations with the most Latino listening are controlled by Latinos: KNAI (Phoenix), KANW (Albuquerque), and KUFW (Woodlake, CA). The other seven stations in the top ten for Latino listening are KUSC (Los Angeles), KPCC (Los Angeles), KKJZ (Los Angeles), WNYC-FM (New York), WLRN (Miami), KCRW (Los Angeles), and KQED (San Francisco).
- While Arbitron does not break out listening by Native Americans, virtually all of the stations that present an hour or more per day of programming targeted at Native listeners are Native-controlled.

We recommend continued strong support for public radio stations that are developed and controlled by people of color. When opportunities arise to increase the number of such stations through applications for new stations, potential acquisitions, or public service management agreements, aggressive efforts should be made to pursue them. Similarly, the success of some 33 Native American groups in gaining station construction permits through the FCC's recent noncommercial filing window (and the prospect of still more to be granted) needs strong follow-up to get these stations on the air as sustainable operations.

Stations Controlled by People of Color



This chart shows the share of listening in the top 25 markets that goes to public radio stations (Metro share, Spring 2008, Arbitron diary markets only). Each segment of a bar is a different station.

The 17 stations highlighted in red are controlled by people of color, as are two stations in Houston (a PPM market not shown) and two other stations with audiences too small to report.

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We recommend the development of clearer quantitative and qualitative expectations of audience performance for public radio's stations controlled by people of color based on format, sustainable resources, and the characteristics of the different markets they serve. In the largest markets, there are several stations with full service signals that currently garner relatively small shares of listening. In some of the smallest markets of the country, such as those served by many of the Native stations, public service expectations may be quite different.