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and AIR producers, who are everywhere.

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# Executive Producer Summary

**Localore was, from the start, an unconventional public media production.** AIR dispatched 12 of our best producers to 10 public media stations to take up our call to “go outside” traditional mindset and craft, and to carry public media further out into the streets of their communities. Why? To address a need facing many local stations — the lack of adequate infrastructure to undertake sustained experimentation during a time of great flux across the industry.

The long game is to bring greater dexterity to help public media expand beyond its plateau of core broadcast audience service to reach more citizens, station by station, city by city, street by street. By turning to some of our most gifted talent to lead the way, we were intent on expanding the contributions producers can make to public media and, by extension, to the American public. With this publication, we share the nuggets surfaced by this richly varied production. There are anecdotes and lessons from our producers and findings from a survey of our core production team. The quantitative impact of the work is reflected in our data visualization and summary observations (page 14). This reflects a rigorous undergirding for the work, with a team of 10 station-based impact liaisons submitting monthly reports based on available calculable measurements throughout the course of the production. While not conclusive, the visualization delivers a unique and contemporary picture of a production that was conceived, designed and, ultimately, executed across nearly 60 discreet distribution channels — providing useful benchmarks for examining multiplatform production from the standpoint of cost and engagement. One key takeaway from Localore is that, in order to grasp the impact of contemporary media, we first have to invent the forms we want to measure. With a race underway to devise new methodologies and assign relative value to programs and productions, we’ve learned that applying new standards to legacy formats and delivery systems is limiting.

The Localore lead producers were as unique as their task — 69% women, 46% under 34, and 46% non-Caucasian. Prior to their Localore assignment, most came from traditional backgrounds — nine freelance radio journalists or producers, two documentary filmmakers, and one game designer. We hired those who possessed traits — flexibility, audacity, and high competence — for figuring out creative solutions to vexing problems. For all, this was their first attempt at creating a complex multimedia project. Everyone’s assignment was the same: “Go Outside!” Their job was to push the station to think and operate outside the box. Go outside traditional approach to craft meant we asked them to design a production from the get-go across three platforms — digital, broadcast, and street. We call it “full spectrum” public media. And we wanted these teams to physically go outside to the farthest corners of the community to lay new paths to citizens who knew nothing about public media.

Each of the producers we hired proposed and executed a very different approach. As a result, our efforts yield a broad and diverse range of new formats, new production models, and new insight into the relationships between these platforms and their impact.

This remarkable team and the coalition of 200 technical, community, station, and field producers they led worked to bring about transformation at each of our incubator stations and build a new asset that would be sustained by the station beyond AIR’s 12-month R&D phase. Reflecting now, a year after the February 28, 2013, launch of the full production, we see our carefully coordinated “pop-up skunkworks” has produced some striking results:

- A new cohort of entrepreneurs emerges: producers — most with radio roots — who proposed and executed their own vision, and are now working to export across the country what they’ve created in a single market.
- The system is ready, willing, and able to take bold moves. In a post-production survey of our stations and producers, they expressed near-universal agreement that, in spite of the difficulty of the assignment, they’d do it all over again if they had to once again make the choice.

## 2 What's Outside?

- In terms of our call to build sustainable assets for our stations, the numbers indicate both success and challenges: eight of the 10 projects are continuing development with a total of 22 staff persons in place and \$1.3 million in in-kind support and funding from a diverse range of sources. The continuing development includes prototyping of community engagement technology and strategy, two projects in a new phase of co-production with ITVS, and one station launching a new “innovation unit” in the footprint left by Localore. We largely achieved our goal to expand the capacity of both stations and producers.

Did we succeed in our attempt to bring “transformation” to the industry? Here are six takeaways:

- 1) **“Local” is a vital future value proposition for a public media seeking to expand and diversify its service.** The legacy model is one built around national programming, principally *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, which serves the core audience of listeners. The legacy value proposition for stations is built around serving as amplifiers of these anchor programs. As stations and the networks continue to strengthen and build on this important core capacity, a new and distinct opportunity emerges for stations to position themselves strongly as community hubs. Citizens in many local communities face daunting challenges, from navigating children through the American education system, to finding sustainable employment, to obtaining health care. Our government and institutions have never been more polarized. Donning the mantle of trustworthy change agents for the prosperity and growth of their community has winning potential for public media stations.
- 2) **Talent. Find it. Invest in it. Let it lead.** Our producer-entrepreneurs have core mastery in a particular craft, an appetite for adventure, and a passion for public service media. Those experienced in audio and with a mastery of short-form storytelling are especially adept. This cohort is competent and excited to take up daunting challenges. Stations would do well to consider talent — inside your shop and coming from the outside — to be an important disruptor ... part of your solution. It is a time for producers, reporters, and technologists, to overcome hesitation and move into unexplored territory. Producers: step up your game and learn to be a collaboration master — a persuader and negotiator. What is the problem you’re trying to solve? What difference will your work make and to whom? Localore’s lead producers embody those who’ve stepped onto a new path of change. Study what they’ve done. Call on them.
- 3) **“Digital” and “engagement” do not necessarily go together (first).** Common wisdom often stakes technology as the goose to lay the golden egg for expanding audience. But building engagement is a step-by-step process, and, too often, short shrift is given to research ... to exploring and understanding the constituency you want to engage. Localore producers found in designing for engagement that it was essential to execute their first stage out in the field, where they could pick up the pulse of the community and introduce public media for the first time to new citizens they were seeking. The *MapJam* in Austin, the sound bubble *La Burbuja* in LA, walking tours by *Reinvention* producers on the streets of Dayton, and the *iSeeChange* producers in the ranches and countryside surrounding Paonia, Colorado — these productions showed us that good old-fashioned shoe leather is needed first to point technology in the right direction. Once engaged, community members eagerly submitted observations and questions online that bloomed into broadcast stories for *Curious City* and other projects. Before taking on a digital production, however, stations would do well to become more technologically self-sufficient. This doesn’t necessarily mean having the capacity to build and code a complex new property. It does mean having the know-how to, for example, quickly respond when Twitter changes its API. We found that working with lightweight, readily available platforms beats building proprietary distribution formats, but that expertise is still needed.
- 4) **The time is right for new, targeted investment in community-based R&D infrastructure.** If a first step in building a new culture of engagement is to physically go outside, our impact analysis indicated it cost \$10.20 per impression on the street, versus \$.05 via broadcast and \$.38 per impression

via digital. At first daunting, the cost of the street strategies speaks to the dearth of infrastructure out in the community. As stations invest in this capacity, the cost per digital and face-to-face impression will decrease over time. Most stations are under pressure, balancing competing priorities and managers who are often stretched to the limit with current fundraising goals and capital campaigns. Managers are challenged to add anything more to the plate of activities that will, inevitably, require financial support. There is now opportunity for stations to start small and build out this new strategic dimension, diversifying the business strategy portfolio. Start with a projected goal of devoting 10% of your budget for R&D. Perhaps start with 2% this year, 4% next year, etc. How to direct those dollars? We have promising models that blend broadcast, digital, and street, and have yielded success — e.g., WBEZ's *Curious City*, KUTX's *MapJam*, and Twin Cities Public Television's *Rewire*, as well as dozens of stations who are moving down this path in their own ways.

- 5) **Recognize new networks; this will strengthen your odds for success.** Key to the success of the Localore production, AIR engaged two powerful networks: its own extensive network of producers and the network of 1,200 public media stations across the country. AIR is leading efforts beyond Localore aimed at more experimentation, and it supports others working to grow the pipeline of talent into the system through the “marriage” of these two networks. Exploring and exploiting networks within the local service area is another key element. Localore producers effectively tapped into a range of systems — libraries, performers, churches, NASA, bars and clubs, universities, small businesses, museums — to build their productions and expand a public media station's footprint. The development of these “new networks” offers fundraising potential for stations that take the lead, singing a new song about their new, local value proposition and aligning themselves with other like-minded institutions.
- 6) **Anchor your work in human purpose. Bring big vision.** This will lift and inspire. It will draw the right collaborators and supporters to you. Know, too, that technology is developing faster than we know what to do with it and, as MIT social scientist Sherry Turkle says, “taking us places we don't want to go.” If technology is the horse, what's the cart? Any good experiment begins with the question “what difference will this make and to whom?” Getting concrete answers to these questions from the start will also save what may otherwise be wasted investment, developing work that is of no real value to anyone.

Through our Localore production, and with the financial support from CPB, Wyncote, NEA, MacArthur, and our incubator stations, AIR has demonstrated its capacity to assemble and galvanize a base of talent effective at provoking positive change. The Localore challenge has also brought forward a “coalition of the willing” — a cohort of stations ready to open up their gearworks and do what it takes to redirect, re-energize, reinvent. And the project demonstrates how producers and stations can work together in new ways.

In the margins of the industry, we've begun a movement toward a public media that serves all Americans. Our work is not done. I've learned, through Localore and the MQ2 initiative before it, that progress is a series of nudges accumulated over time. It is my hope and intention that the accomplishments of our team in these 10 communities serves as an encouraging model for others across the system to follow our lead and “go outside.” In the words of one of our Localore producers, “We survived!” Indeed, more than that, we thrive.



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Before you dive in, first spend some time with the Localore metasite ([Localore.net](http://Localore.net)) and watch *This Is Localore* ([bit.ly/ThisIsLocalore](http://bit.ly/ThisIsLocalore)) to familiarize yourself with the range and approach of the 10 projects.



Then, read through the following four sections for advice and observations from AIR's national production team, lead producers, impact analysts, and the station managers and liaisons who worked hand in hand with those producers. In the sidebar for each section, you'll find related background and tips.

We'd love to hear about what you make – drop us a note at: [WhatsOutside@airmedia.org](mailto:WhatsOutside@airmedia.org).

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# Insights for the Public Media System

*As a national initiative, Localore offers insight for those inside public media working to spur invention and broaden service across multiple platforms — including funders, national networks, and producers of national shows. Here’s a description of how this networked production was structured, what worked, and obstacles that the team encountered.*

The Localore production builds on public radio’s legacy of technical innovation in the service of enlightening and informing the public. From the founding days of NPR, intrepid producers have played a pivotal role in field-testing new communications technologies to illuminate Americans’ lives.

As a network of 1,000 audio and multimedia producers, AIR is uniquely positioned to deploy makers to meet the challenges of a rapidly transforming media landscape. This unusual initiative harnessed producers’ talent to build innovation capacity at each partner station.

AIR has shown that producers can serve as powerful catalysts to help strengthen public media in ways we haven’t conceived before. As AIR Executive Director Sue Schardt told *Current* at Localore’s start, “We learned that we have this vibrant asset of individuals — independent producers who are tolerant of risk, incredibly adaptive, and able to work quickly. They are not constrained by institutional mindset or infrastructure and are often at the front of experimentation. We can turn to that talent and throw it like a lightning bolt at a problem or an idea we’ve identified.”

With the fall 2012 call for proposals, AIR challenged producers to step forward with their best ideas for local multimedia storytelling projects. But producers alone could not crack the code. Stations were called out, as well, to be project incubators, and invited to share their new vision of public media. In order to be eligible for Localore, they had to be investors — willing to put some cash on the table — and also submit video or audio profiles of their goals, ideas, and communities to an online multimedia “runway”:  
[airmediaworks.org/localore-productions](http://airmediaworks.org/localore-productions).

Sixty-one stations produced and posted media on the Station Runway, vying to be incubators for one of the chosen producers and expressing their commitment to the “transformation” aspect of the



## **Austin Music Map/Map Jam**

Lead Producer: Delaney Hall  
KUT, Austin, TX  
[austinmusicmap.com](http://austinmusicmap.com)



*Austin Music Map* uncovers Austin’s diverse sonic subculture in tandem with fans and performers. Travel beyond the city’s much-documented music scene to the “third places” where musicians perform and commune: front porches, sidewalks, churches, and under bridges. Hall, KUT, and Zeega developed an evocative digital map to help users immerse themselves in these hidden gems.

## **Black Gold Boom**

Lead Producer: Todd Melby  
Prairie Public Broadcasting,  
Fargo, ND  
[roughride.blackgoldboom.com](http://roughride.blackgoldboom.com)



*Black Gold Boom* traverses the rigs, man camps, and crossroads of North Dakota’s oil rush, capturing compelling audio portraits of the workers who have streamed there, and unpacking the implications of the region’s rush to drill. Don’t miss *Rough Ride*, a groundbreaking immersive short-form tour of oil country, produced with Zeega.

## **Curious City**

Lead Producer: Jennifer Brandel  
WBEZ, Chicago, IL  
[curiouscity.wbez.org](http://curiouscity.wbez.org)



*Curious City* opens up the newsroom by crowdsourcing questions from Chicagoans and partnering the “winning” questioner with a reporter. An interactive site lets participants follow the investigations from query to broadcast and beyond. See how dozens of WBEZ reporters are crafting multimedia explorations designed to inform and delight.

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**Ed Zed Omega (EZO)**

Lead Producer: Ken Eklund  
TPT, St. Paul, MN  
edzedomega.org



*EZO's* “thought collaboration” asked participants to help answer a tough question: “What does school accomplish?” Eight actors played this “authentic fiction” out across social media and face to face. *EZO* brings “something new to the conversation about education,” says *Wired*.

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**Hear Here:**

**A Pop-Up Radio Project**

Lead Producer: Erica Mu  
KALW, San Francisco, CA  
hearhere.kalw.org



*Hear Here* deepens coverage of the Bay Area and Oakland beyond the usual “bleed and lead” headlines by seeking the stories most relevant to residents and connecting neighbors. Working in concert with community partners, the team hosts live, “pop-up” events that feature local participants, storytellers, musicians, and artists.

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**iSeeChange**

Lead Producer: Julia Kumari Drapkin  
KVNF, Paonia, CO  
theAlmanac.org



*iSeeChange* flips the script on environmental reporting by crowdsourcing listeners’ observations about the weather. Visit the *iSeeChange* Almanac to learn how climate shifts are affecting Americans’ lives. Drapkin’s reporting draws scientists in to create dialogues that help community members make hard decisions together.

Localore initiative. They ranged from tribal and rural stations and state networks to standalone TV stations and major market outlets. There were still more knocking on the door when the deadline for entry had passed.

After a rigorous competition and matching process, in January 2012, AIR announced the 10 teams who would execute Localore productions. AIR Executive Editor Noland Walker noted that the producers who stepped forward were of a particular breed: “skilled adaptors who were willing to make sacrifices — to move away from home for up to a year, to build something and leave it behind when they’re done.” Indeed, this core team represents a new breed of social entrepreneur, with a public service idealism that serves as a unifying and motivating force throughout the development of this work.

Soon after, interactive storytelling team Zeega was added to the project to work with eight of the 10 Localore teams. Principals Kara Oehler, Jesse Shapins, and James Burns were the team behind AIR’s MQ2 project *Mapping Main Street*. They honed the digital production technology they had developed for this first project and, as AIR’s technology partner for Localore, plugged their first-generation ingenuity into eight Localore productions. Working with AIR through these two phases of development enabled the Zeega team to road-test their interactive production platform, and with core support from the Knight Foundation, develop it into a stand-alone tool, open to a global community of interactive storytellers: Zeega.com.

AIR’s team of 12 lead producers hired to execute their own vision worked hand in hand with their partner stations, marshaling a field of nearly 200 community-, technology-, and station-based producers during AIR’s 12-month R&D phase. They succeeded in their quest to build new locally focused models for public media, showcased at Localore.net and in *This Is Localore* ([bit.ly/ThisIsLocalore](http://bit.ly/ThisIsLocalore)), a half-hour documentary produced by AIR and directed by Josh Banville.

**Tracking Full Spectrum Impact**

Given the experimental nature of this production, AIR conducted rigorous and ongoing strategic assessment. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, Localore’s national team tracked the impact of the production across several dimensions:

- the effect of the projects on producers tasked with leading cross-disciplinary teams,
- growth in the innovation capacity of stations,
- reactions from community members who participated in the production,
- the emergence of individual projects as models for other stations and makers.

The year-long R&D period was bookended by two “Public Media Labs,” produced by AIR and hosted by Boston-based Localore station WGBH. In the first lab, the producer-station teams presented project visions, set goals, and brainstormed engagement strategies. In the closing lab, they circled back around to evaluate how closely their productions matched those original concepts, and to share insights about their process, obstacles, and triumphs. AIR’s station-based “impact liaisons” filed monthly impact reports and conducted a final survey three months after the close of the first year of R&D.

The survey included members of the core field teams of lead producers and station staff — 36 managers, PDs, and reporters most involved with the Localore production — and assessed four key areas: relative success at achieving goals, technology, sustainability, and lessons learned over the R&D/production phase: March 1, 2012 to February 28, 2013.

Based on the survey results, Localore made a notable impact on both stations and producers by enhancing their capacity. What’s more, they were uniformly in agreement that it was a significantly positive experience that they’d repeat if they had to decide to do it all over again. These findings provide useful baseline data for AIR as it builds on the strengths of Localore to expand the playing field for system R&D led by our most intrepid producers and far-reaching stations.

This core coalition also delivers up lessons for how producers and stations can work together in new ways to realize the vision of a public media that meets the system’s founding goals and an understanding of how media continue to have, in the words of President Lyndon B. Johnson, “immense — even revolutionary — power to change, to change our lives.”

### Planet Takeout

Lead Producer: Val Wang  
WGBH, Boston, MA  
planettakeout.org



*Planet Takeout* serves up perspectives from both sides of the counter on Chinese carryouts as crossroads of life and culture. Wang’s interactive documentary, produced with Zeega, features vignettes from outposts in diverse Boston neighborhoods — illustrating how they act as lenses onto the communities they feed.

### Reinvention Stories

Lead Producers:  
Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar  
WYSO, Yellow Springs, OH  
reinventionstories.org



*Reinvention Stories* gives residents of Dayton — one of America’s “fastest-dying cities” — a chance to reflect on how they’re remaking themselves. Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar, an award-winning filmmaking duo, work with WYSO staff and volunteer media-makers to craft multimedia reports, and with Zeega to build a groundbreaking interactive documentary.

### Sonic Trace

Lead Producer: Anayansi Diaz-Cortes  
KCRW, Los Angeles, CA  
sonictrace.org



Multiplatform documentary *Sonic Trace* opens us to an authentic and intimate experience of Latin American immigrants, from their new roots in LA neighborhoods and back to their home communities. Anayansi Diaz-Cortes reports from both sides of the border on-air, online, and — throughout LA — from a portable storytelling booth, La Burbuja.

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**The Making Of...**

Lead Producers: Nikki Silva  
and Davia Nelson  
(The Kitchen Sisters)  
KQED, San Francisco, CA  
[blogs.kqed.org/makingof](http://blogs.kqed.org/makingof)



Veteran radio producers The Kitchen Sisters join forces with KQED to spearhead *The Making Of...*, a mixed-media series that chronicles the creativity happening across Northern California — the hub of American innovation. *The Making of... Studio*, produced with Zeega, invites participants to craft their own interactive artworks.

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**Sue Schardt**

AIR Executive Director  
Localore Executive Producer



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**Noland Walker**

Localore Executive Editor



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**Jessica Clark**

AIR Media Strategist



The work accomplished in these 10 communities serves as an encouraging model for others across the system to try new approaches — to break the mold.

The teams created beautiful and inventive transmedia productions that not only grabbed the attention of local audience members, but also generated national and international notice. Each local project is different, but all share the same commitment to shifting public media's relationship with audiences members by connecting with them not only via broadcast, but also online and out on the street. The striking results rise to AIR's challenge to the producer-station teams: "Go outside."

Overall, the production made a significant impact with audience members during the R&D period, generating more than 28 million impressions across the spectrum of broadcast (radio and TV), digital, and street platforms. The relative breakdown of these numbers — along with an estimated cost-per-impression for each platform — is detailed in the "Localore Impact" visualization [p. 15].

**Insights and Obstacles**

Localore yielded a series of clear takeaways for the public media system and its funders, enumerated above in the Executive Summary:

- 1) Local is the future value proposition for stations seeking to expand their audience.
- 2) Talent. Find it. Invest in it. Let it lead.
- 3) "Digital" and "Engagement" do not necessarily go together (first).
- 4) The time is right for new, targeted investment in community-based R&D infrastructure.
- 5) Recognize new networks.
- 6) Anchor your work in human purpose. Bring big vision.

However, this complex and ambitious production also revealed a set of difficult new realities for system leaders aiming to lead public media into the 21st century and serve all Americans. Here are some of the challenges the national production team observed, and a few lessons that might help others seeking to follow in Localore's footsteps.

**Many stations aren't able to support ambitious experiments, and must shift both their mindsets and resources to succeed**

In general, AIR found that stations would do well to beef up their tech staff, even modestly, to deal with the ongoing disruption of shifts in the media marketplace. Technology is innately volatile; glitches and new versions are the norm in social media and digital development. Staff and contractors should have core competencies not in a single platform or programming language, but in anticipating and responding to continual changes in tools and platforms.

Keeping experiments simple seems to be one lesson. Working with Zeega to develop sophisticated transmedia experiments did not always turn out to be the most practical process for stations. Core takeaways along these lines include: Dream big, but then build small. Find targeted ways to test and refine both technologies and new forms of reporting or storytelling before committing to a large-scale plan. Establish points of connection between existing workflows at the station and new production processes, so as not to create stand-alone projects that will be isolated and age in place. And don't spread projects too thin across a range of digital platforms — figure out where users are and learn those tools inside out.

However, even with this sort of iterative approach and strong tech team in place, sustainability is the nut to crack. From the start, producers, stations, and technologists must be thinking together about how to maintain full spectrum projects beyond the first burst of creative inspiration. Not only does technology change, but as a project evolves, so do the producer's responsibilities and the users' expectations.

Stations should support producers in their fundraising from the get-go, and producers will succeed best when they work closely with stations to make sure that what they're inventing can be woven back into daily production and technology routines. Expect even the most successful projects to generate unforeseen costs and challenges.

**Building a creative culture that's eager to reach beyond station walls requires a sustained commitment**

Creating and maintaining new forms of communication is not a plug-and-play proposition. Localore producers attempting to propose new

# ZEEGA

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## Full Spectrum Storytelling Models



*The various Localore projects engaged communities in different ways. Here are five models that emerged across the Localore production, which producers and stations should consider when designing ambitious cross-platform productions:*

### **The Big Bang**

Projects focused on local stories with a strong national resonance like *Black Gold Boom* — which documented the impact of North Dakota's oil rush on residents, the environment, and the economy — can bring attention to a station and community via wide syndication.

### **The Invention Engine**

Projects structured to open the door to a wide variety of responses from community members — such as participatory reporting projects *The Making Of...* and *Curious City* — can support multiple cycles of experimentation and partnership.

### **The Bridge Builder**

Projects that create a safe space for discussing a polarized topic — such as *iSeeChange*, which asked participants to report on their personal experiences of climate shifts — can help stations to reach out to a new listener base.

### **The “You Are Here”**

Place-based projects with physical outposts focused on the particulars of a region or a venue — such as *Austin Music Map*, *Planet Takeout*, *Sonic Trace*, and *Hear Here* — can help a station to gradually deepen relationships with targeted communities and local partners.

### **The Catalyst**

Projects that involve taking a risk and supporting staff in learning many new skills — such as Ed Zed Omega, which spawned TPT's *Rewire* project, or *Reinvention Stories*, which helped to power WYSO's community media center — can help station leaders create and invest in new units that increase the station's future capacity to invent.

ideas sometimes found themselves stymied by existing structures and priorities.

Bigger isn't always better — projects based at the larger stations were most challenged when it came to integrating the productions. Competing fundraising priorities and difficulty adapting quickly were primary obstacles. Some naysayers saw Localore projects through the lens of previous or ongoing innovation efforts, and more easily discounted the attempts at something new. In contrast, producers placed at smaller stations — most notably KVNF and WYSO — established closer ties to station leaders and were able to connect more deeply with station culture, and have stronger impact.

Stations considering this kind of work might get the ball rolling by creating a “go-team” from inside the station to pitch and consider inventive ideas, as TPT did with their *Rewire* unit, inspired by their Localore project, or as WYSO did with their existing Community Voices program, which provided a clear context and a healthy cadre of volunteer makers for the producers of Localore's *Reinvention Stories*.

Multimedia production brings different working styles and expectations that can be at odds with the dominant station production culture. Communication is key, and so is making sure the right people are at the table. This means overcoming some institutional barriers. It was surprising to see how little interaction and collaboration editorial and digital staff had at some stations.

Successful project teams take time to lay out expectations, define their terms, and regularly check in on process. Strong communication and finding time for “relaxed integration” (e.g., occasional drinks after work) can help ease the way and foster a shared sense of purpose. It's critical, too, that station managers and program directors show up — take time to experience what new things staff are bringing into the halls, on the screens, and in the streets of the community.

A clear takeaway for producers seeking to find a foothold inside stations is to keep a “door wide open” policy. *Curious City* producer Jennifer Brandel stressed that she took pains to let other station staff and freelancers know that they were welcome to participate, and she

recommended keeping an eye out for potential internal contributors, ambassadors, and champions.

Rather than thinking in terms of scarcity, stations should recognize and reward the abundant creativity latent in their own shops — and just adjacent. Both AIR’s national production team and the teams on the ground had to learn how to effectively allow audience members to help define the projects, through the questions, stories, and visual content they submitted. “Going outside” also means letting community members in.

Practice generates possibility. Committing to try new storytelling approaches provides a valuable opportunity for stations to consider the benefits of taking on additional experiments. Even when producers or stations tried something and failed, they described it as a useful process.

#### **More work is needed to figure out models for combining face-to-face and digital engagement with broadcast**

Many of the Localore producers found that despite prevailing assumptions about the power of digital platforms to spur engagement — using a smartphone app, for example, to attract citizens — physical connection held surprising power. The teams developed a number of successful approaches that generated enthusiastic participation — hosting live storytelling events, recruiting participants at local festivals, building eye-catching story-gathering booths, and partnering with local museums and community spaces to create installations. A related lesson: Without an established core digital audience, stations will have difficulty succeeding with stand-alone digital plays.

Comparatively speaking, across the production, digital engagement was revealed to be significantly more expensive (38 cents/impression) than broadcast (1/2 cent/impression). “Street” — i.e., face-to-face — engagement was more expensive still, at \$10.20/impression.

However, these numbers reflect both the breadth of national broadcast exposure for selected local stories and the lack of physical infrastructure beyond the station. The quality of interaction at Localore “street” events, however, tended to be much higher, perhaps suggesting that offline outreach might serve as a gateway for new

## Concept Workshops



*AIR bookended the Localore productions with two concept workshops, or “Public Media Labs” — the first in spring 2012 to help the teams lay out the vision and structure for their projects, and the second in spring 2013 to assess and debrief them on their projects.*

*Here are a few guidelines for organizing such events, which help to cohere the production teams and put flesh on the bones of project concepts:*

### **Develop the elevator pitch**

For the first Public Media Lab, AIR asked the producer-station teams to arrive with a presentation about the concept and goals of their project, using the five-minute “Ignite” format. This was the team’s first chance to produce something together (and it was pretty terrifying for all!).

### **First get visionary**

At the first Public Media Lab, AIR asked the producer and station liaisons to work together as a team to craft a short vision statement that would describe what their project had accomplished by the end of the first year.

### **Then get concrete**

In addition, AIR asked the teams to attach some specific projections to their visions. How many people would participate? How many stories would they produce? This process created initial benchmarks to aim for.

### **Focus on engagement**

AIR then asked the various teams to work together in breakout groups to consider their engagement strategies. See the “Designing for Impact” sidebar below for the questions they discussed.

### **Check back in**

A year later, at the second Public Media Lab, AIR brought out the vision statements that the teams had composed and asked them to reflect on their year-long production processes, and how close they had come to what they had envisioned.

### **Cull lessons**

Comparing the early project visions to their production journeys allowed the Localore teams and AIR to surface best practices. These are captured in the sections that follow.

## Designing for Participation — Key Questions:

Here are some central questions the station-producer teams considered during the March 2012 Public Media Lab:

- 1. Does your project call for a booth, or some physical structure or presence?** What is important to think about as you consider how to design it? What elements are you thinking about in terms of color? Shape? Size? Placement? How are you going to make final determinations about these questions?
- 2. AIR is asking you to go to the far corners of the community, to where people don't even know what public media is, and somehow convert them — get them to trust what you're doing. How are you going to communicate "this is public media" to the citizens in these far corners?**
- 3. We heard about the importance of field research** and how you have to test-drive some of your ideas for technology and story-gathering before you set out. Is this built into your plan? If so, how are you going to accomplish it?
- 4. You and your team are going to go out into the local communities. You may or may not live there, but chances are people living there don't know you. You may not even look or speak the same way. Furthermore, they don't know public media. Yet, the core of your project depends on their contributing stories and participating in documenting their community in new ways. What's your question for them?**
- 5. You've gone out into the community. Let's assume you've successfully captured citizens' attention — gotten them to tell their stories and engage with you. Beyond that, how are you going to bring them into the experience of public media? How are you going to effectively draw them back to the radio or television broadcasts — to change their behavior and convert them to public media?** Does this question have different answers depending on whether it's the station or the lead producer answering it?

audiences, who can then be led to participate digitally and listen on air. The prospect of driving citizens from street engagement to broadcast or digital engagement is a new frontier, ripe for exploration.

### Stations adept at collaboration have the best shot at success.

The Localore productions demonstrated that public media stations can partner surprisingly well with other local institutions when they present themselves as community hubs with a core mission of strengthening the local community. But doing so can be a stretch for station managers who have many pressing priorities.

Museums, libraries, and schools emerged over the course of the Localore initiative as trusted peer institutions also seeking to engage participants in new and sometimes playful ways. There's an alignment of intention, values, user expectation, and trust that producers and stations should build upon with such partners in order to connect with their constituents. Learning to effectively utilize these networks can take stations to corners of the community they've never seen and expose them to audiences who've never heard of them.

It's also important for stations to make an effort to foster nontraditional partnerships. *iSeeChange* forged an impressive bond with the science community, bringing big science at NASA down to earth and tying citizen scientists back up to a national network. Outside voices can help to clarify the stakes of internal debates and bring new energy. Establishing a multidisciplinary production team can also lead to breakthroughs. Partnering with spaces or community members not normally associated with public broadcasting can generate memorable sparks and potentially enduring relationships.

### The next wave of talented public media leaders look and act different

On average, AIR's lead producers skewed more diverse and more female than the typical news or technology innovator. In turn, they recruited field producers — both from inside the stations and from local communities — who looked and communicated more like the new audience members they were working to reach.

These demographic differences were accompanied by a difference in work style — Localore producers tended to be more lateral in forming collaborations within and outside their stations, more willing to let go of new technologies based on ongoing interaction with community members.

This shift in style from a top-down management culture to bottom-up development of new and in most cases unfamiliar productions is refreshing and at times startling for station leaders and staff members. “We had to sometimes make things up as we went along” was a common refrain among the Localore teams. This is the nature of invention, especially in collaborative productions. Other advice along these lines that Localore producers shared was “get out of the way of the story” and “go as far as you can see, and when you get there, you’ll see further.”

Overall, however, stations say that they found differences in both storytelling process and subjects to be inspiring. Whether connecting with indigenous Zapotecs in LA, debating with teens contemplating dropping out, tracking down farmers in their fields, or filming oil workers hanging off of rigs, the Localore producer-station teams uniformly reported a surge of excitement from staff and community members.

Bringing fresh faces and voices into the management and reporting mix not only reinforces public media’s mission to serve all Americans, it also enlivens coverage, creates opportunities for unprecedented dialogue, and suggests new pathways for recruitment and promotion.

Changing people’s minds about public media is a long-term process: Both producers and station leaders noted that while their Localore projects took an important step in reaching beyond core audiences, more work and additional projects are needed to reach communities that don’t perceive themselves as represented by public broadcasting. Continually recognizing and elevating diverse talent is essential in bridging audience gaps.

## Why Produce Full Spectrum?



*Cross-platform media production is not for the timid, and it’s best for those interested in evolving beyond the status quo. Most of Localore’s lead producers brought core experience in creating high-quality media in their respective fields of radio, film, and game production, but few had much experience negotiating and managing a multidisciplinary team and production budget. All of the lead producers were breaking new ground, in one way or another, and all gained significant on-the-job training! The Localore challenge to create new productions across platforms enabled them to:*

**Stretch their skills** — filmmakers learned something about radio production, radio producers learned something about video production, and everyone across the project learned more about digital production. The collective nature of the productions — 10 teams working on the same assignment and timeline — helped push and propel the intensity of experimentation from project to project.

**Learn to lead** — the Localore producers managed cross-disciplinary project teams, which included station staff, designers, developers, outreach staff, and, most critically, citizens in the community who participated. And once built, a number of the producers continued their evolution as media entrepreneurs, strategizing about how to build out the next phase of development for the work and extend the impact.

**Master rising platforms** — Localore producers experimented not only with now-established social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr, but also with emerging and custom-built digital tools.

**Take risks** — AIR’s mandate to “go outside” gave the Localore production teams and our technology partners the time, space, resources, and permission to invent new storytelling strategies from scratch.

**Design from the ground up** — the community-driven nature of the projects gave the producers license to get to know their communities before they started crafting their formats and designing their integrated platforms.

# Localore by the Numbers

Embedded in Localore's local teams were "impact liaisons" tasked with reporting on measurements of engagement across platforms over the 12 months of production. AIR devised a reporting methodology based on the designs of the 10 projects to best capture the activity on all distribution platforms. The liaisons filed monthly surveys capturing data sets ranging from station Arbitron and Nielsen ratings, to user-generated content, to social media followers, to the number of citizens attending public events. Qualitative fields in the survey allowed AIR to track the producers' perceptions of the production, as well. We included questions such as "From your perspective at the station, what was the most exciting thing that happened with your Localore project this month?" We also included open fields for describing, for example, interactions in the community. The data visualization presented here captures all quantitative measures of activity across the 103 distribution channels reported by our station liaisons. On average, each producer-station team used 10 different platforms to reach and engage audiences.

The unique nature of the Localore production is important to understand as you view this visualization, which is designed to scale. The media we created were conceived and executed from the start as an integrated whole, as opposed to most public media, which are produced discretely for one platform and migrated (i.e., a radio feature put on a website, segments of a film repurposed and distributed via YouTube, a radio program streamed via a phone app, etc.). We worked to provide as close an "apples to apples" comparison of reach, engagement, and user contribution across platforms as possible. At a time when there is little conformity for assessing the impact of mixed distribution and participatory production, we did our best to provide a holistic perspective

— the "full spectrum" — of how multiple platforms work as an integrated whole.

It's important to note that the 28.2 million total impressions do not represent unique visitors. Instead they represent discrete "touches," moments when users encountered or interacted with the production. We are not able to capture crossover; it's safe to assume some percentage of those engaged in Localore experienced it on more than one occasion and, perhaps, on more than one platform.

## OBSERVATIONS:

**Broadcast** is still the platform that delivers the greatest bang for the buck for public media. In this context, and by comparison to other channels, the two pie graphs for radio and television depict an industry with a mature infrastructure, an established core audience, and consistent methodology for capturing listener/viewer data. Standing on its own, broadcast isn't considered very sexy these days. But if we can imagine it now not as diminishing, but as one distinctive, bright star in a broadened constellation of platforms, we can begin to recognize its new agency. For example, today's broadcast medium, when matched with brand talent, has the potential to push a podcast through the glut, up to top national ranks, with the organizational brand along for the ride.

**Street.** Localore called on producers and stations to physically "go outside" into their communities to learn more about those not served by public media; to lay new paths to service beyond the core audience to all citizens. This new and perhaps most experimental aspect is captured in data for the street platform. The audience is disproportionately small. At \$10.20, the cost to reach one citizen is more than 2,000 times the cost of reaching someone via broadcast. This reflects the lack of infrastructure and the "newness" of public

MARCH 1, 2012 – FEBRUARY 28, 2013

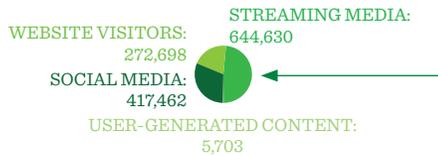
# Localore Impact

total impressions: 28,154,770

## DIGITAL

**38¢ / impression**

1,340,493



**TOP PLATFORMS:**  
 Vimeo Plays: 437,080  
 Facebook "People Talking About": 382,050  
 Station Sites: 135,496  
 Project Sites: 116,354

## STREET

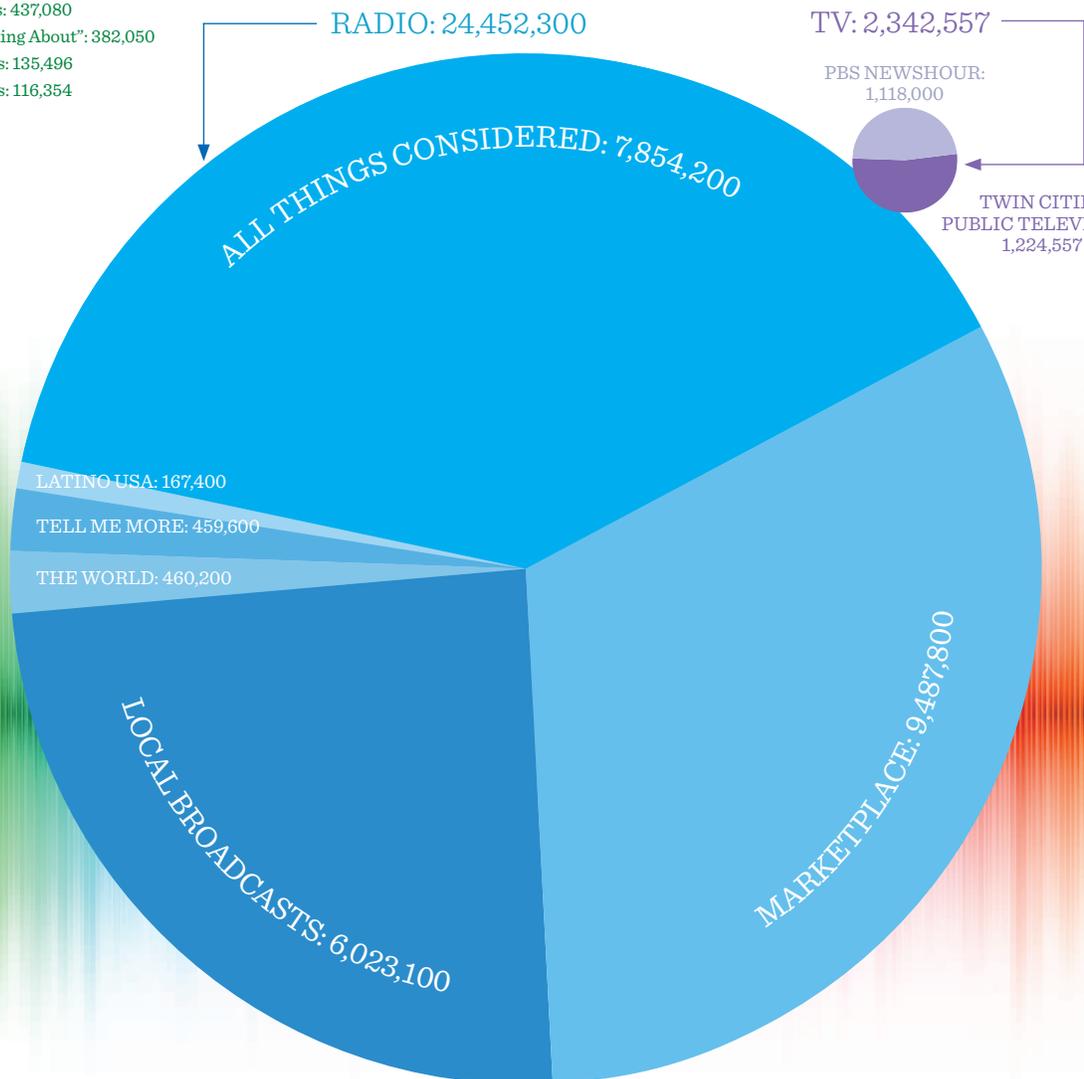
**\$10.20 / impression**

19,420

FIELD EVENTS:  
 19,420  
 participation

## BROADCAST

**1/2¢ / impression**



media occupying a space outside the building. In many cases, our producers built new physical spaces to best execute their projects. In LA, there was a portable sound booth, *La Burbuja*; *Hear Here* created “pop-up” installations throughout the Bay Area; and there were significant museum events in San Francisco, St. Paul, and Dayton produced by *The Making Of...*, *Ed Zed Omega*, and *Reinvention* producers.

**Digital.** Collectively, Localore producers threw all the spaghetti they could at the wall. What did we learn? When capably conceived and executed, digital can serve the larger objectives of a production quite well, but tools and platforms must be suitably integrated into the full operation of media creation and distribution if they’re to be effective. With Localore, there was substantial creative tension between the digital creatives, the designers, and the media producers. The secret is striking an equal balance.

The pace of change in the digital space is rapid and continual, making it a challenge to build anything enduring in terms of service. How do we know what’s working effectively over the long term? We have a lot of hunches, but available data give us little insight into why, for example, Vimeo delivered the greatest digital impact, or how we might replicate that performance. Localore’s field of digital experimentation was vast. At the one end of the spectrum are our immersive sites — *Austin Music Map*, *Reinvention Stories*, *Planet Takeout*, and *Black Gold Boom: Rough Ride*. This work, created with our technology partner, Zeega, is exquisitely beautiful and inspiring to many who have experienced Localore. These sites were also costly and time-consuming to build and present challenges for the stations to integrate into their operations.

On the other end of the spectrum is *Curious City*, the project with, perhaps, the greatest “digital” success

in terms of ubiquity, integration into the overall execution of the project, and capacity of the station to maintain it. Zeega and the *Curious City* team capitalized on existing APIs (Google Docs, Flickr, YouTube, etc.) to build the crowdsourcing platform. This was a strength and, while it may for this reason sound simple, the platform was fragile. The staff could (and did) take down the site by accidentally overwriting a row of code. And public APIs require maintenance. This meant the team had to be equipped to handle, for example, Google’s making a change to their code. While it didn’t have the obsolescence problem of some of the other sites, *Curious City*’s approach to technology revealed an inherent weakness in the collective brain trust of public media — it lacks sufficient digital know-how to build and maintain digital properties. And outsourcing is not a viable long-range solution to the problem.

An important takeaway from Localore for digital public media is that — at least for now — we are not well suited (or financed) to invent new technology or build digital platforms that will quickly become obsolete. It’s important to now turn our focus to helping stations and producers become adept at harnessing and managing existing, lightweight tools we can pull into service to meet our larger mission objectives.

**Field Research Imperative.** The expense of the street platform begs the question, how important is it to physically “go outside”? Of course, each station would have different ways of answering that question. Our R&D leads us to conclude that it’s very important. A station may not want to invest \$10K to build a portable sound booth, but some sort of active field experimentation is essential to inform, for example, which technologies will be effective (and which will not). And for those seeking to expand their audience beyond their core, producers moving out into community is an important and efficient way

## DIGITAL BREAKDOWN: 1,340,493

<b>STREAMING MEDIA: 644,630</b>	
Vimeo plays:	437,080
SoundCloud plays:	141,604
YouTube plays:	33,872
Podcast downloads:	31,983
Mobile plays:	91
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA: 417,462</b>	
Facebook “people talking about” interactions:	382,050
Comments/votes/questions to project or station web pages:	14,969
Twitter followers:	10,711
Facebook likes:	6,913
Twitter mentions:	2,706
Other (Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.):	113
<b>WEBSITE VISITORS: 272,698</b>	
Station sites and related pages:	135,496
Project sites:	116,354
Localore.net:	20,848
<b>USER-GENERATED CONTENT: 5,703</b>	
UGC submitted to project or station web pages:	1,389
Flickr UGC:	898
Facebook UGC:	863
Face-to-face stories collected:	801
Voice mail/mobile stories collected:	725
SoundCloud UGC:	470
UGC via other platforms (Instagram, Tumblr, email, etc.):	408
Twitter UGC:	149

of understanding whom you are trying to reach, what their needs are, and what public media's relative strengths and weakness are in this territory — territory that is untested, but waiting just beyond the walls of the station.

**Movement and Interconnection.** In addition to the street, another new frontier ripe for exploration is understanding the relationship between these platforms. Here, at the conclusion of 12 months' R&D, we are left with as many questions as answers. How to drive people, for example, from a public media broadcast experience to a digital experience in a way that is most satisfying for them, that provides a truly new and enhanced service? Is the goal to build an audience that shifts from platform to platform — to establish a path for an individual to flow from one place to another in a coherent, traceable way? Or is that not so important?

**Discrete channels.** What seems more likely, based on our R&D, is that we are seeing a new paradigm emerge where public media's opportunity may be to serve different cohorts of citizens on different platforms. For example, the broadcast spectrum is the platform where we primarily serve and build our traditional core audience. The MapJam music festival in Austin, for instance, is where KUTX is exploiting the opportunity to serve a new segment of the community that is more diverse than the broadcast audience. This model has important implications because it suggests a different approach to evolving the new public media service we seek. Rather than trying to serve everyone everywhere, development would focus on vastly diversified areas of programming and strategy. The imperative would then be for leaders to put forward a unified vision, and build a new sort of integrated culture within the institution or enterprise that marches to the same drumbeat, but in distinctly different ways.

*I'm grateful to researcher Scott Williams for his assistance analyzing our compiled data, and to Craig Oliver for his consultation and review of our reports. David Giovannoni was generous with his time and insight on our data visualization, pushing us to go further with an analysis of the cost per impression across the "full spectrum." David's contributions have strengthened this report. Angelynn Grant brought our data to life with her design prowess. —Sue Schardt*

# Insights for Producers

Below are some of the most notable discoveries shared by the Localore lead producers during the debriefing on their projects at the conclusion of the year-long R&D period.

**Listen for the beating heart of your project:** The gifts of our most talented producers transcend technology or a particular phase of evolutionary change. As Executive Producer Sue Schardt pointed out to our core team during the final Public Media Lab, “You hear things and see things that are not apparent; this is what sets you apart.” Technology may ease productions and distribution, but an exceptional maker is distinguished most by his or her keen intuition and the determination to bring out something essential about humanity.

**Check your digital assumptions — there is no one-size-fits-all social strategy:** All of the Localore producers used social media platforms to reach and involve communities — most commonly Facebook and Twitter, but also SoundCloud, YouTube, Vimeo, Tumblr, Instagram, and others as appropriate. But their strategies differed according to their projects’ goals and the types of responses they were trying to elicit.

**Labels count:** Creating new media hybrids offers makers the chance to coin fresh language. Localore teams grappled with vocabulary throughout the project, introducing terms such as “authentic fiction” and “immersive documentary” as they went. Such phrases can strike listeners as either catchy or opaque. Take the time to craft an elevator pitch using direct, clear language. Can you explain your project to the station in one breath? To the community your project serves? To your parents?

**Beta test!** It’s essential that your production timeline include sufficient allowance for beta testing. You need people with experience to create a rigorous structure, and to lead the beta test and incorporate improvements. Make sure they are accessing the project across a variety of devices, browsers, and levels of Internet connection and accessibility.

*Working on Ed Zed Omega  
“reminded me of the power of  
the simple and the analog.”  
— Andi McDaniel,  
Interactive Producer,  
TPT*



## Exploit Broadcast to Reach New Citizens: A Case Study

*Necessity truly was the mother of invention that birthed La Burbuja (The Bubble), the portable sound booth created by Sonic Trace and their designer Hugo Martinez. When Anayansi Diaz-Cortes and her team realized they’d need to have a structure to better appeal to the Oaxacan immigrants they wanted to engage, they embarked on a strategy that combined architecture/design, construction, and crowdfunding, with an appeal to the heart and aesthetic sensibility of the communities they targeted:*

### The team:

- called for potential designers in a broadcast space that was highly targeted — KCRW’s program *DNA: Design and Architecture (DNA)* — where the producers took aim at a core audience likely to deliver on what they needed;
- made an appealing case for the sound booth’s creation by describing the genesis of *Sonic Trace* and the importance of reaching new citizens in new ways. They rippled out that appeal via Kickstarter to more local listeners, cultural and design institutions, and those in the public media community, and they successfully raised the funds needed to construct the sound booth;
- made clear asks with a tight time frame — first for design submissions and then for Kickstarter support to build the winning design;
- selected a designer whose own personal story resonated with the goals of the project — Hugo was a young immigrant from Oaxaca when he arrived in LA as a teenager;
- kept the story rolling — returning multiple times to *DNA* listeners and online supporters to report on the project’s progress;
- invited a diverse mix of supporters, KCRW listeners, and community members to celebrate the sound booth’s launch at a local Oaxacan restaurant — where they collected the first of many stories about LA immigrant experiences inside La Burbuja

*“Don’t expect people to be naturally stoked about narrative arcs.”*

— Audrey Dilling,  
Co-producer,  
*Hear Here*

## Five Tips for Sharper Social Content:



*Cross-platform media production is not for the timid, and it’s best for those interested in evolving beyond the status quo. Most of Localore’s lead producers brought core experience in creating high-quality media in their respective fields of radio, film, and game production, but few had much experience negotiating and managing a multidisciplinary team and production budget. All of the lead producers were breaking new ground, in one way or another, and all gained significant on-the-job training! The Localore challenge to create new productions across platforms allowed them to:*

### 1.) The visual Web:

The *Austin Music Map* and *Planet Takeout* teams found ready-made communities of photographers on Flickr that helped to add pop to their immersive docs, while the *Reinvention Stories* and *Sonic Trace* team gained good traction on Facebook by creating eye-catching albums. Facebook was also a source for *iSeeChange*. Community-posted pics and questions were harvested to populate the *Almanac* for launch, before user-generated content (UGC) kicked in. Share and solicit photos, videos, illustration to build on the habits that users have already developed of producing and sharing these with their friends and networks.

### 2.) Social audio:

While there’s much talk about mobile and video as the hottest next areas of development, social audio platform SoundCloud attracted a surprising number of online listeners for projects such as *Austin Music Map*, *Curious City*, and *Black Gold Boom*. It also served as a key tool for story collection for *The Making Of...* and story curation for *Hear Here*, *iSeeChange*, and the Zeega-based sites.

### 3.) Mobile:

Through trial and error, the Localore producers and developers learned that not only should digital sites be accessible via mobile, but finding new ways for

**Craft smart asks:** The Kitchen Sisters asked participants, *What are you making?* *Sonic Trace* asked Latino immigrants in LA, *Why do you leave? Why do you stay? Why do you return?* *iSeeChange* asked, *Do you see change?* The questions you ask should be specific, distinct, and evocative. Don’t expect to arrive at the right question the first time. Experiment on a small scale until you get the results you want.

**Remember to close the loop:** It may be stating the obvious, but it is important to think carefully in advance about how you’ll let community participants know where they can find or listen to the content they’ve helped to create, and make it easy for them to share.

**Seek out and elevate natural storytellers:** As a rule, the producers found, crowdsourced content requires careful context, shaping, and verification. But when you find a subject who has the knack, go back for more.

**Perseverance furthers:** At the closing Public Media Lab, the Localore producers shared many accounts of how they had to revise their initial assumptions about the best ways to recruit participants and storytellers. Julia Kumari Drapkin of *iSeeChange* scrapped her plans for mobile engagement and headed out to the streets and ranches of Paonia, Colorado, to find locals whose everyday lives were directly affected by climate shifts. Only then — halfway through the production — did she begin to focus on creating the online *Almanac*. Erica Mu and Audrey Dilling of *Hear Here* built an interactive website, but found that few people wanted to contribute. They refocused their efforts on collecting stories at area libraries. Expect things to break. Expect you’ll need to adapt and adjust.

**Innovation requires illustration:** Trying something and reporting back to staff and stakeholders is valuable for demonstrating new capabilities inside of a station, even if the project or technique is not 100% successful, suggests Andi McDaniel of TPT. *Ed Zed Omega* provided “evidence that we were willing to take a risk,” and that led to further opportunities.

**Invest in yourself:** Through the Localore production, AIR’s intention was to give producers a shot not only at creating a new project, but also at stretching their own professional capacity to learn

*“Just keep approaching people.”*

— Todd Melby,  
Lead Producer,  
*Black Gold Boom*

how to manage a complex project, and make an important mark on their partner station and within a community. It’s demanding work. Balance is important, and so is owning both failures and successes. “Make room for life to happen,” says Jennifer Brandel.

**Delight:** Build spaces and opportunities to play with your colleagues, collaborators, and audience members, as the *Curious City* team did when they made “delight” a key tenet for reporters working on the project, or as the *Ed Zed Omega* team did in a pair of interactive events co-organized with the Walker Art Center, or as the *Hear Here* team did when they hosted a “Story Slam-wich,” featuring local participants and a grilled-cheese cook-off.

Choreograph gatherings with your story subjects, as the Kitchen Sisters did in their blowout *The Making Of...* event at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), which introduced creators they’d been covering to thousands of visitors over a two-day sprint. Reinvent public media in ways that make audience members yearn to join in.

*“We’re not the only ones telling the story; it’s all of us, together.”*

— Nikki Silva,  
Co-producer,  
*The Making Of...*

## Five Tips for Sharper Social Content:



users to consume and submit content out in the field can drive connection in certain instances. Carefully choreographing the interaction is key; people are more likely to participate at events where they are being directed to perform a particular action: to listen, to tell a story, or to tag a photo or video. Passive mobile installations — posters, QR codes, signage — generated fewer responses.

### 4.) Embeddable content:

Embeddable videos (via YouTube/Vimeo), audio (via SoundCloud), photos (via Flickr), and other more specialized content (Tumblr, Scribd, TimelineJS, Zeega, etc.) all drove higher digital exposure for projects — most notably *Curious City* — enabling both Localore producers and external reporters/bloggers/participants to share content easily online.

### 5.) The mundane:

The *Reinvention Stories* team noted that the process of creating immersive media uses more static photos, ambient audio, and “B-roll” — establishing shots, actuality moments, cinéma vérité moments — than one might expect. Make sure to capture what you need when you’re on the spot.

## Ring That Phone:



*A few tips from The Kitchen Sisters on how to collect stories via phone:*

- Listener phone lines work best when the questions they’re asking captivate people and trigger their imagination. Ask for something slightly unusual and compelling. Try posing the questions you’re thinking of asking to people around you in advance, to make certain that your message is clear and evocative of story.

- In the outgoing message, give callers examples of the kind and range of stories and ideas you’re searching for.
- Produce short on-air promos from the stories you collect to create a new quest for stories from listeners. Again, give examples of what you’re looking for. It will help draw out their memories and imagination.
- The more the station airs the promos, the better the daypart; the more compelling

the production of the on-air ask, the more calls you will get. Once or twice a day for a week has the potential to draw a lot of listener calls.

- Theme music or a sonic signature for a project helps draw people to the project — makes it more resonant and familiar. Use the same theme for both the stories and for the on-air promos.

# Insights for Station Leaders

## What's Your ROI ... Return on Innovation?



Here is an eight-point list from Localore station managers detailing the value proposition of the field cultivated by Localore and our lead producers:

- 1) New product development for digital/ community spaces
- 2) Professional development for staff — unifies station, energizes those who participate
- 3) A fundraising and community-engagement strategy to expand and diversify station's audience
- 4) An opportunity to elevate visibility and mission
- 5) A tool for repositioning the station with new community partners and networks built around a new, shared local value proposition. Meet with them to create it
- 6) Fresh and unexpected places to hang the station's shingle
- 7) A cool point of contact out in the world with potential listeners/members/donors
- 8) Inspiration, and the courage for others in the station to push more and go further with new ideas

*"I've been in public radio since 1968. ....  
It's amazing how many new good things  
there are to do and try. It's great."*

— Bill Thomas,  
Director of Radio,  
Prairie Public Broadcasting

Here are some of the lessons from Localore station leaders and collaborators gleaned from the closing Public Media Lab and their monthly project reports:

**Superserve your core PLUS:** Maintaining your core audience and reaching beyond to new members of the community are not mutually exclusive. "Keep the core programming. Frame innovation projects as valuable add-ons," suggests Bill Thomas, Director of Radio at Prairie Public Broadcasting. At WBEZ, the *Curious City* team produced a regular, signature segment during the local afternoon talk show, creating a profile for the project with listeners at a daypart with lower audience numbers. The stakes weren't as high as during drive time, and it gave them a little more room to experiment with moving listeners over to the digital crowdsourcing platform and encouraging online participants to tune in to the broadcast platform.

**Collaborate internally:** The work will not succeed without buy-in and mentorship from you — top station management. Pay attention to what happens *after* you sign the contract. Set up periodic updates. Go into the field or onto the news floor where the producers are experimenting. Make time to experience what is happening. Equally important is lateral support across the organization, with active partnership from station-based peers. AIR designed the Localore project to reflect this by identifying station liaisons to work directly with the lead producers. But the real work happens face to face, and often the onus is on producers to make regular contact with staff members and clarify how they can have a stake in the project.

**Go outside, and bring outside in:** The *Austin Music Map* team brought hip-hoppers who said they'd been trying with no success to get into the station for a long time to perform; the *Curious City* team invited Chicagoans in to help report stories. Invite bloggers, performers, students into the station to contribute to what you're doing. It is one of the greatest incentives for those you're trying to reach, and it's a first step toward building reach and loyalty among new audiences. *Ed Zed Omega, Reinvention Stories, iSeeChange, Sonic Trace, The Making Of..., Hear Here* — virtually every one of the

Localore productions figured out a way to bring citizens inside of public media — into the building, a new physical space, or a venue — in a new way.

**Invest in innovation:** Have you budgeted for experimentation? How do you define innovation, from an operational standpoint? If you aren't devoting resources and haven't got a clear grasp on what falls into the category of "innovation," it's important that you take a first step. Start incrementally. For one, while many digital production and distribution platforms are free, the talent needed to make them work effectively for a station isn't. R&D requires support not only for production, but also for development, design, and community-engagement strategy. Match ambitions to available time, space, staff, resources, and assignment, and communicate regularly with the team on budgets and timelines along the way.

**One risk can fund another:** Localore stations reported that their productions drew attention from both local and national funders looking to support other emerging forms of media and civic engagement. The fact that they'd assumed the initial risk (with AIR and the lead producer) gave greater incentive to new funders to step up for a phase II. Bring your development and production staff together to craft a new value proposition for the station in the community. Identify new local funding stories. Spend some time on the Localore Station Runway and consider producing a similar, short-form media calling card to take to investors and local partners.

**Integrate experimental content:** From the get-go, address how elements of experimental work will flow with the current broadcast platform, will be incorporated into the culture of the station — at the morning news meeting, for example — and how you'll communicate progress (successes and failures) with the rest of the staff. Having everyone invested in the outcome of experiments is a sure way to push the shift toward greater institutional dexterity and more capacity for risk-taking. *Curious City* quickly became part of the morning news meetings, and features were given a regular slot in WBEZ's *Afternoon Shift*; *Hear Here* was repeatedly featured in KALW's *Crosscurrents*; *Austin Music Map* found a home in *Texas Music Matters*; KQED found ways to slot interstitials and calls to action for *The Making Of...* into a tight programming schedule.

## Outreach Sparkle:



*Here are a few ways the Localore projects enhanced stations' outreach networks and methods:*

- **Enliven the station's existing outreach channels:**

Inventive new projects can help to animate existing community relationships, as well as the station's promotional vehicles: newsletters, program guides, sonic IDs, and membership premiums.

- **Build buzz with preview events:**

Bringing in bloggers, press, station members, community partners, and local funders to see a new interactive project before it is released will not only deepen connections, but also provide valuable feedback.

- **Seize opportunities for creative swag:**

Localore producers created and distributed a range of promotional items tailored to reflect their project themes and goals: bookmarks, postcards, letterpressed posters, fliers, buttons, T-shirts, fortune cookies, stickers, and more. What can you create — perhaps in tandem with your station's communication or design department — that will express the spirit of your project in a new way and reel people in to be a part of it?

*“If we really want to react and be relevant to new communities, we need to experiment.”*

— Jennifer Ferro,  
General Manager, KCRW

## Learn More:



### Coverage of Localore from Current:

link: [bit.ly/Localore\\_Current](https://bit.ly/Localore_Current)

### Localore posts on the NCME blog:

link: [bitly.com/bundles/localore/3](https://bitly.com/bundles/localore/3)

### AIRblast Spotlights:

- January 2013: A Science Journalist Hedges Her Bets in Paonia, Colorado (Julia Kumari Drapkin)  
link: [bit.ly/Jan\\_AIRblast](https://bit.ly/Jan_AIRblast)
- May 2013: Yes, In My Backyard and Other Rural Realities (Sally Kane)  
link: [bit.ly/May\\_AIRblast](https://bit.ly/May_AIRblast)
- May 2012: Why I Love the Indie Audio Community: Thoughts on Radio, Innovation and Interactive Documentary (Jesse Shapins)  
link: [bit.ly/May12\\_AIRblast](https://bit.ly/May12_AIRblast)

### Additional coverage:

link: [airmediaworks.org/story-so-far](https://airmediaworks.org/story-so-far)

**Consider your timing:** Everyone is feeling the extraordinary pressures of too many distractions and a need to get too much done with too little time. It’s important to understand and anticipate that the success of a new, experimental initiative depends on the timing you choose. Is it an election year? Is your station moving? When does school end? When is the pledge drive? External factors can feed or starve an experimental new production. Find a zone that will allow for the right people to be involved with sufficient attention.

**Launch well:** If you’re sending up a new production or experiment, consider carefully how to introduce it to the community. Involve close stakeholders early, and line up press materials and local bloggers and reporters. Many of the Localore projects launched with events in local venues that reflected their commitment to involving community — restaurants, community centers, local theaters, and performance spaces.

**Anticipate success.** What will happen if your website or event draws more participants than you imagined? Will you have enough bandwidth, space, or staff capacity? What will you ask them to do once they’ve arrived?

**Step out of the way:** Let leaders rise and producers produce. Your job is to be a cheerleader, and to bring the resources and the space to let them do their best work. Localore local interns, freelancers, designers, communities, and station-based producers found a toehold in these productions and a place to sing — but, says Hawk Mendenhall of KUT, it’s important to minimize meetings, paperwork, and “brushes with bureaucracy” for the production team. Be sensitive and supportive of the needs of some of your producers needing guidance and support in fundraising.

**It’s a long game:** Many of the teams expressed that they had only just mastered the logic and structure of their projects as the year-long R&D phase was ending. If you’re successful, one push leads to the next unexplored frontier and opens doors to new questions. Be clear with your expectations — internally and externally with investors and partners. Laying groundwork for new relationships with community partners, developing trust among a new network of participants, and establishing a clear trajectory for an ongoing production require a sustained effort over time.

*“The biggest risk is not trying new ways to tell stories.”*

— Hawk Mendenhall,  
Associate Director  
of Broadcast and Content,  
KUT

## Designing for Impact



*While the procedures for tracking broadcast audience are well established, the field of tracking impact for cross-platform public media projects is still in flux, and there is a wide span of sophistication across the public media network. The unique nature of Localore as a national multimedia production required AIR to invent a methodology for gathering and analyzing data over time and at the conclusion of the R&D. There may be lessons in AIR's impact evaluation strategy to be gleaned for big, middle, small stations.*

*AIR's assigned a team of station liaisons to complete monthly surveys in order to scrape data across broadcast, digital and street platforms. Here are a few recommendations:*

- **Designate someone at your station to collect and report on data:**

While they might work closely with producers to uncover this information, it's important to engage someone outside of the production to be responsible for tracking. Ideally, you want someone who — at a minimum — likes numbers, is good with Excel, and has a passion for unpacking the story numbers tell.

- **Designing your survey:**

First step, you'll want to sit down with the team before production starts to lay out the landscape of activity. This will inform the survey fields you create and the way you formulate questions. Consider enlisting someone with expertise in statistics and data analysis to advise you in this process. It will save time in the long run and minimize the need to filter through useless data. Free analytics tools are available for most of the major social platforms. Here, too, be discerning. It's less important to collect all available metrics, and more important to decide at the start which platforms your digital community uses most and focus on the range of interactions you're going to care about.

- **Broadcast data is the linchpin:**

You'll need to be able to track broadcasts for all elements that air on the station in order to accurately reflect Nielsen data. Know in advance that your broadcast will have far greater impact than digital or street/event numbers.

- **Google Analytics comes next:**

Make sure you standardize and build consistency for measuring where on the station site project-specific media will park. It may mean tweaking Google Analytics or finding another tool for measuring the discrete digital impact of the work.

- **Collect data beyond the numbers:**

User testimonials, press coverage, awards, content submissions, and other qualitative responses can serve as important indicators of project success. Set up a consistent framework for where you'll store that information. For Localore, we created a fairly sophisticated methodology using Box.net that opened up contributions to those working across the field.

- **Keep your impact story updated:**

Establish a regular timeline for collecting and analyzing. For Localore, it was on a monthly schedule over 12 months. It's a good idea to take stock after a period of time — perhaps six months in — to gather the data and see what story may emerge. If you have funds for data visualization, it's worth the investment to be able to most clearly communicate the impact of the work to funders, stakeholders, and participants.

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