

A Bold Step Forward
in Support of Our Community



Rhode Island **PBS** 
Strategic Plan



Executive Summary

Our topline goals are to:

- Better serve our community as a trusted resource and partner to support Southeastern New England's unique culture and diverse interests
- Broaden the reach and impact of our services by growing our audience and membership
- Raise our profile within our viewing area; build greater awareness for Rhode Island PBS
- Invest in our team and strive to be among the best places to work in our community
- Build a sustainable financial future for the station

The means by which we accomplish these goals are directly related to the quality of our content. Therefore, we must:

- Improve the quality and quantity of locally produced content that educates, informs and inspires our community; improve our in-house production capacity for weekly programming, and utilize independent producers for high quality original series and documentaries
- Expand our education content to support the region's educational needs
- Take on a long-term meaningful cause that will have lasting impact on our community – climate change
- Expand our digital capacity to address the way in which the community wants to consume content: over-the-air, video-on-demand, streaming, podcasts, etc.
- Launch a brand campaign to raise awareness for the station

To justify a strategic investment and demonstrate success, we will:

- Improve existing and produce new high-quality content that tracks to our community's interests
- Produce a new children's series, publish new instructional content, increase LearningMedia registrations, and improve engagement and education equality in high poverty districts
- Launch a brand awareness campaign to increase community engagement
- Substantially increase over-the-air and online viewers, and Rhode Island PBS memberships
- Increase funding from corporate underwriters, sponsors and grants



Strategic Plan

WSBE Rhode Island PBS strives to make the world a better place.

This aspiration defines our work, our identity, and our future.

We believe through the power of public media we help people better understand each other, themselves, and our community—empowering us all to make the world a better place.

Our aspiration elevates us on the media landscape, helps to set goals today and guides our course for tomorrow.

We believe Rhode Island PBS is our community's stage – the platform on which diverse voices may address issues that matter.

We create content from a compassionate heart, discerning mind, empathetic ear and visionary eye — extending our hand to lift voices that might not otherwise be heard.

We strive to lead Rhode Island on a journey of exploration and self-discovery down the path of lifelong learning.

Our Mission

“With the support of our members and sponsors, we serve the needs of all generations within Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. We spark imagination, explore our history and reflect the values of our diverse community. Guided by civic engagement, we provide unique, high-quality local, national, and international programming and digital content that educates, inspires and entertains.”

We harness the power of public media to create content and opportunities that are educational in the broadest sense of the word, so learners of all ages can access the tools and information they need to lead happier, healthier, productive, more fulfilling lives.

Our Vision

“Rhode Island PBS strives to be the most trusted resource for lifelong enrichment, and alternative, engaging content, reflecting the values of our diverse community.”

We are innovative, passionate, accountable, respectful, and compassionate. Our values help drive our success as an organization.

Our Guiding Principles

Respect. We engage our community in ways that build mutual trust and respect for the dignity and intellect of each individual.

Integrity. We operate ethically, honestly, and with the highest level of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Quality. We create and present content and services of intellectual integrity and cultural merit.

Commitment. We engage our staff, supporters, and the Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts communities with a genuine intent to inform, inspire, and evoke meaningful conversations.

Collaboration. We accomplish more when we work together and purposefully extend our relationships throughout the communities we serve.

Our Goals

Our goals are to grow our audience, expand member support, and forge new relationships. These goals can be achieved by building on four core focus areas:

Content

Education Services and Community Outreach

Operational Effectiveness

Financial Stewardship

Our Audience

Rhode Island PBS has three key audiences to serve in setting priorities for creating content and investing financial and human resources.

- Children under age 18 and their parents
- Adults age 23-54
- Adults age 55+

Children and their parents are Rhode Island PBS's bridge to a digital future. Rhode Island PBS is developing a new children's series to help build that bridge.

A hallmark of PBS is its trusted, innovative, and award-winning educational series for children. Rhode Island PBS will make its mark on the local and national scene with a children's series that reflects the unique flavor of Rhode Island. Rhode Island PBS's award-winning Education Services team will produce the learning guides to accompany the series, fulfilling the educational and creative needs of children and their parents as only Rhode Island PBS can.

Our series fulfills every aspect of our mission, and with an eye toward national distribution, can put Rhode Island PBS on the National PBS map and generate revenue for the station.

Adults age 25-54 - Rhode Island's Millennial and Gen X populations - are our future members and donors.

Rhode Island PBS will launch new short and long-form content about the Ocean State's changing environment, and create more in-depth coverage of public affairs and local history. This content will be delivered with On Demand convenience and mobile access.

Adults age 55+ in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts are predicted to increase by 15%¹ as a group over the next five years.

Considered the traditional PBS television audience, this burgeoning group of discerning viewers and their significant shift to digital technology will continue to drive our content choices.

¹ 2018 Claritas LLC; Rhode Island Population Projections 2010-2040, 2013; Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Market Blueprint 2018.

Content

Goal: Be the Southeastern New England media choice for high-value and high-quality content

Content is at the heart of what we do. Our local storytelling resonates with our audiences. It's our value proposition.

Our audiences inspire us with the various ways they watch our content. We need to meet them where they are by preparing our content for broadcast television, Internet streaming, Video On Demand, our website, social media, and podcasts. We also scout emerging platforms.

What resonates? In 2019, Rhode Island PBS members and non-members ranked these topics as either "most interesting" or "very interesting":

	Members	Non-members
Nature/environment	80.1%	68.2%
Rhode Island/New England history	79.3%	65.1%
Current event issues	69.5%	55.3%
Science	68.1%	57.6%
Travel	66.8%	63.2%
Performing arts	64.9%	49.1%
Cooking	55.9%	55.5%
Gardening	51.4%	43.3%
Politics	51.3%	34.2%

Based on the data, we will expand coverage of nature and the environment, local history, and news and public affairs content. We will also periodically re-sample our audiences for new trends and interests.

Strategic Initiatives

- Focus on audience – what they want to see, how they want to see it and when.
- Grow our broadcast audience - current and new.
- Aggressively extend our programs and productions across digital delivery platforms.
- Create and acquire cross-platform local content that aligns with our mission, is locally and regionally story-driven, targets specific audiences, and aligns with funding opportunities.
- Catalog current productions; diagnose successes and make strategic improvements to boost the productions' cross-platform engagement with audiences.
- Forge production partnerships with media and community organizations of distinction.



A Lively
Experiment

Goal: Collaborate with independent producers to create high quality documentaries and series.

There are many independent producers making content that aligns with our mission. It is content that inspires, influences, and moves. We seek to collaborate with those individuals and organizations who create content that advances our goals and values.

Strategic Initiatives

- Increase engagement with independent producers to expedite production of high-quality, creative content.
- Allocate funding to support independent projects that reflect our goals.

Goal: Be the region's leading resource for content about environmental research and the local impact of climate change

Rhode Island is known as the Ocean State with more than 400 miles of shoreline. World-class universities and research labs study New England's waters and marine life. Indigenous peoples in our area - Narragansett, Wampanoag, Pequot, and Mohegan - are rich sources of knowledge about our natural world and its stewardship. Historical, cultural, and environmental organizations lend their expertise and resources.

Combining the strengths of these stakeholders, we will fulfill our viewers' need for more content about nature and our environment. Rhode Island PBS will launch a new initiative to be the valued, trusted, and a widely-used media resource and authority about rising sea levels, and the local effects of climate change.

Strategic Initiatives

- Create original and gather existing content from environmental experts and scientists to build an extensive multi-media resource library.
- Launch a brand identity for the project and a campaign to spark audience engagement.
- Produce and adapt content for PBS LearningMedia.
- Use the project to stimulate more local content and partnerships.
- Pursue partnerships that fund the venture.

Goal: Be the local leader in creating digital content that engages audiences and attracts a new generation of media users

Whether we produce digital-only content or adapt broadcast programs for digital, we must develop cross-platform content to engage a new generation of Rhode Island PBS viewers.

At the same time, our older audiences who traditionally watch scheduled television are also changing how they watch our content. Combined, these demands amplify opportunities for new relationships with our audiences and to attract new viewers. We will create new digital programs, energize interactive experiences through social networks, and activate community and virtual screening events to engage and better serve our communities.

Strategic Initiatives

- Create an in-house digital team and strategy that generates content for both broadcast and digital distribution, to attract and engage a new generation of media consumers.
- Increase on-demand viewership and engagement for existing productions.
- Acquire external digital productions and series to attract new audiences as well as engage current Rhode Island PBS media viewers.
- Develop digital opportunities in Education Services, weekly broadcasts, digital-only content, and incorporate opportunities for sponsors and underwriting.

Goal: Be a recognized, valued source of original programming for children

With PBS already valued by parents as the most trusted source of children's content in the US, Rhode Island PBS will expand its connection to local parents and their young children by developing and producing an original children's television program.

Strategic Initiatives

- Identify local collaborator(s) with necessary production credentials and educational expertise to develop and produce a series.
- Support the series with comprehensive instructional resources and a robust community engagement plan.

Education Services and Community Outreach

The Rhode Island PBS Education Services Department operates on two complementary tracks: developing, producing and distributing instructional content; and extending the impact and reach of all Rhode Island PBS content through community outreach and professional development for educators, students, and families.

These combined efforts have established Rhode Island PBS Education Services as a recognized and respected provider of instructional services certified by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). We focus on three core areas of service: K-12, pre-K/early childhood, and adult basic/GED education.

Goal: Be a recognized, valued producer of educational content for PBS LearningMedia

Since 2018, we have published 15 instructional content collections to Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia, generating more than 35,000 visits by educators and students locally and nationally. In our next phase of growth, we will move boldly beyond the standard public media model of adapting general audience content, to develop, produce, and publish original content to Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia specifically for instructional use.

This exciting phase will be informed by state K-12 subject area professionals and stakeholders (e.g., RIDE, Rhode Island Council for Social Studies; Rhode Island Math Teachers Association; the Tomaquag Museum, and other Rhode Island cultural organizations) to support state curriculum goals. This approach will strengthen the station's position locally as a valuable provider of instructional content, and raise our profile on the national public media instructional content landscape.

Strategic Initiatives

- Produce original instructional content aligned to Rhode Island standards.
- Increase development and production of PBS LearningMedia resources from local productions (for example, *Opioids in Our Community*) and grant-funded national programming (for example, *Camp TV*).

Goal: Increase our prominence as a community stakeholder known for high-quality educational media resources and services

Strategic Initiatives

- Increase focus and delivery of the full range of Education Services (pre-K, K-12, adult basic education) to under-served communities, with special emphasis on those defined as high-need through child poverty levels, as reported annually by RI Kids Count.
- Provide career development opportunities to students (middle/high-school, university) through mentorship, especially in journalism and its production.
- Use existing and explore emerging multi-platform technologies to facilitate content and service delivery to under-served audiences (for example, deliver web-style content through datacasting and instructional content through free mobile apps).

Goal: Be recognized as a trusted convener, creating accessible forums for sharing diverse perspectives around important issues that impact our audience

Through collaborations with relevant community stakeholders, Rhode Island PBS has developed a strong model of community outreach to our diverse audiences. Our virtual and in-person screening events and discussions raise awareness, share critical information, and provide access to expertise and services. Over the next four years, Rhode Island PBS dedicates itself to extending the reach and impact of outreach efforts around local and national program content by inaugurating high-profile cross-platform initiatives.

Strategic Initiatives

- Develop fully-funded multi-platform projects that include producing original content and involve community outreach and education resources (for example, the ongoing *Opioids in Our Community* initiative).
- Provide virtual and in-person community screenings and discussion events related to local and national content, and station grant topics.

Operational Effectiveness

With the leadership and support of the Rhode Island PBS Foundation Board of Directors, Rhode Island PBS is positioned to be a 'Best in Class' public media institution, a 'Best Places to Work' in Rhode Island, and a diverse and inclusive organization. We achieve that by expanding ideas, practices, values, and the perspectives of our employees, our partners, and our community. Our operational effectiveness relies on the three pillars of our organization: our brand, our technology, and our people.

Our Brand

Goal: Raise our profile within our viewing area; build greater awareness of Rhode Island PBS as a trusted source for quality content

Our brand represents who we are. Every point of contact builds our reputation for being a responsive, respectful, and trustworthy brand. Telling the stories that convey to the public who we are, what we do, and why it is important credits and differentiates our work.

Strategic initiatives

- Launch a brand strategy analysis and campaign that ensures WSBE Rhode Island PBS is positioned in the market as the trusted source for quality local content and educational media expertise, uniquely distinguished from other media.
- Strengthen the association between our WSBE call letters and our Rhode Island PBS name to help our largest audience - terrestrial broadcast viewers - find us.

Our Technology

Goal: Expand our digital platform, continue improvements to our broadcast capabilities, and plan for emerging technologies

Developing a robust and effective digital content distribution strategy goes hand-in-glove with content creation; it is essential in reaching and engaging our audience, and amplifying the impact of our content by making it easily accessible on multiple platforms and channels.

In 2019, 88% of members and 80% of non-members in our core adult audience over 50 years old preferred to watch terrestrial television in real time. By February 2021, website and streaming data through ripbs.org and pbs.org show this audience is shifting their viewing habits to on-demand delivery, too. The younger edge of this age group is more technologically sophisticated and getting used to the immediate response that faster media technology delivers.

Strategic Initiatives

- Build a state-of-the-art digital processing and distribution plant and team to support production, broadcast, streaming, and on-demand platforms, to meet the various viewing preferences of our viewers.
- Maintain a superior infrastructure for our website and its connections to PBS and other online portals to allow smooth interface, intuitive navigation, low latency and high connectivity.
- Automate, update, upgrade, or replace hardware and software systems as needed.

Our People

Goal: Ensure our diverse workforce is engaged in the success of the organization and has the tools and training to be successful in their roles

Strategic Initiatives

- Cultivate a culture of accountability that ensures responsibility towards delivering our strategic priorities and operational objectives.
- Nurture and develop the talent of our employees; establish and chart progress of Human Resource metrics, systems and practices.
- Foster an environment of community service and giving in the organization.
- Create a talent management map that identifies strengths and growth needs of all employee.
- Establish a discretionary spending budget for community giving.
- Develop a training and development program that addresses the needs of the staff.

Financial Stewardship

Goal: Build a Sustainable Financial Future for WSBE Rhode Island PBS

WSBE Rhode Island PBS has always attracted a loyal audience of broadcast viewers. As we serve these viewers and attract new ones, we realize they are increasingly seeking out content online. At the same time, national trends show a decrease in membership and corporate revenue for PBS stations.

With viewing habits changing and traditional sources of funding declining, public media's model of support must continue to evolve if we are to achieve our goals of service with and for the community. This will require us to continue to grow our investments and diversify our base of support—strengthening our relationship with existing supporters, developing new relationships, and investing in new models of fundraising.

Strategic Initiatives

- Responsibly steward the investments to derive income to supplement the operations of the organization to achieve our strategic goals.
- Develop infrastructure to capture data needed to better understand our existing and potential audiences, and supports expansion of philanthropic revenue; create a compelling value proposition to attract new corporate underwriters of the station's priorities; engage the Rhode Island PBS Foundation Board through their personal and professional networks to support fundraising and sponsorships.
- Build and strengthen relationships with individuals who can provide financial resources to Rhode Island PBS, with the goal of increasing membership and major donor support.
- Increase support for new and existing projects from foundations, corporations and businesses, and government agencies, including support for our work in civic engagement, local journalism, and educational services for high need audiences.
- Expand revenue-generating partnerships, like vehicle donation partnership and AAA travel club partnership, and special initiatives, like the Opioids initiative, that enable us to address a community issue and fund raise around it.
- Develop a four-year spending model to support the Plan's Strategic Initiatives.



WSBE Rhode Island PBS
50 Park Lane
Providence, RI 02907
401-222-3636 ripbs.org