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KBOO Community Radio Station Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW/ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF KBOO COMMUNITY RADIO	5
KBOO Today	5
History of KBOO – The Beginning	5
History of KBOO – 1975 to 1990	7
History of KBOO – Modern Expansion and New Technologies	7
History of KBOO – The First Decade of the 21 st Century – 2000 to 2010	8
CHAPTER 2: MARKET DEMOGRAPHICS	9
Market Demographics: Portland Metro Area	9
Market Demographics: Online and Apps	10
CHAPTER 3: EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	11
Board of Directors	11
Committees	11
Program Charter	11
Paid Staff Members	12
CHAPTER 4: FINANCIAL RESOURCES	14
Average Annual Paid Memberships From 2000 – 2010	14
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS	15

DRAFT

DRAFT

CHAPTER 6: REINVENTING KBOO – A PLAN OF ACTION	17
Overview	17
Reinventing KBOO – Programming	17
Reinventing KBOO - Marketing and Outreach	19
Reinventing KBOO - Media Center	19
Reinventing KBOO – Diversified Revenues	20
CHAPTER 7: PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES	21
Overview	21
Goal #1 - Board Development	21
Goal #2 – Staff Development	24
GOAL #3 – Overall Volunteer Development	25
GOAL # 4 - Community Development	26
CHAPTER 8: PROPOSED PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES - A PLAN OF ACTION	27
Overview	27
Programming – General	27
CHAPTER 9: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – A PLAN OF ACTION	31
Goal #1 - Marketing and Community Outreach	31
Goal #2 – Media Center	32
Goal #3 – Secondary Product Development	32

DRAFT

DRAFT

CHAPTER 10: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY – A PLAN OF ACTION	33
Goal #1 – Membership	34
Goal #2 – Grant Writing	35
Goal #3 – Media Center and Secondary Product Development	44
CHAPTER 11: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	45
Year One: June 2011- June 2012	45
Year Two: August 2012- July 2013	45
Year Three: August 2013- July 2014	45
Year Four: August 2014- July 2015	46
Year Five: August 2015- July 2016	46
CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION	47
CHAPTER 13: SOURCE DOCUMENT	48

DRAFT

DRAFT

KBOO Community Radio Station Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Overview/ Executive Summary

This section will be completed as the last piece of this Strategic Plan because it will summarize the most important findings that emerge from the planning process and Working Group.

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CHAPTER 1: History of KBOO Community Radio

KBOO Today

KBOO is a community radio station based in Portland, Oregon. The station provides music, culture, news and public affairs to listeners in Portland metro area, which includes Vancouver, WA, as well as Corvallis and Hood River and outlying areas. KBOO broadcasts every day of the year, 24 hours per day on air and also offers two audio streams via its website. Further, the station is universally accessible to the public via a Public Radio Tuner app for iPhone or iPod.

The KBOO Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation, which owns and operates the radio station. The station's professional memberships include the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, West Coast Public Radio, Pacifica Foundation and the Consortium for Public Broadcasting in Oregon.

KBOO is Community Radio, which is defined by certain common characteristics that KBOO shares with other similar stations. The radio format is non-commercial, educational, and locally based. Further, the station depends on community support, local control, and unique programming, which distinguish it as a community radio station. The format is especially potent because community broadcasting invigorates local communities and adds local voices to the media environment, which is increasingly nationalized, consolidated and pre-packaged for mass audiences.

As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, KBOO is dedicated to peace, justice, democracy, human rights, multiculturalism, environmentalism, freedom of expression, and social change.

History of KBOO – The Beginning

KBOO Community Radio began in the 1960's when a group of local citizens in Portland, OR wanted a classical music radio station. Disappointed by the absence of such a station, the group organized themselves as Portland Listener Supported Radio in 1964.

The group of local Portland citizens was inspired to develop a community radio station because of the influence of Pacifica Foundation's KPFA radio station that had been founded in 1949 and had pioneered the concept and the philosophies of a community-based radio station in Berkeley, CA. Friends, family and the community told the founder, Lewis Hill, that non-commercial, listener-supported community radio would never work. However, the concept was successful and spawned numerous community radio stations throughout the country.

The example of KPFA certainly inspired a group of passionate and committed Portlanders who created KBOO based on the model that had been developed by Lewis Hill. One of KPFA's former volunteers had created a similar station in Seattle with the call letters KRAB. When the Portland group approached him for guidance, Lorenzo Milam agreed to help them organize a

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station. After several planning sessions, Portland Listener Supported Radio applied for and received a radio license.

A former community radio volunteer from Seattle, David Calhoun, packed up his VW with a transmitter from KRAB and moved south, once the group received its radio license. Thanks to a diverse group of approximately thirty volunteers from the Portland area, the group procured the basic requirements that would enable them to begin broadcasting. From a donated basement room on Third and Salmon Streets in downtown Portland, the group had just enough room for two tape recorders and one turntable.

At a cost of less than \$4000, KBOO Community radio was on the air in June of 1968. With a total output of only ten watts less than an average light bulb and a monthly station budget of \$50, the dedicated group of volunteers had created a powerful, innovative and community-driven media source on Portland's radio airwaves.

Although at first KBOO was only on the air when a volunteer was available to flip a switch and activate the repeater signal from KRAB in Seattle, the station began to get local attention as an exciting source for community-driven programming. KBOO volunteers began remote recordings at local cultural, political and community meetings and events; Notable artists were invited to the KBOO studio for interviews and performances; Local poets discovered this innovative medium for their work; and KBOO became popular as a source for new and underground music that spanned the range from classical to rock to folk music.

KBOO began to attract listeners in greater numbers and financial support from listener-subscribers began to offset KBOO's operating costs, although the organization's budget was still subsistence level. Also, KBOO's volunteer base began to grow and diversify, which resulted in an increase of local-origin programming. During the summer of 1970, KBOO installed a 1000-watt transmitter that enabled KBOO to be heard in much of Northwest Oregon, which further increased the station's audience and subscriptions.

By this point, KBOO had outgrown its studio and moved to a storefront on SE Belmont Street near 31st Avenue. Volunteers lined the makeshift studio walls with egg cartons for sound insulation, the restroom graffiti achieved local notoriety for its depth and sheer quantity, and two desks were shared by everyone.

In 1972, the station formalized its commitment to serving the public and incorporated as a non-profit organization under the name of the KBOO Foundation. By 1973, the staff had grown to five, with about 50 active volunteers, and approximately 600 subscribers donated an average of \$20 a year. The station applied for and was awarded an \$80,000 federal grant to help purchase equipment. These numerous accomplishments positioned KBOO for the next phase of development and growth, which would be fulfilling, challenging and stimulating for the

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organization and the community that it had created around it as well as for the broader Oregon community that had come to appreciate KBOO for its unique “spin” on community radio.

History of KBOO – 1975 to 1990

By 1975 the KBOO Foundation had grown to embrace 800+ members and the Foundation elected its first Board of Directors. This step was important in procuring the license and ownership of the station, which enabled KBOO to relinquish its relationship with KRAB radio and its parent company, Jack Straw Memorial Foundation. Although this relationship had been vital to KBOO’s growth and development, it was now time for the Portland station to stand alone and assert its place as a fully competent and independent radio station for the people of Oregon.

KBOO continued to grow and mature and in 1977 the station moved to SW Yamhill Street. Also, this significant moment in KBOO’s history saw the station transition to a 24-hour broadcasting schedule. Further, KBOO was broadcasting at 12,500 watts. KBOO enjoyed rapid growth in its new downtown location when subscribers soared from 1,200 in early 1978 to well above 2,000 by 1980. Volunteers increased as well to approximately 300 volunteers by the end of the 1970’s. This growth drew national attention as one of the strongest volunteer programs in the nation.

In 1980, KBOO hired its first new director and began regular new productions. Then in 1981, when urban renewal in downtown Portland forced a search for a new home, KBOO found its present location at 20 SE Eighth Avenue. Through a massive volunteer effort, a new station was created from what was previously an empty warehouse. This move bolstered the organization’s strength as a community presence, increased their self-sufficiency and amplified the possibilities for expansion of all aspects of their business.

In the early '80s, KBOO broadened its commitment to multicultural programming by adding new Spanish- and Asian-language programming. African-American musical programming was added in 1981 and in 1984 KBOO introduced a strip of Hispanic programming. Also, the station’s News and Public Affairs Director, along with a group of volunteers created a nightly newscast, which was supplemented by a new wire service and national newscast from Pacifica Radio.

By the mid-1980’s KBOO had raised enough funds to purchase its building and KBOO was in the black for the first time in memory. The building purchase was completed in 1986. KBOO boosted its power to 23,000 watts and began broadcasting in stereo for the first time. Another major federal grant in 1987 enabled KBOO to upgrade studio equipment, a satellite dish was added on the roof, and the station bought a remote transmitter, which enabled live remote broadcasts of community events.

History of KBOO – Modern Expansion and New Technologies

During the 1990’s KBOO continued its expansion into areas outside of the Portland Metro Area. The station set up a translator in White Salmon, WA, which enabled the station to broadcast into

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the Columbia Gorge and also installed a translator in the Corvallis area, which enabled KBOO to reach audiences in the Mid-Willamette Valley.

In 1991, KBOO moved its transmitter to a new location, on the 550-foot KGON tower on Portland's West Hills. The antenna is now 300 feet higher than before, which gives the station much broader range. Also, the station increased its wattage to 26,500. Excited listeners reported hearing KBOO clearly from the Oregon Coast and the outskirts of Eugene for the first time.

At noon on July 31, 1999, KBOO began streaming online via its website. KBOO now enjoys a worldwide listenership, and continues to receive feedback and financial support from listeners as far away as Japan and Europe.

History of KBOO – The First Decade of the 21st Century – 2000 to 2010

KBOO is important to the community it serves because of their unique market share, which includes distinctive programming and voices. In the first years of the new century KBOO found itself competing for listeners with other local radio stations and also with the advent and subsequent widespread use of portable media. These factors have caused a decline in membership revenues and listenership. KBOO recognized that it must evolve and diversify in order to move forward, to remain viable, and to attract new and different audiences and supporters.

The strategic planning came at a critical time for KBOO. At this key point, KBOO board and staff made the important decision to come together and plan for their future. They knew that it was important to look not only at the short-term impacts of the reductions of members and listeners to the organization, but also at the long-term effects. They also knew they had spent many years building a strong organization and an array of programming and community outreach that the community relied on.

To this end, KBOO initiated this strategic planning process, which began in 2010 and culminated in 2011. The charge was to provide the organization with a five-year strategic plan that clearly states goals, strategies, action steps and timelines for achieving these goals. Additionally, KBOO took a hard look at the organization's internal needs and abilities in developing a financial plan and fundraising strategy for the same time period. Above all, this planning process symbolizes the organization's commitment to a future that is full of new and renewed opportunities for evolution and expansion. KBOO is dedicated to thriving for another fifty years and beyond.

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