

The Listening Project

Listening to the Community and Looking for What Matters



ideastreamSM

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***“It is easier to keep talking once
you know someone is listening.”***

A participant in the very first community dialogue of *The Listening Project* tells how public broadcasting can strengthen the resolve of Northeast Ohio residents to improve their communities and their own lives.

The comment shapes the operating principles and sets the goals for **ideastream**SM, an innovative, provocative multiple media public service organization.

The gathering in which the comment was voiced was the first in a series of conversations in which public broadcasting became the listener—the audience—as the community defined Northeast Ohio needs and identified resources. More than 7,700 individuals in town meetings, broadcast forums and mail, telephone and Internet surveys told us how the new organization, **ideastream**, could use multiple media to help strengthen and fortify local communities.

**For a complete report of
The Listening Project,
please see www.wviz.org
or www.wcpn.org**

A New Beginning

In the summer of 2001, two independent organizations serving Northeast Ohio—90.3 WCPN® and WVIZ/PBS—joined forces to create a new multiple media organization. WVIZ/PBS is a public television station that signed on the air in 1965. 90.3 WCPN is a public radio station that signed on the air in 1984. Both stations brought well-established revenue streams, creative and technical capability as well as a tradition of service and excellence. Now, governing boards, office systems, staffs, and budgets are consolidated in a new organization with a new name—**ideastream**—that combines the vision of a multiple media future with the legacy of a rich public service past.

From the beginning, this new organization focused on the two words that define its new mission: strengthening community. It was clear from the start that the power of this new organization holds great promise to serve audiences in new and exciting ways. All the resources of radio, TV, the Internet, and other media are now available to tell every story and to add dimension to every piece of content.

But it is important to know what those stories are: what kind of information does the community want and need? How can a non-profit media organization—operated in the public interest, with access to a variety of sources of information and with a variety of outlets to disseminate that information to the people—best serve? The **ideastream** vision statement for 2005 gives an overview of what the future holds.

How will this new organization achieve this vision?

It became clear that a much better understanding of several words in the vision statement was required. Who exactly is in the “community”? How can broadcasting “connect”? Is there a common community agenda that can be identified through some mechanism? What is the true value of having programming and services “relate to our lives”?

For help, **ideastream** sought out long-time broadcasting consultants, Drs. Judith and David LeRoy of TRAC Media Services. Together with the **ideastream** staff, they generated a list of what they needed to know: who is the constituent community, how does that community really feel about their lives, their perceptions of public media and its role, and what is ultimately important to them. Finally, a project was designed to tackle all of these questions, one that would put **ideastream** in touch with people who could help provide answers.

What follows is a road map that identifies where our listeners and viewers want to go and offers ideas on how to get there. But we see this as only a beginning. In the months ahead, we intend to engage in additional dialogues with the public to better understand their changing expectations of public media and to continually refine what we do, how we do it, and how our product is conveyed. We look forward to delivering future reports on our progress.



Jerrold F. Wareham
President and CEO
ideastream



Kathryn P. Jensen
Chief Operating Officer
ideastream

Vision 2005:

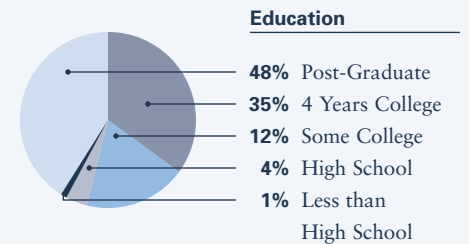
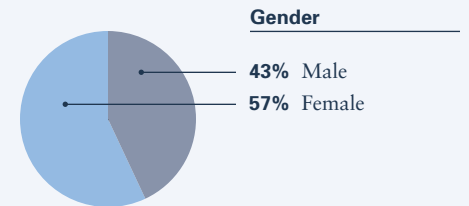
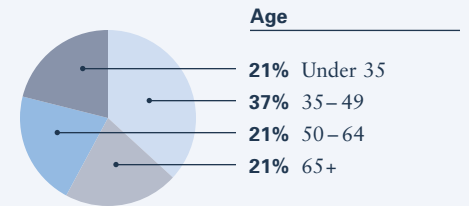
ideastream will be recognized as an indispensable multiple media resource connecting community through preeminent programming and services that enrich, respond, and relate to our lives

Demographics of Participants

	Town Meetings	Member Mail Surveys	Telephone Survey			Internet
			TV Members	Radio Members	General Population	
AGE						
Under 35	17%	6%	1%	19%	21%	21%
35–49	39%	21%	15%	40%	35%	37%
50–64	30%	26%	37%	29%	24%	21%
65+	15%	48%	47%	13%	20%	21%
GENDER						
Male	42%	38%	37%	40%	35%	43%
Female	55%	61%	63%	60%	65%	57%
EDUCATION						
Post-Graduate	36%	45%	29%	50%	12%	48%
4 Years College	33%	26%	29%	33%	23%	35%
Some College	24%	19%	20%	12%	25%	12%
High School	3%	9%	21%	4%	36%	4%
Less than High School	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%

Note: Not all respondents answered every question.

THE LISTENING PROJECT: INTERNET DEMOGRAPHICS



The Listening Project

Goals

The Listening Project set out to listen to the many varied voices of Northeast Ohio residents to learn what really matters most to them.

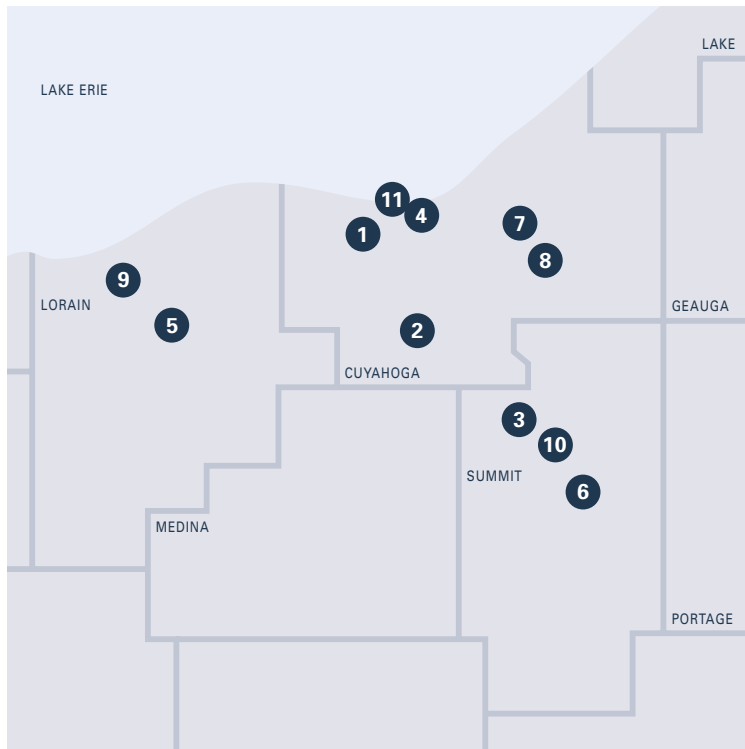
The project's primary goal was to seek information that revealed:

- The public's assessment of its community, its assets, its challenges, and its viability as a place to live;
- The public's level of social involvement, trust, and community volunteerism; and
- The public's idea about the role public media might play in convening the community around issues of common need and interest.

Who Did ideastream Listen To?

To be representative, *The Listening Project* needed to reach a broad spectrum of the community—geographically diverse people of all ages, genders, and ethnic groups—people who use WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN, and those who don't. *The Listening Project* engaged community members from many different backgrounds in the discussion. Teachers, businessmen and women, electricians, politicians, plumbers, librarians, students, retirees, social service workers, musicians, and artists responded with enthusiasm and great thoughtfulness.





Town Meeting Locations

- 1 Pilgrim Congregational Church, Tremont
- 2 Schaaf Community Center, Parma
- 3 Happy Days Visitor Center, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area
- 4 The Louis Stokes Wing of Cleveland Public Library, downtown Cleveland
- 5 Lorain County Community College
- 6 Canal Park Restaurant, Akron
- 7 Antioch Baptist Church, Cleveland
- 8 Shaker Heights Public Library
- 9 DeLuca's in the Park, Elyria
- 10 McDowell Branch, Akron-Summit Library, Fairlawn
- 11 Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association

A town meeting of studio and audience participants was simulcast by 90.3 WCPN and WVIZ/PBS to the entire 18-county broadcast area.



Reaching Respondents—Where and How?

The Listening Project convocations and activities took place at least once a week during the summer of 2001, in locations all over Northeast Ohio. Some encounters with the community were face-to-face at town meetings; other information exchanges took place on the Web, by phone, or by mail. Comparable information was gathered whenever possible. For example, each person who attended a meeting or was contacted in some other way completed the same survey.

Every format had its own multi-layered character: there was rich dialogue at town meetings, while mail and telephone surveys elicited concise and specific responses. Some formats resulted in comments with context, others provided condensed bursts of ideas. A wide variety of information was gathered by inviting participation through many different pathways.

Methods Used to Reach Respondents

- Twelve town meetings publicized on radio, TV, the Web sites, and in print were held in convenient locations and at differing times. These meetings, for both the general public and the leadership of Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Summit counties, were located all over the broadcast area. Each one used the same format: a facilitated dialogue that was taped on audio and video to capture the data. One town meeting was simulcast on TV and radio with listener interaction via telephone and Internet.
- Phone calls were made to a representative sample of station members and randomly selected community respondents.
- A survey was conducted on both the 90.3 WCPN and WVIZ/PBS Web sites.
- Surveys were mailed to members of 90.3 WCPN and WVIZ/PBS.
- Surveys were distributed at various summer events, including The City Club of Cleveland forums and a senior citizen resource fair held at the Cleveland Convention Center.
- Station reporters conducted surveys among their specialized contact groups.
- The combined staff of 90.3 WCPN and WVIZ/PBS was surveyed.
- The **ideastream** Community Advisory Board, representing six counties in Northeast Ohio, was surveyed.

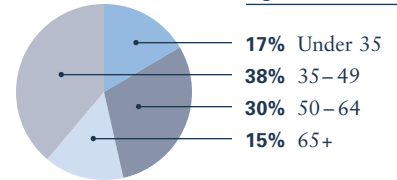
“(Our community has)...strong stable families that go back many generations; (it has) deep roots and a multi-cultural ethnic diversity that is wonderful.”

—from a town meeting held at Pilgrim Congregational Church

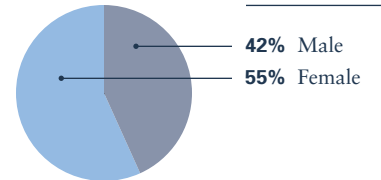


**THE LISTENING PROJECT:
TOWN MEETING DEMOGRAPHICS**

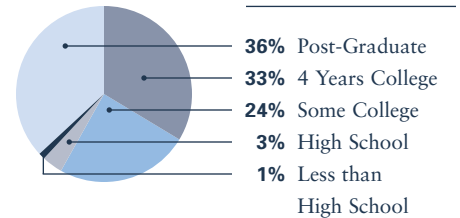
Age



Gender



Education



Note: Not all respondents answered every question.

The Raw Data

After the data was gathered, TRAC Media Services analyzed the responses. The resulting information and interpretation gave direction and momentum to **ideastream**.

What Did People Say?

The stations received both qualitative and quantitative results from a remarkable number of Northeast Ohio residents; 7,704 in all. The findings were amazingly consistent across media and demographics. Neither age nor location mattered significantly. Answers provided by mail, telephone, or Internet were very similar to those provided in town meeting conversations. Long-time residents' answers echoed responses from newcomers. Such surprising consistency across all samples made the findings particularly compelling and clear.

The town meetings provided opportunity for dialogue. In two hours of informal and lively talk great ranges of concerns, comments, and ideas surfaced. The facilitators encouraged candor from participants. Attendees were open, honest, and enthusiastic, ready to assist the process. The depth and expansiveness of many of the responses in town meetings and in open-ended survey questions revealed a public that cares deeply about its community. Not only did 318 people show up at the town meetings, but they also came primed with a great deal to say. And often they repeated how grateful they were for the opportunity to talk about issues that concern them.

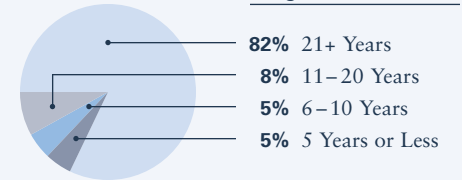
Civic Engagement*

	Town Meetings	Member Surveys	Telephone Survey			Internet
			TV Members	Radio Members	General Population	
VOTED IN LAST ELECTION						
Yes	87%	98%	93%	90%	86%	94%
No	10%	2%	6%	9%	14%	6%
READ DAILY NEWSPAPER						
Days Per Week						
None	5%	7%	3%	9%	11%	11%
1-3 days	31%	18%	17%	23%	24%	28%
4-5 days	19%	7%	3%	11%	10%	13%
6 or 7 days	51%	69%	73%	55%	53%	48%
SOCIAL TRUST						
Most People Can be Trusted or Most People are Out for Themselves						
Can be Trusted	86%	87%	87%	90%	74%	78%
Out for Themselves	14%	13%	9%	7%	21%	22%

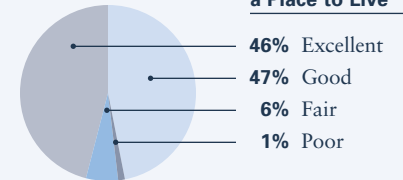
Note: Not all respondents answered every question.
*Self-Reported

THE LISTENING PROJECT: TELEPHONE SAMPLE

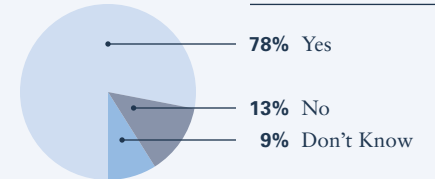
Length of Residence



How Would You Rate Your Community as a Place to Live



Will Be Here in 2008



Results from Telephone Survey/General Population only.

Are Northeast Ohio Residents Engaged in Their Community?

There is a nationwide trend of people isolating themselves from one another and preferring non-involvement to social interaction, a phenomenon well documented by Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam in his book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 2000. Dr. Putnam has detailed the ills that accompany this trend and public broadcasters have embraced the mission of reinvigorating community engagement and interaction.

Citizen involvement in Northeast Ohio communities is a valid measure of the potential impact of **ideastream**. Providing thoughtful information and considered opinion to people who actively work for a better quality of life by joining groups and participating in projects can yield significant community benefits.

The fact that many *Listening Project* respondents are already engaged in their communities bodes well for the new **ideastream** endeavor. Northeast Ohio people care and are motivated to help improve community life. They are attuned to civic issues, they are well informed, and positive about each other and about their community's future. Such audiences are the likely users of future **ideastream** program content. They are the logical catalysts for community changes.

This is their civic-engagement profile:

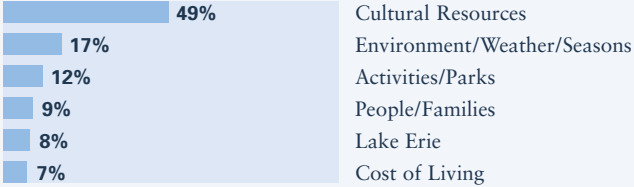
- 90% voted in the last election.
- Most read a daily newspaper at least 5 days a week.
- 68% belong to local organizations, many of which are active in advocacy.
- 75% believe that ordinary people like themselves can impact community enhancement.
- Roughly two-thirds of the sample uses **ideastream** media in some way.

Do People Like Northeast Ohio?

Yes! People are remarkably content with their community. More than 90% of the participants in *The Listening Project* rank Northeast Ohio as a great place to live. They like it so much that few of them anticipate moving away in the near future. It is their home, for better or for worse, and a good place to raise a family.

While most respondents see Northeast Ohio as a great place to live, many point out that it is by no means a perfect place to live. They are very articulate about their likes and their concerns. The satisfaction they take in regional assets is not overshadowed by their worries over regional challenges.

ASSETS



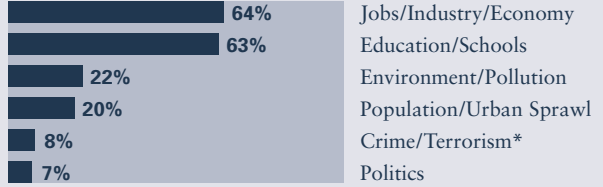
Data from Member Mail Survey.
Results representative of all samples.

Percentages add to more than 100
due to multiple responses.

Asset Highlights

- Cultural institutions: The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cleveland Orchestra and other regional symphony orchestras, theater companies, dance organizations, and museums
- Easy and inexpensive access to culture
- Excellent parks, natural resources
- Affordable cost of living and housing
- Seasons, weather, rural flavor with city conveniences
- Wonderful, friendly people
- Great colleges, library system
- Major league and amateur sports opportunities
- Diversity
- Generous community
- Tourist attractions
- Excellent health facilities
- Accessibility of assets

CHALLENGES



Data from Member Mail Survey.
Results representative of all samples.

Percentages add to more than 100
due to multiple responses.

Challenge Highlights

- Threats to school excellence: teacher pay, budget cuts, deteriorating infrastructure
- Economy, brain drain, lack of new jobs, businesses leaving area
- Pollution, environmental quality
- Lakefront issues—lack of planning
- Over-development, traffic congestion, loss of natural spaces
- Drugs, gangs, violence
- Diversity/racial and economic segregation
- Healthcare
- Crime and terrorism*

*mentioned especially by post-9/11/01 respondents

A Civic Agenda

***“I want to live in a place that has a lake
clean enough to swim in every day.”***

—from a town meeting of Elyria residents held at Lorain County Community College

***“You can be in an urban setting or a
rural setting within a matter of minutes.
We have the best of both worlds.”***

—from a meeting with Lorain County leaders

As the project moved through the summer of 2001, it became clear that the growing lists of community assets and challenges gathered by *The Listening Project* provided an extraordinarily clear picture of the things that people really care about. In fact, the results from *The Listening Project* constitute a remarkably astute civic agenda. In a number of meetings, the audience took notice of the lists of issues they were building, and commented on the importance of those topics to the community at large.

Many issues on that civic agenda—such as environment and diversity—show up on both the asset and the challenge lists. This is a strong indicator that these issues are at the top of people’s minds, for reasons that can be both positive and negative: people simultaneously care about assets and fear their loss.

Many participants suggested that solutions might be just around the corner. The words “regionalism” and “lack of planning” were offered as potential deterrents to problem resolution, and the single word “vision” was cited as the most critical precursor to addressing community challenges.

***“Empower the community to develop and use
its collective voice to bring about change.”***

—from a town meeting held at Antioch Baptist Church



“Give voice to all ideas and all individuals. Provide a vision.”

—from a town meeting held at Antioch Baptist Church

A Civic Agenda continued

Public Advice

- Foster positive can-do attitudes
- Help citizens reach consensus and decision
- Erase the divide between central city and suburbs
- Don't just tell us about problems, help us fix them
- Pick an issue and lead us
- Create quality programming that builds confidence in our community
- Develop partnerships with arts and culture, social service providers, healthcare providers, business, and industry
- Take national material and make it local
- Help make regionalism happen
- Provide vision for the region/community leaders
- Recognize your strength to be a leader

The Public's Advice for ideastream

The respondents' comments about how public media can address assets and challenges in Northeast Ohio are among the most exciting aspects of *The Listening Project*. People not only offered goals for **ideastream**'s service to the community, they suggested specific ideas for programming on issues of style, impact, format, frequency, and scheduling. Many of the ideas are innovative. Some are new thinking. A few deserve instant implementation. Taken collectively, they provide an overwhelming mandate.

Respondents pinpointed community enhancing goals for **ideastream**. They want **ideastream** to address community challenges, but they also want it to help celebrate the strengths and to increase community awareness and pride. They want **ideastream** to provide information about the land and the lakes, the history of the area's diverse neighborhoods and tales about distinctive architecture, culture, and local characters. They want to hear from grassroots advocates, experts, academics, ordinary people, and encourage the involvement of young people in community life. They suggest the need for more community town meetings, in-person and Internet discussions. They speak in favor of tackling the “tough issues” and demand—above all—a local focus. They see great potential for public broadcasting media to help improve their community; and they want public media to become even stronger: to play the role of a catalyst for community change, to encourage personal and civic growth.

“...become a center for civic discussion and debate. Truly engage the citizens of the area into fuller understanding and participation in the policy and community-building areas.”

—from a survey distributed at The City Club of Cleveland

“Remain independent, retain your editorial integrity.”

—from a meeting with Lorain County leaders

***“Assemble panel discussions, public forums.
Be inclusive, not just experts.”***

—from a caller to a simulcast town meeting

“(Your goal)...is to take on local issues in depth, connect them with those issues on a national level, and stick with those issues to mobilize community energy around them.”

— from an Internet survey

“Play the devil’s advocate.”

—from a town meeting held at Antioch Baptist Church

“...include the energy and enthusiasm of young people with the experience of older generations so that everybody has a chance to get involved.”

— from an Internet survey

“Sponsor presentations of cutting-edge speakers from around the world. Don’t just make these lectures, create cross-dialogue.”

—from an Internet survey

Where Does ideastream Go from Here?

“Give us some new heroes for our children.”

—from a town meeting of Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association

The Listening Project results are a ringing call-to-action. The community clearly desires **ideastream** to organize its resources to address their concerns in order to improve Northeast Ohio. “If not you, who?” is the theme of this mandate.

ideastream intends to use the capabilities and opportunities of multiple media to deliver relevant, useful material to more people in more ways than ever before. The future of **ideastream** will include:

- Evolved, expanded and new programming initiatives based on information gathered in *The Listening Project*;
- Capacities developed from new staff dynamics and expanded resources;
- Research to test specific new types and uses of programming;
- Partnerships with organizations that can provide data and expertise; and
- Periodic assessments of **ideastream**’s impact on community progress or change.

ideastream is emerging squarely in the midst of a community hungry for tools to improve itself. *The Listening Project* makes clear that there is a shared sense of hope for Northeast Ohio, as well as a realistic assessment of the challenges ahead. The task for **ideastream** is to deliver programs and services that will empower individuals to create meaningful results for their communities.

ideastream

is a public service multiple media organization with a mission to

“...strengthen our communities by providing distinctive, thought-provoking programs and services that enlighten, inspire, educate, and entertain.”



ideastreamSM

**4300 Brookpark Road
Cleveland, OH 44134-1191**

**www.wviz.org
www.wcpn.org**

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