



ideastream®



the listening project 10

listening to the community and looking for what matters

the region

environment
arts and culture

location

people and communities

quality of life

mission

ideastream® is a multiple-media public service organization with a mission to strengthen our communities by providing distinctive, thought-provoking programs and services that enlighten, inspire, educate and entertain.

recreation

the weather

politics

the economy

education

racial issues

urban sprawl

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. The new organization, called ideastream, adopted a mission to “strengthen our communities.”

It was clear from the beginning that this new public service media organization held great promise to serve audiences in new and exciting ways. ideastream had the power to use radio, television, the Internet and other media to tell important stories, provide education, resources and add dimension to content.

But what stories needed to be told? What information did the community want and need?

Those important questions led to the development of The Listening Project, an ongoing community engagement project designed to find those answers. Each year, the Project’s goals have remained constant: to give voice to the people who call Northeast Ohio home and to ascertain their thoughts about regional assets and challenges. By “Listening To the Community and Looking for What Matters,” the role of public media and direction of ideastream programming, services and content creation has been shaped.

Ten Years and Still Listening

In 2010-11, through online and emailed surveys and interactive program opportunities, ideastream once again asked questions, and then carefully listened. The surveys focused on four broad categories:

- The region’s assets and challenges
- The economy
- People and communities
- Education

These overarching topics encompass a larger list of assets and challenges that have been consistently identified each year as important to participants. Those include:

Assets: Arts and culture, location, recreation and weather, the environment and quality of life.

Challenges: Crime and drugs, politics, urban sprawl, people and racial issues.

Hundreds of people took part in the surveys. Also informing ideastream is its Community Advisory Board. Representatives from counties throughout the 90.3 WCPN and WVIZ/PBS listening and viewing areas meet quarterly to provide specific stories from their locales about the identified assets and challenges. Frequently this input informs on-air stories.

On the following pages, you’ll see the results of The Listening Project and learn how ideastream has delivered programs and services relevant to the lives of Northeast Ohioans and to the success of the region.

listening

to

the

community



Each quarter ideastream examines topics related to health



Proximity to Lake Erie is reported as an asset



Watch Your Mouth, one of several productions produced by ideastream on health topics of local importance

THE REGION

To ascertain local residents' concerns and to gauge their thoughts on the positive aspects of living in Northeast Ohio, two Listening Project surveys focused on the challenges and the assets of the region.

THE REGION'S CHALLENGES

Results from The Listening Project show that the problems found in Northeast Ohio are not unique, but mirror those of the nation. In fact, topics leading the national newscasts and found daily in newspaper headlines are not only evident – but in the forefront – of citizens' minds.

Respondents to The Listening Project called out jobs and the economy, politics and racial issues as key challenges for the region:

*"If the region can meet the challenge of preserving the best of the past, recreating a truly functional and healthy natural environment and fostering a high standard of living through **progressive economic policies and technological innovation**, the region will be a role model for reimagining older industrial, urban and suburban social environments."*

*"I think our **racial diversity** continues to be an issue in Northeast Ohio. While we have many different groups represented, many of these groups are separated from each other. Some communities are more integrated than others, but I think there's still a long way to go."*

*"I think the biggest challenge we face is a lack of **visionary leadership** that can promote our assets, grow our economy, and instill pride in our citizens."*

*"The most pressing challenge for Northeast Ohio is to realize that **common sense isn't going to do it**. Like everywhere else, we have to rise above the comfort of the familiar and confront a daunting future."*

*"The **lack of a coordinated successful vision** and support for central Cleveland's future, including growth and adequate finances to run a thriving city."*

*"I love the NE Ohio area and celebrate and promote it at every chance. However, personally, I grieve that my son and daughter-in-law, an interracial couple, moved from Euclid to the D.C. area ... because they feel **Cleveland is too segregated**. It wasn't their only reason for moving, but it was at the top of the list."*

THE REGION'S ASSETS



Rick Jackson, NewsDepth host



NPR's European Correspondent Sylvia Poggioli visited ideastream



Cokie & Steve Roberts at The City Club of Cleveland



Dee Perry, Host of Around Noon & Applause

Courtesy: Chris Stephens, The Plain Dealer

The region's strengths, as seen by Listening Project respondents, are perhaps unique to Northeast Ohio. Our changing seasons, the lakefront and park systems, the multicultural fabric of our neighborhoods, the richness of the arts, outstanding medical facilities and the "big city feel" in a geographically manageable region make Northeast Ohio a special place.

Responses on the best things about living in Northeast Ohio were as varied as they were positive:

"I love the diversity. It makes it feel like a true "big city" to be able to walk down the street and hear Croatian, Italian, different dialects of Spanish, and many more languages being spoken, not to mention the great food!"

"Cultural amenities. Trite, but true, many towns would salivate at the wealth of riches here."

*"It is great to be near **Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park** so you can go to the beach and trail ride all in the same day."*

*"I like the **educational opportunities** A history of ambitious, creative citizens who create or advance industry and education."*

WE LISTENED

Programming that explores the region's challenges and spotlights its assets is delivered to audiences through ongoing, locally produced programs. Among the wide-ranging topics of conversation on The Sound of Ideas®, for example, were in-depth examinations of the effects of state budget cuts, and how smart homeowners can save money by "smartening up" their homes. Meanwhile, Applause and Around Noon took the arts to the airwaves revealing the places to go, things to do and people to know in the Northeast Ohio arts scene. Among the many artistic ventures and happenings showcased: a look at the best bands of 2011, a tour of Ingenuity Fest, a preview of the Cleveland International Film Festival and a walk through the Escher Exhibit at the Akron Art Museum.

Each quarter, ideastream's locally produced coverage on health provides content via multiple media – including radio reports, television programming and web resources – and makes a difference to both residents and area non profit organizations. In fact, LifeBanc reported that "We had one gentleman ... contact us and want to get more involved with our mission because of stories he heard on WCPN."

These local programs and others are mixed into a broadcast schedule that includes programs from PBS, NPR and other sources to help residents in Northeast Ohio connect to topics and events of national and international interest.



WWIZ/PBS Televised Auction Volunteers



Volunteers at The Edward P. Campbell Design Squad Challenge



Phone bank volunteers

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Social capital is woven into the fabric of Northeast Ohio, binding us together for the common good. Year after year, Listening Project surveys show that the people of Northeastern Ohio care about their communities and are motivated to donate their time, talents – and dollars – to help improve them. Time and again, respondents say that they “get

back more than they give” when volunteering to help local organizations. The Spring 2011 Listening Project Survey looked at the topic of Community Volunteering to determine if, how and why people volunteer and/or attend community events. The survey also queried how the economic climate has affected volunteerism.

Responses to The Listening Project’s survey on the subject show that Northeast Ohio residents value involvement in their communities.

*“I was raised to believe that giving back – both financially and of my time – is my duty. And **it fulfills** me.”*

*“Volunteering is a great way to **make a difference** in our community. I’ve met many wonderful people through my volunteering. It’s also an opportunity to learn and apply skills and expand interests.”*

*“Unfortunately, our financial situation means that my **extra time is spent trying to make more money** to support my family instead of helping the community.”*

*“I’ve been without a job for three years, so **I have had more time** to be active in my community.”*

*“The awful economy has increased the needs at my church and in my community, so **I volunteer more.**”*

*“I believe **volunteerism is most important during challenging economic times**. The needs of non profit and community organizations for volunteers are greater, as they try to do more with less. Volunteering also encourages people to look out for their fellow community members, instead of focusing on their own personal situation.”*

listening to the community and looking for what matters



ideastream in the community:
90.3's Around Noon Open Air on Star Plaza



WVIZ/PBS Televised Auction Volunteers



90.3 WCPN Pledge Volunteers

*"After working for almost 40 years, **it feels great to be able to volunteer** for an organization that I care about and never had the time to help out with before."*

*"**I would volunteer more** if opportunities were made more obvious."*

*"First thought - not enough information available on the community needs. Second thought - **get involved with the community** and the needs will become apparent."*

*"Love it! I volunteer at two very different venues year-round. **I have learned new things** and grown intellectually and experientially and continue to do so. I have received much more than I've given."*

*"I am retired. **Volunteering is my work.**"*

*"**It feels great to see that people are still getting involved** and have ideas to make things better. Instead of staying at home and being scared of what's going on, getting involved and hearing other people's views makes it look better than it actually is out there."*

WE LISTENED

ideastream, through its locally produced programming and websites, regularly calls attention to community happenings, examines and explores community needs, and connects residents with resources that can better their lives. In fact, one Listening Project respondent noted that, "I rely heavily on my local NPR station to find out about groups and events in our community," and another mentioned that, "Listening to an NPR program about recycling got me involved."

Both WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN count on volunteers to help the organization realize its mission to "strengthen our communities." From the volunteer Board of Trustees to the organization's Community Advisory Board and through the efforts of thousands of individuals from throughout the region, ideastream is impacted by the generosity of Northeast Ohioans who donate their time and talent.



Distance Learning "Careers" series



Students from schools around the region participate in Distance Learning



Eric Fingerhut, former Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, at the P-16 Education Conference

EDUCATION

The Listening Project survey on the topic of education proved once again that the subject continues to be a source of concern for residents. This comes as no surprise since education has been rated as a top challenge in all ten Listening Project surveys.

The 2010-11 Listening Project survey asked participants to reveal their thoughts about critical educational challenges in the region, and they responded:

*"Until parents are engaged in the education of their children, until teachers are respected, until learning is a cultural priority, Cleveland will languish. We should be **marketing learning as relentlessly and insistently as we market the sports teams.**"*

*"...**The purpose of education has to be reinvented** to meet what 21st century students need, want, and are responsive to. Additionally, a new educational structure must be developed to fit this new model."*

*"I am concerned about the **rising cost of state schools.** It used to be that everyone who wanted to attend, could. Not so much anymore."*

*"I am very concerned about our schools. Most are extremely underfunded and struggling financially. We need a plan that would **allow kids from Cleveland to get the same education as kids living in Hudson or Westlake.**"*

*"We are **not providing adequate early education in the "basics."** We must provide strong foundations in math, reading, grammar/English, science etc. in order for students to succeed at higher levels."*

*"**Education is probably our number one problem.** I don't know if it is a reflection of our other problems, or a cause of our problems."*

*"**Ohio's challenge is no different from any other state** ... our education system was predicated on the assumption that students would come to school ready to learn."*

listening to the community and looking for what matters



U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, P-16 Education Conference at Idea Center

STATEIMPACT

Ohio

Eye on Education project



Science Education Summit at ideastream



ideastream produced technology training for teachers

"The availability of **effective, broad-based education** is the key to addressing any problems in the region."

"My perception is that Ohio is struggling in its commitment to education. **People talk about education as important**, but then educators and education seem to be under attack."

"I think that we, as educators, are doing well, but are **hamstrung by bureaucracy and lack of money**."

"We have many dedicated educators who cannot do their jobs because of **lack of funding AND the challenges of students arriving at school totally unprepared** and/or unwilling to participate in the learning experience."

WE LISTENED

Through programs and services, WVIZ/PBS provides a critical role in formal and informal education, from preschool through college and beyond. WVIZ/PBS Education builds beyond its education-based broadcast schedule and conducts professional development sessions; offers online courses for training teachers; presents interactive distance learning classes; and conducts educational opportunities for early childhood educators.

Education-related topics are often the centerpiece in both local and national news and public affairs

programs on WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN. In addition to regular features and reports on educational issues and news of the day, 90.3 WCPN is the lead station in StateImpact Ohio: Eye on Education, a collaboration between 90.3, NPR and two Ohio NPR stations (WKSU and WOSU). StateImpact Ohio is an ambitious local-national journalism initiative designed to report on government actions related to education and their impact on citizens and communities.



Feagler & Friends



Tom Hudson, *Nightly Business Report*



Remaking the Manufacturing Belt

Changing Gears

ECONOMY

The challenges of the economy continue to be a burning issue for our region and for respondents to The Listening Project. They note that Northeast Ohio is faced with very real and persistent economic challenges in the areas of jobs, growth, housing/foreclosure problems and the perception that our transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy is progressing far too slowly.

Interestingly, when asked, respondents report that they generally like living in Northeast Ohio and are aware of its many assets. But year after year of Listening Project results show an ongoing concern about the economic-based issues that face us all.

Respondents to Listening Project surveys shared their concerns about the region's economy:

"I work in public service and the impression I have is **many more people need services** and help than in the past decade. Our volume for assistance is three times what it was 18 months ago."

"Although I found work after being unemployed for 2+ years, **I am presently earning what I made in the 1980s.**"

"I think the most pressing challenge is **transitioning from a city built on steel** and steel-based products to a city built on the talents of its citizens."

"Jobs, Jobs, Jobs! **How can my children and future grandchildren hope to find decent jobs in this area?** It has been a declining area, employment-wise, since I graduated from college 30 years ago."

"The region could use a developing (continuously improving), focused, matrixed **plan for job creation and community reinvestment.**"

"The most pressing local challenge? **Jobs, jobs and jobs.** The ability to change focus from manufacturing steel, autos, etc., to new industries and keep talent here for it and attract talent to Northeast Ohio."

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Kai Ryssdal, *Marketplace* on 90.3 WCPN

WE LISTENED



ideastream programs provide economic news and analysis

"Jobs, like everywhere else, is the easiest answer. But I think it's especially true of NE Ohio because even when the economy rebounds, it's not likely that the manufacturing jobs that this area was built on will be back. It's going to take a new industry, and therefore a new identity, to bring this area back."

"Even though I am finally working again, things are still difficult. [I am] not seeing it improving anytime soon."

Coverage of the region's economy is a priority for ideastream and has been since 2001 when community feedback to the first Listening Project survey reported that it is the number-one challenge facing Northeast Ohio. Topics related to the economy are frequently discussed on ideastream-produced programs, including *The Sound of Ideas*®, which gives listeners the opportunity to call in and make their thoughts known. National programs, including *PBS NewsHour*, *Nightly Business Report* and *Marketplace* bring economic news and analysis to the airwaves.

ideastream, along with Michigan Radio and Chicago Public Radio, are working together to tell the story of *Changing Gears: Remaking the Manufacturing Belt*. The stations' ongoing coverage explores the economic transformation of the industrial Midwest, through the stories of people driving and experiencing this change. The project, made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, includes feature reports, regional call-in discussions, blogs and other online features.

WE LEARNED



Marketplace Money's Tess Vigeland on 90.3 WCPN

The Listening Project allows ideastream to ascertain residents' thoughts about topics of importance. Through the participants' responses, the organization can focus its programs and services and help spur critical thinking and discussion about topics that affect us all.

As one respondent said in an early Listening Project survey, "It is easier to keep talking once you know

someone is listening." Clearly, those who participate in the surveys value this opportunity to share their thinking and voice their concerns.

And by gathering, examining and using this information, ideastream is able to come closer still to fulfilling its mission to "strengthen our communities."

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Your participation in The Listening Project is important to ideastream.
To provide feedback, sign up for The Listening Project email newsletter, or see previous Listening Project reports:

Visit ideastream.org/lp

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