

## Listening To The Community, Looking For What Matters

Since 2001, the citizens of Northeast Ohio have been providing ideastream direction on meeting its mission to “strengthen our communities.” Through yearly Listening Project surveys held since the inception of ideastream, thousands of participants have responded to the organization about what matters most to them and to the region.

With each survey, respondents are consistent in identifying a short list of Northeast Ohio’s key assets along with the region’s challenges, concerns that can be understood as a civic agenda, providing key points around which to organize new programming initiatives. By leading the regional discussion through The Listening Project, ideastream is able to monitor the role and value of its services to the region.

Through the years, several topics of interest have consistently remained front-of-mind with respondents: economy and jobs, education, politics, arts and culture and the environment. Given the consistency of response over time, ideastream transitioned The Listening Project from an annual survey to a monthly, on-going questionnaire. The results of the monthly queries continue to show both appreciation for the quality of life in Northeast Ohio, and concern and worry that such quality will be difficult to maintain. In addition, respondents continue to declare that ideastream is making a positive impact on the Northeast Ohio community.

The July 2009 survey was timed to follow ideastream’s heart health programming initiative. Questions centered on the impact that the multiple media initiative had on the lives of people in the region. Survey respondents

who tuned in or logged on to content responded enthusiastically, noting that ideastream’s heart health content led them to take steps to better their own lifestyles, most notably through exercise and diet.

The August 2009 survey focused on the topic of arts and culture, driven by the considerable content provided by ideastream that focused on the Cleveland Museum of Art’s East Wing expansion, and on the future of art museums in the region. The impact of the programming on respondents was evident, with two out of three relating that they visited a regional art museum in response to broadcasts on ideastream channels, while another 50% chose to access other art-related options.

The regional economy was front and center in the September 2009 survey, the final one offered in the fiscal year. The questionnaire focused on one of the primary economic issues of the region: foreclosure. “Facing the Mortgage Crisis,” ideastream’s ongoing coverage of the failing housing market was tested. Three-quarters of those answering the survey indicated that they had seen or heard programming on ideastream stations related to the region’s economy. Over half had specific recall of ideastream on-air mentions for a partnering organization’s hotline for mortgage questions and resources.

Full results of this survey, in a downloadable PDF report, can be found online on the Listening Project page, at [ideastream.org/lp](http://ideastream.org/lp).