NPR Strategic Plan FY21-23 — Public

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I. INTRODUCTION

NPR must change to survive.

The challenges we’ve seen in our industry and our country as a result of the pandemic, the economic crisis, racial injustice, and increased polarization driven by misinformation make the need for our public service journalism and cultural programming more acute. The changing face of America makes our need to reach a broader and more diverse audience more essential. And the shifting ways in which audiences engage with us make the need to adapt and innovate more urgent. Yet our impact on the public is also more apparent than ever: we see it in the record-breaking audiences to our platforms, the relevance and quality of our work, and the loyalty of audiences across the many communities of public radio.

Over the next three years, we’ll come upon opportunities we cannot yet imagine and face challenges greater than any we’ve seen. The ensuing changes will be lasting and the consequences of not innovating will be dire. We must be bold and ambitious, doing an untold number of things for the first time. To be successful, we must also recognize that we cannot do everything. We must make difficult and strategic decisions that advance our goals, and stop working on initiatives that don’t support our key priorities. With this plan, we’ll be ready.

NPR was founded in 1970 by 90 ambitious public radio stations who believed that, in addition to serving their own communities with content from and about their markets, they could also work together to create a shared news service that would serve the entire nation. One of the original founders of NPR, Bill Siemering, expressed his vision for NPR in this way:

*National Public Radio will serve the individual;*

*It will promote personal growth;*

*It will regard individual differences ... with respect and joy, rather than derision and hate;*

*It will celebrate the human experience as infinitely varied, rather than vacuous and banal;*

*It will encourage a sense of active constructive participation, rather than apathetic helplessness.*

Much has changed in the 50 years since Bill wrote those words, and the pandemic has only accelerated these changes this year. The demographics of the audience and the workplace have shifted. The media landscape has become increasingly fragmented. User behaviors and expectations for digital content consumption have changed. The number of platforms on which audiences can experience media has proliferated, and the distinctions between those platforms has blurred over time. Non-profit business models have changed.

Today, our mission is to work in partnership with Member stations to create a more informed public—one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures. In the coming years, we must be bold and ambitious, doing an untold number of things for the first time. While focusing on achieving our priorities, we must aggressively combat a growing number of competitive threats.

As such, in a moment like this, the importance of this plan is vital, and we’ll use it to ground us, guide us, and unlock opportunities.

Let’s review our plan for the NPR of 2023.
II. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

NPR’s key strategic priority over the next three years is to “Diversify Our Audience to Reflect, Serve, and Inspire America.”

We must expand NPR's audience to reflect what America will look and sound like in 2021 and beyond, attracting a more diverse audience to our journalism and cultural content, with an emphasis on Black and Hispanic audiences on all platforms. This expansion helps fulfill our higher mission to reach and inspire all citizens with our trustworthy work reporting, producing, acquiring and distributing news, information and other content that meets the highest standards of public service in journalism and cultural expression.

To be successful in achieving this requires improvements across several dimensions of our work, including workforce and leadership development, content and sourcing, marketing, and business partnerships.

While focusing on achieving this key strategic priority, we must also aggressively combat growing competitive threats to diversifying our audience through podcasting, posed by platform companies, traditional legacy publishers, and new digital publishers.

The four supporting pillars to help NPR realize this priority include:

- **Optimize Content And Products To Meet Audiences Where They Are**
  - We must continue to develop and execute a preeminent journalism and cultural programming strategy and the products that support it. We must experiment and innovate in the face of change, rise to the occasion of a global crisis, continue to solve critical needs for our current and future audiences. It is no longer a matter of bringing them only to our world of broadcast. We must meet our new audiences on multiple platforms and in the myriad ways they consume audio. And we have to mount an aggressive marketing strategy to let them know where and who we are.

- **Realize The Power Of Local/National Network For An On-Demand Future**
  - We must strengthen the work of the Station Compact and build NPR and the network of Member stations into one impactful, powerful and united media enterprise. We have the unique power of local, regional and national news reporting and storytelling and must align around a shared strategy for its distribution. Now is the time to fully realize and use that strength to beat our competitors.

- **Transform Workplace Culture**
  - We must create a culture that supports our strategy and the aspirations of NPR and all who work here and break down systemic barriers to equity and inclusion. We must define the future of work and our workplace, leaning into the inevitable change as an opportunity to reset the conversation. We must commit to transparency from NPR management, accountability and communications to build more trust between NPR staff and management, and create opportunities for staff to have a voice at every level of the organization.

- **Diversify And Grow Revenue Models**
  - We must evolve to live up to our mission and that means growing our existing revenue opportunities while discovering new sources and models. We must optimize existing revenue streams, seizing new business opportunities and partnerships while reducing dependence on station fees by realizing the Station Compact.
III. ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

Achieving success will require the entire organization to engage in a series of measurable actions.

- **Optimize Content And Products To Meet Audiences Where They Are**
  - Expand our on-demand content offerings to grow a more diverse audience with an emphasis on Black and Hispanic audiences
  - Leverage the power of our news magazine shows and our local/national partnerships to serve audiences on more on-demand platforms
  - Optimize content creation processes to allow for efficiency, rapid iteration and fast failures
  - Develop and grow the next generation collaborative journalism model
  - Extend content and programs across relevant platforms to grow audiences and take NPR into new places
  - Deepen engagement with our public radio audiences across touchpoints

- **Realize The Power Of Local/National Network For An On-Demand Future**
  - Leverage the network to shine a light on critical social issues across a diverse range of communities
  - Build a network-wide revenue model based on the passions of our audiences and the ways they connect with us
  - Align around a shared strategy for digital distribution and discovery that enables NPR and stations together to adapt to changing audience needs
  - Refocus the network so it can serve a wider variety of audiences and respond quickly to opportunities and threats

- **Improve Workplace Culture**
  - Dismantle systemic barriers to true diversity, equity and inclusion
  - Build clear and inclusive decision-making processes that empower staff to have a voice at every level of the organization
  - Increase the diversity of leadership and staff
Create a culture of transparency and accountability that builds trust between NPR management and staff

- **Diversify And Grow Revenue Models**
  - Explore new business models that enable NPR to compete more assertively in the audio marketplace and realize new revenue.
  - Align content, platforms, philanthropy, and station partnerships to increase gifts and donations
  - Realize meaningful revenue from alternative sources
  - Employ creative ways to grow sponsorship and better serve sponsors
  - Manage implementation of the core fee model

**IV. OPERATIONALIZING AND TRACKING OUR PROGRESS**

While it is imperative to have these measurable actions identified, it is also important to rally and organize all NPR staff members to make the actions a coordinated reality. To that end, we are creating cross-divisional teams to operationalize the suggested actions and others that staff members feel are necessary to put NPR on the road to achieving success for this strategic plan. This work is beginning now and will continue through the next three years, identifying, developing, managing, and launching the required programs and initiatives.

We’re also committed to measuring ourselves against the programs of our new plan. Each priority and pillar will hold NPR leadership accountable to reaching our ambitions with the following top-level KPIs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC PRIORITY</th>
<th>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversify Our Audience to Reflect, Serve, and Inspire America</td>
<td>% of NPR audience who are Black and Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimize Content and Products to Meet Audiences Where They Are</td>
<td>% of NPR digital audience who are Black and Hispanic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total audience reach on digital platforms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total engaged audience on digital platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realize the Power of Local/National Network for an On-Demand Future</td>
<td>New donors through NPR digital platforms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Multi-platform investigative/ enterprise projects between Member stations and NPR to engage new audiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Changes implemented to NPR Membership criteria, service to stations, and network structure</td>
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<td>Transform Workplace Culture</td>
<td>% of employees, supervisors and leadership who are people of color</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Employee engagement/satisfaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Employee voluntary turnover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversify and Grow Revenue Models</td>
<td>Total new revenue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total revenue</td>
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V. FORTIFYING OUR FUTURE

We stand today and write a plan to carry us to the year 2023, but even as we finish this plan, we recognize
the future is unknowable. Regardless of what the next few years bring, we know this:

In order for us to fulfill our mission, stay competitive, and thrive in this new environment, we need to
achieve all of our strategic aspirations. We must act with resiliency in everything we do. Rather than be in a
defensive posture, we must move toward the challenges with openness, ingenuity, and with an eye for an
opportunity for change.

We must experiment and innovate in the face of change, serving and invigorating a more diverse audience
in new ways that rise to the occasion to solve critical audience needs and promote a more informed public
who will have a richer understanding of the issues, ideas and culture that are critical to their well being. We
must be resilient and clear-minded so that our business model can be an engine for innovation and growth.
We must examine every aspect of our norms so that we can create a diverse, equitable and inclusive
culture. We know we must also be steadfastly resilient in the face of uncertainty. **We must diversify our
audience to reflect, serve, and inspire America.**

At NPR, we believe in the enduring power of stories, in people’s insatiable appetite to understand the
world around them, in the inalienable need for facts, in the power of connection and empathy, and in our
own collective desire to make the world a better place. There has been no more important time to reach
audiences with our journalism and cultural content. Our dedication to journalism as a public service will not
change; only the way we reach people and the people we reach will change. Together with our colleagues
across the network, we will inhabit the words Bill Siemering wrote 50 years ago, and continue to be a
critical source of truth for new generations to come.

Through the last 50 years, NPR has established itself as a vital American institution—and this is our moment
as stewards of this great institution and public trust to begin the journey of the next 50 years.