

CPR Administrative

A. DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

1. What are critical ways your department advances the mission and goals of the college? Cite some examples. Limit 500 words.

KCRW's mission is to be the cultural voice of Los Angeles, providing a platform for new, next, and unexpected sounds, tastes, ideas, and experiences. There is strong alignment with a number of SMC's goals.

Providing Real-World Experience and Career Pathways for Students:

KCRW's Next Gen Initiative offers paid internships and apprenticeships, giving hands-on experience in various media fields.

The Report LA Fellowship, funded by various organizations, provides in-depth training in public radio production and reporting. This initiative has successfully placed two fellows in full-time KCRW positions as well as launched others into full time audio and journalism careers, demonstrating a direct pathway from college education to professional media.

Podcast Bootcamp equips aspiring podcasters with storytelling skills and connections to those making careers in this field.

Enhancing SMC's Commitment to Diversity and Community Engagement:

KCRW's programming frequently spotlights diverse voices and perspectives, aligning with SMC's commitment to inclusivity.

KCRW's community events, like Summer Nights and PieFest, attract thousands of participants, fostering a sense of community that includes the college environment.

Strengthening SMC's Reputation as a Leading Educational Institution:

KCRW's reputation as a premier public radio station reflects positively on SMC as its licensee. The station's innovative programming and commitment to excellence align with SMC's pursuit of high-quality education. We provide life-long learning as well.

KCRW's success in attracting top talent and producing award-winning content enhances the prestige of its association with SMC. By nurturing the next generation of media professionals, championing diversity and inclusion, and fostering a strong community presence, KCRW significantly contributes to the realization of Santa Monica College's mission and goals.

2. What internal and external factors have impacted your department since the last review that would provide context for your self-evaluation report? Limit 500 words.

KCRW's radio audience continues to decline. The overall cume audience has dropped by another 20% in this fiscal year. AQH however, is seeing some overall growth. (AQH stands for Average Quarter Hour which is a radio audience measurement that indicates the average number of people who listen to a station for at least five minutes during a 15-minute period. AQH is calculated by adding up the total number of quarter hours of listening during a specific time period and dividing that sum by the total number of quarter hours in that time period.)

Also important to note is the evaporation of listening from people under 35, and increasingly under 45 that has happened over the last 18 months. Radio is not where we will find our new listeners. However radio remains the most important place for loyal listeners and their membership dollars. Will KCRW adapt fast enough to manage this new reality?

The leveling of competition for KCRW's audience forces us to make decisions we haven't had to make before. We need excellent content that means enough for people to be loyal to us and contribute. We also need the technology that audiences are accustomed to. This technology requires significant investment in tech architecture which requires knowledge we don't have in-house. Radio requires a level of staff attention that can distract from the focus on how new audiences consume media.

Our brand relationship with and dependence on NPR programming is also a factor. We cannot control how well or fast NPR adapts to our audiences preferences. We need a strong and excellent NPR to make a strong and excellent KCRW.

We are finding and attracting audiences under 45 on other platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. KCRW ended our relationship with X in 2023 when the platform falsely labeled public radio "government sponsored."

B. DEPARTMENT'S CUSTOMERS

3. Whom do you primarily serve? Describe the services you provide for each of the groups you identify (for example, students, employees, Enrollment Services Department, City of Santa Monica). Limit 250 words.

KCRW serves the communities of Southern California, from Santa Maria in the far west (north) to Orange County in the south and San Bernardino in the east. We cover five counties with our terrestrial signal. We also stream our content online and are listened to by nearly every continent in the world with emphasis on Canada, England and other English-speaking countries. We have a combined listening audience of 1.6M listener hours per month (this is a combination of terrestrial and digital hours of listening), a 28% year over year growth. We have a newsletter audience of 206K, social: 975K subscribers/followers across Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, 60K MAU on our app, 1.2M monthly downloads of audio content, and 44K active members.

The service we provide is music discovery; a trustworthy and reliable source of news and information about the world, the region and the local Southern California community; and introductions to culture that include food, entertainment and art.

C. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

4. Describe the progress your department has made on meeting the objectives and recommendations from your last program review. (Skip if first time completing program review) Limit 500 words.

Capital Campaign

- Objective: Successfully complete the \$20 million capital campaign.
- Progress: The campaign was a success, raising nearly \$25 million, surpassing the original goal by 25%. This accomplishment reflects robust donor engagement and connection to the mission of KCRW.

Audience Growth

- Objective: Increase audience by 10% both digitally and terrestrially.
- Progress: Despite concerted efforts, we didn't meet this objective. Over the past six years, audience numbers have stagnated both terrestrially and digitally. The pandemic caused massive disruption in habits like driving to work and listening to the radio. In fact, all radio listening in Los Angeles dropped by 50% with not much returning in following years. Audiences have new habits and those include using mobile devices to listen to podcasts and other on-demand content plus reading, skimming or getting most of their media from TikTok and YouTube. A percentage of the work population doesn't drive to work everyday anymore. Even one-day of remote work represents a 20% change in listening habits. This is why we are working on a comprehensive reassessment of audience engagement strategies, including leveraging emerging platforms and finding new ways to deliver content like in person events, newsletters, social, video and podcasts.

Revenue Growth

- Sponsorship Revenue
 - Objective: Achieve a 5% increase.
 - Progress: Sponsorship revenue grew from \$8.3 million to \$9.1 million, a 9.6% increase. This reflects effective partnerships and enhanced sponsor relations.
- Major Donor Revenue
 - Objective: Increase by 15%.
 - Progress: Major donor contributions surged from \$1.85 million to \$4.5 million, representing a remarkable 143% growth. This success underscores the strength of donor cultivation and stewardship initiatives.
- Membership Revenue
 - Objective: Increase by 10%.
 - Progress: Membership revenue grew from \$6.4 million to \$7.5 million, a 17% increase, surpassing the target. This demonstrates strong member engagement and the appeal of membership benefits.

We have exceeded our key financial goals but audience growth remains a critical area for improvement. The success of the capital campaign and revenue initiatives provides a solid foundation to invest in strategies aimed at expanding listenership, including enhancing digital platforms, content innovation, and targeted outreach.

5. Outcomes are the results your department hopes to achieve after providing services and carrying out the functions of your department. What are one to three outcomes your department has focused on since the last program review cycle? How do you assess or measure them (i.e. survey, internal tracking)? Limit 300 words.

KCRW has been very focused on each stage of the User Journey, from Awareness to Consideration to Habit-forming and finally, to Conversion/Membership with KCRW. We have altered our events strategy to be focused on not only providing a community building experience for the attendees but also a funnel for collecting email addresses of our attendees. We then work to build a relationship with our event attendees that includes introductions to our audio content, our in-person content and newsletter content. We invest heavily in social media to both promote KCRW and to make content and build connections in those spaces. We have grown our email list to over 206,000 active email recipients and we have seen our donation conversions grow to 12% of our overall contributions.

Since 2016 KCRW has also invested in new branding with an updated logo and visual identity. We use these in our social media, in person presentations and online. We are also launching new content that starts first as a video podcast, audio podcast or newsletter before it migrates to becoming a radio program.

The main outcome we are focused on is audience growth and engagement. We track the following metrics for this purpose:

Social media engagement metrics.

Newsletter contacts and engagement metrics.

Radio listening via Nielsen.

Digital streaming audience metrics.

Event RSVPs and attendance.

Membership numbers and revenue totals.

Major donor numbers and revenue totals.

6. Describe how your department incorporates stakeholder (student, employee groups) feedback for unit planning. Limit 300 words.

Audience Member Feedback:

Surveys: We regularly conduct audience surveys to gather insights on our content, our membership offerings and experiences. These findings inform decisions about programming, digital strategy, and community engagement going forward.

Digital Analytics and Social Media Engagement: We use data from digital platforms, including website analytics and newsletter behavior. We also analyze and respond to audience comments and feedback on social media. Our Membership Department reads through, comments on and shares monthly feedback on all aspects of KCRW - content, membership offerings and digital interfaces.

Employee feedback:

We hold monthly in-person staff meetings and encourage feedback. Each manager is in constant dialog with their direct reports and shares questions and comments to the senior team and HR.

7. Based on analyses of the data your department collects, address the following questions Limit 500 words.: a. What is your department doing well? b. What didn't work as well in your department in the last four years? c. What are the lessons you learned? What will you do differently in the future?

- 1. What is your department doing well?
- 2. What didn't work as well in your department in the last six years?
- 3. What are the lessons you learned? What will you do differently in the future?

What KCRW is doing well:

Fundraising Success

Over the past six years, the department has excelled in fundraising, notably exceeding the \$20 million goal for the capital campaign by raising nearly \$25 million. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of our donor engagement strategies and KCRW's strong brand presence in the community.

Revenue Growth

Revenue from sponsorships, major donors, and membership has exceeded targets:

Sponsorship revenue grew by 9.6%, surpassing the 5% goal.

Major donor contributions increased by 143%.

Membership revenue rose by 17%, exceeding the 10% target. These results reflect strong relationships with donors and effective messaging about KCRW's value.

Community Engagement

KCRW events are continuing to grow in popularity. We continually attract over 100,000 attendees and many are finding out about our events from sources other than radio. We are a go-to source for summer engagement and fun.

Maintaining KCRW's Legacy

KCRW has upheld its reputation as a trusted cultural institution, continuing to deliver high-quality radio, in-person and digital programming that resonates with the Los Angeles community. The partnerships we continue to make with other beloved cultural institutions as well as businesses proves we have a positive reputation in the community.

What didn't work as well?

Audience Growth

The department did not meet its goal of a 10% increase in terrestrial or digital audiences over the last six years. Despite efforts to engage listeners, audience numbers have stagnated, indicating challenges in reaching new audiences and retaining existing ones. The pandemic delivered a big blow to our growth goals and we are not yet able to return to levels we had before.

Adapting to a Multi-Platform Model

Transitioning from a radio-first mindset to a multi-platform approach has been slow. Many KCRW creators still primarily associate KCRW with radio, limiting innovation in digital content and alternative engagement strategies.

Collaboration Challenges

Remote work has limited opportunities for in-person collaboration, hindering the creative exchange necessary for generating fresh, dynamic ideas.

Lessons Learned

We need to know our audience well, both the one we have and the one we want. We need to invest in the skillsets and talent to get us quicker to the multiplatform world (video, podcasting, newsletters, social media content.) And, while KCRW's legacy as a radio station is a strength, future success depends on expanding beyond this identity to become a multi-platform media hub.

What will you do differently?

Enhance Digital Presence

Invest in user-friendly digital platforms, on-demand content, and innovative engagement strategies to attract new listeners. Create a clear path for converting digital audiences into paying members. This requires deeper investment in marketing and audience development.

Foster Collaboration

Increase opportunities for in-person collaboration through regular team retreats, brainstorming sessions, and a hybrid work model that emphasizes face-to-face interaction.

Reframe KCRW's Identity

Actively communicate and implement a broader vision of KCRW as a multi-platform community resource. Offer training to help staff adapt to new formats and platforms.

Revitalize Audience Engagement

Launch targeted outreach campaigns and develop content that reflects the diversity and creativity of LA, appealing to underserved and younger audiences.

D. FUTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

8. Tell us your department's vision: Where would you like your department to be six years from now? Limit 500 words.

KCRW's vision for the next six years is to build upon its existing strengths and evolve to meet the changing media landscape while remaining deeply rooted in its mission as the cultural voice of Los Angeles. We want KCRW to be your daily destination for sounds, tastes, ideas and experiences driven by the diversely creative

spirit of LA. We want you to connect with us and a community of curious like-minded individuals, both digitally and IRL. We also expect to have a fully developed business plan for off-radio sustainability.

Here's how this vision translates into tangible goals:

Lead our Industry in Public Media Innovation: KCRW will continue to push the boundaries of audio storytelling and content creation, looking for new partnerships, talent and formats to reach diverse audiences by launching new properties annually and sunseting ineffective properties. KCRW will invest in high-quality, original programming that explores the rich cultural tapestry of Los Angeles.

KCRW will expand its digital presence, becoming a known destination for on-demand audio content and engaging multimedia experiences, ensuring accessibility while developing a path to membership conversion. (For example: A freemium version on the radio, distinct offerings available for members.) This goal can be measured by a 25% increase in digital membership conversion.

Content Resources. Within six years KCRW's staffing will reflect that radio is a platform among equals and our staffing will be 30% who are solely dedicated to radio, with 70% committed to, and having expertise in, off-radio pursuits.

Sustainability: KCRW will prioritize financial stability and explore innovative revenue models to ensure its long-term sustainability and independence.

This will involve diversifying funding sources, cultivating strong relationships with individual donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors, and embracing new digital revenue streams. We expect our revenue model to be 8% off-radio sponsorship; 25% radio sponsorship; 65% individual supporters (including membership, major donors and institutional support.) We will need a few membership products that are attractive to the off-radio audience and lessen our dependence on radio pledge drives.

By achieving these ambitious goals, KCRW will solidify its position as a vital cultural institution, a trusted source of information and entertainment, and a driving force for community engagement in Los Angeles and beyond. This vision aligns directly with Santa Monica College's goals by fostering educational opportunities, community engagement, and a vibrant media landscape that reflects the diversity of the region.

9. What are some challenges you anticipate facing in accomplishing your department’s vision? Limit 500 words.

A significant challenge includes audience loss that occurs faster than audience gains which will affect our revenue. If audience loss continues, radio will not be perceived as a valuable outlet for sponsorship dollars, it will also narrow our membership gains that we do via pledge drives.

Funding challenges. The 2025 Congress is likely to reduce, alter or eliminate the funding package that provides 5% of KCRW’s budget (\$1.3M). Executing on this vision requires investment. We cannot invest while cutting operational staff at the same time.

10. What are the action steps your department needs to take to accomplish the vision? Limit 500 words.

Content:

Launch new content every year—podcasts, video series, or live events—while letting go of what isn’t working. We’ll collaborate with creative talent, cultural institutions, and tech platforms to bring fresh ideas to existence. At the same time, we’ll invest in high-quality programming that captures LA’s diversity, ensuring it’s both relevant and resonant.

Grow Our Digital Presence

We want KCRW to be the go-to destination for on-demand audio and multimedia experiences. This year that strategy includes building an app that sits at the top of the user journey funnel, rather than the bottom (with those that already know who we are.) A tiered membership model will offer a “freemium” option for casual listeners and premium benefits for members, making the switch to paid support an easier decision. We’ll use audience data to refine our strategies and promote our unique digital offerings to attract new supporters. This requires committing budget dollars to social marketing and other awareness campaigns.

Balance Staffing for the Future

As we continue to expand beyond radio, our staffing needs to reflect this shift. Over the next six years, we are aiming for 70% of our team to be focused on off-radio pursuits like podcasting, events, and digital content. Training and development will be key to equipping our team with the skills they need to succeed across platforms, while still maintaining the core expertise that keeps our radio programming strong.

Secure Financial Sustainability

We expect to grow digital sponsorships to 8%, expand radio sponsorships to 25%, and make individual contributions—membership, major gifts, and institutional support—account for 65% of our revenue. We’ll also reduce our reliance on pledge drives by offering new, compelling membership products for digital audiences and piloting alternative fundraising methods like subscription models and targeted micro-campaigns. We will launch a Capital Campaign for our content and tech initiatives, growing our reserves which provide support annually for operations while at the same time give us resources to make investments in the tech space and with new content initiatives.

Deepen Community Connections

KCRW thrives because of its connection to LA’s community. We’ll build strategic partnerships and host more in-person events that bring people together to connect with each other.

Align with Santa Monica College

As part of Santa Monica College, we’ll build a partnership with CMD’s Interaction Design cohorts and other media track students.

11. How will you know you’ve successfully made progress towards your vision? What are the expected outcomes/results (transformative change in skills, attitudes, behaviors, workflow, etc.). If relevant, discuss your departments’ progress towards the goals of the six-year action plan. Limit 500 words.

If KCRW can successfully monetize our live events, our newsletters and social feeds, plus create conversions of audience-members off-radio we will know we are succeeding. Building a diversified source of funding and listening/audience behavior will also show that we are making progress. The success metrics are outlined a few times in this document as they relate to the vision. Growing audience, developing new properties, building off-radio audiences and revenue streams will tell us we are being successful.

E. EMPLOYEE/STAFF AND DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE

12. Who makes up your department? Describe your staffing levels including full-time/part-time status and classification (per unit, if applicable) Limit 200 words.

KCRW has a unique position on the campus similar to The Broad Stage. We have 109 FTE, 45% of whom are represented by SAG-AFTRA in a contract with the KCRW Foundation. The CEO of KCRW is a full time Santa Monica College employee. All KCRW employee expenses and operational expenses are paid for by the KCRW Foundation.

13. Analyze your current staffing levels in the context of your department’s vision and goals for the next six years (refer to response in question #9). Limit 300 words.

Looking at KCRW’s future challenges, including the slow shrinking of radio; the increased and sizable competition for audience attention; the strong likelihood of reduced or eliminated federal funding; we must be ready to operate in an environment that makes the most efficient use of our current human resources. We are educating our workforce on audience metrics and engagement practices and are analyzing these needs monthly and strategically.

14. Describe how your department provides ongoing professional development opportunities for employees. Limit 300 words.

Employees have access to online training on best practices. We train our editorial team on editing software. They also have access to journalism education. Our Audience staff (including social, membership and communications) has access to one or two conferences each year that share tactics, results and best practices. Managers have monthly manager meetings that include training elements. Senior team leaders have access to executive coaching.

15. What is the impact of professional development engagement on the effectiveness of your department? Limit 300 words.

Professional development trains our staff on developing needed skills in a changing media world plus provides strategic design thinking to help KCRW stay focused on our goals.

16. Describe the elements of your department’s workplace culture and climate that significantly impact (both negatively and positively) your ability to achieve your goals. Limit 500 words. For example, a departmental culture with little opportunities for collaboration and an emphasis on independent work may mean loss of knowledge/skills on specific domains when a team member leaves. Or the positive impact of working in a state-of-the-art facility has improved the productivity of the employees in the department.

Challenges

Lack of On-Site Collaboration

While remote work offers flexibility, it has reduced opportunities for the kind of spontaneous, creative collaboration that thrives in an in-person environment. This has hindered the brainstorming and cross-pollination of ideas necessary for innovation and dynamic content creation.

Radio-First Mindset

The long-standing culture at KCRW revolves around radio as the primary medium for storytelling and community connection. Shifting this mindset to embrace a broader, multi-platform vision takes time and effort. Many creators still view KCRW primarily as a radio station rather than a diverse, community-driven media hub.

Strengths

Mutual Respect and Professionalism

Our workplace is defined by immense respect among team members and a shared pride in KCRW’s legacy. This sense of camaraderie fosters a positive working environment, where employees value each other’s contributions and expertise.

Strong Brand and Community Standing

KCRW's reputation as a trusted, innovative voice in Los Angeles culture motivates staff to maintain high standards. The brand's stature within the community provides a strong foundation for ambitious goals, such as expanding digital platforms and diversifying content offerings.

Impact on Goals

The challenges around collaboration and mindset shift slow progress toward goals like innovation and the expansion of KCRW's digital presence. However, the strong internal respect and pride in KCRW's identity create a supportive environment for tackling these challenges. By fostering more in-person collaboration and encouraging a broader vision for KCRW as a multi-platform community hub, we can leverage our strengths to address these challenges directly.

17. Discuss ways your department creates a more equitable departmental culture. Address one or more of the following points: Limit 500 words. *Creating space for discussing issues of race and racism in ways that are relevant to work *Promoting trainings and professional development opportunities focused on racial equity *Setting and enforcing departmental norms related to open, honest, and collegial communication *Ensuring staff who belong to a racially or other minoritized group (sexual orientation, gender, etc.) feel validated and respected and are part of the decision-making process on an ongoing basis *Deepening trust and sense of community amongst the diverse staff *If relevant, ensuring departmental practices, policies, and procedures do not create barriers for minoritized student groups (racially minoritized, low-income, first-generation college, undocumented, Veteran, students with disability, etc.)

Promoting trainings and professional development opportunities focused on racial equity

KCRW holds annual, mandatory training in order to foster an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Creating space for discussing issues of race and racism in ways that are relevant to work

Our audience and programming goals are designed to reflect and engage with the full community. We perform source tracking to ensure we are hearing from a wide range of experts and sources in our reporting. Our music content also reflects the wide diversity of genres and talent in order to have meaningful relationships with diverse audiences.

F. BUDGET AND RESOURCES

Human Resources and Professional Development

18. Based on your department's six-year vision and the action plans to get there, discuss the optimal staff structure to achieve your vision. Include in the discussion: Limit 500 words. a. The opportunities to revamp your workflow, procedures, and processes to increase efficiency b. Re-envisioning of existing job classifications and/or creation of new job classifications, if applicable c. Your succession and training plans (including cross-departmental training) to ensure that you have the right people in the right jobs today and in the years to come d. Knowledge management practices - documentation of key workflow and processes to ensure continuation of critical services provided by your unit

KCRW has developed a strategic operational document that includes a reorganization addressing workflow and increasing efficiency. The details are confidential at this time. The net result is training and hiring for needed expertise in digital content creation and audience engagement. The plan considers the best path forward combining the goals and skill sets of the Audience and Content teams to better reflect today's media environment. Departments are being cross-trained and recombined. For example, audio engineers and board operators are now under one department and work on similar tasks for the organization.

KCRW also holds monthly manager meetings that train managers on organization-wide policies. We also discuss best practices for managing employees and review necessary training.

Budget and Space

19. Based on your department’s six-year vision and the action plans to get there, analyze your existing space and infrastructure environment and discuss changes that would improve your unit’s productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Limit 500 words. Examples: redesign of existing space, additional space needed/space no longer needed, additional technology, change in technology)

As referenced above, we are planning a Capital Campaign to build our resources for technology and content investments. KCRW has a dedicated building at the CMD campus. It serves our needs however we are looking for public locations that are accessible to a wider population in Southern California so we can more easily connect in person with our audience.

20. Assess whether your current budget aligns with your plan of work for the next six years and is adequate in helping your unit meet your goals If not, what changes in the budget need to be made? Discuss reallocation of existing budget lines, increase/decrease of overall budgets or specific budget lines. Upload document or spreadsheet, if necessary. Limit 500 words.

KCRW is responsible for raising and spending its entire budget. We work with the KCRW Foundation Board to ensure we have the resources we need. Our analysis of our work plan over the next six years requires us to raise more funding from individual contributors while building sponsorship revenue in new formats to replace erosion of radio sponsorship. We will adjust our budget accordingly based on the priorities outlined in this vision should our revenue expectations change.

This form is completed and ready for acceptance.