The Listening Project 2008

Listening to the Community and Looking for What Matters
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“It is easier to keep talking once you know someone is listening.”
— a participant in the first Listening Project

ideastream Mission
To strengthen our communities by providing distinctive, thought-provoking programs and services that enlighten, inspire, educate and entertain.

ideastream Vision
ideastream will be recognized as an indispensable resource critical to the future success of the region and deserving of philanthropic and public support.

An electronic version of this or other Listening Project reports is available online at ideastream.org/lp.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

AGE
18-34: 12%
35-49: 30%
50-64: 43%
65+: 15%

RACE
African American: 5%
Asian American: 1%
Caucasian: 91%
Hispanic/Latino: 1%
Native American: 0%
Multi-Racial/Other: 2%

GENDER
Female: 60%
Male: 40%

STATION MEMBERSHIP*
90.3 WCPN: 34%
WVIZ/PBS: 46%
ideastream (ideaLeader): 6%

* Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.
ideaLeaders are contributors to ideastream at a certain level.
Not all respondents answered every question.
Since 2001, the citizens of Northeast Ohio have been providing ideastream® direction on meeting its mission to “strengthen our communities.” Through the yearly Listening Project surveys held since the inception of ideastream, more than 11,000 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 and challenges, concerns that could be understood as a civic agenda and provide key points around which to organize new programming initiatives.

While leading the community discussion, ideastream also monitors the role and value of its services to the region.

History

In the summer of 2001, Cleveland’s PBS and NPR affiliates joined together to form a new public broadcasting organization with an ambitious but clear goal: to “strengthen our communities.” An impressive collective of regional broadcasting resources, ideastream now includes public television (WVIZ/PBS), public radio (90.3 WCPN), educational and public service channels (including the Ohio Channel™), interactive video distance learning, teacher/student outreach and workshops, and a host of online resources.

To find the pulse of the region, ideastream went directly to those who knew best: the residents of Northeast Ohio. Since its inception eight years ago, The Listening Project has helped ideastream align its mission, strategies and tactics closely with Northeast Ohio’s perceived priorities. Thousands of Northeast Ohioans have let ideastream know their thoughts, concerns and opinions about the state of their region.

Years of Listening Project research have given ideastream a solid understanding of what the region considers important, what needs improvement, and what should be celebrated. And in this understanding, ideastream has developed content — distributed through radio, television, web, and outreach — to address both the assets and challenges of the region to fulfill the organization’s mission.

Goals

In June 2008, ideastream returned to the residents of Northeast Ohio with the latest installment of The Listening Project in order to reveal:

- The public’s assessment of the region, its assets and challenges and its viability as a place to live;
- The public’s idea about the role ideastream plays in Northeast Ohio;
- Educators’ assessment of the issues surrounding Northeast Ohio education.

Whom Did ideastream Listen To?

Respondents were solicited through a mix of broadcast, print, and online resources to complete a 45-question online survey. The survey contained questions about the region, ideastream’s role in serving the region, and a special section focused on Northeast Ohio education. 1,711 people responded to the online survey.
In the past year, have you seen or heard programming on 90.3 WCPN and/or WVIZ/PBS that addressed regional assets?

Yes - 81%
No - 19%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses. Not all respondents answered every question.
Rating the perceived assets and challenges of the Northeast Ohio region has given ideastream a platform on which to focus its programming and services.

The Listening Project 2008 survey asked respondents to list the assets they felt were most important to the region. The responses were tallied and organized into six general categories: cost of living and quality of life, culture, location, people and community, recreation, and weather and environment.

The results showed, by a large margin, that culture is the most important asset for Northeast Ohio (58%). Established institutions, such as the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, PlayhouseSquare, and The Cleveland Orchestra were mentioned many times in audience responses. Respondents are generally happy and satisfied with the number and variety of cultural options available in the region.

Other assets of importance to the respondents include the people and communities of Northeast Ohio (36%), location (34%), recreation (29%) and weather and environment (25%).

Respondents also mentioned Northeast Ohio’s cost of living as an asset (13%). The current economic climate may have led respondents to evaluate the quality of life and realize that the region had much to offer at a lower cost than other places in the country.

Other assets that appeared regularly in the open-ended response included the region’s range of hospitals and the choices available for higher education.
Challenges

- **economy** 79%
- **education** 53%
- **crime and drugs** 33%
- **politics** 31%
- **urban sprawl** 29%
- **people and racial issues** 21%

In the past year, have you seen or heard programming on 90.3 WCPN and/or WVIZ/PBS that addressed regional challenges?

- Yes - 81%
- No - 19%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses. Not all respondents answered every question.
What Did People Say About Regional Challenges?

The Listening Project 2008 also polled respondents about the challenges faced by Northeast Ohio. The responses were tallied and organized into six general categories: crime and drugs, economy, education, people and racial issues, politics, and urban sprawl.

According to the response, the economy of Northeast Ohio is the region’s largest challenge; 79% of respondents listed economy in their challenge list for the region, an increase of 6% from the last survey. Many mentioned the housing crisis and the collapse of the mortgage industry in their open-ended answers. Others were concerned about the lack of jobs in the area.

Education, at 53%, is still the number two challenge, but showed an 18% drop from the previous survey. Respondents are concerned about the state of K-12 education, particularly in the Cleveland area.

Other challenges listed by respondents include crime and drug problems (33%), politics (31%), urban sprawl issues (29%) and racial concerns (21%). Respondents showed concern for the aging infrastructure of buildings and roads in the region and were especially vocal about taking care of the lake and environment, two items that rated high in this survey’s assets list. Several times, “brain drain” — the loss of intelligent minds to other areas — was listed.
Education

Educational Assets

excellent schools 29%
educator dedication 26%
cultural diversity 17%

Educational Challenges

27% funding
19% community and parent involvement

How would you rate the overall quality of education in Northeast Ohio?

Very effective: 7%
Generally effective: 48%
Somewhat effective: 35%
Not very effective: 10%

How much potential does the average educator have to improve education in a school, district or educational institution?

Large potential: 22%
Moderate potential: 39%
Some potential: 35%
No potential: 4%

How much potential does a public media educational service have to improve the educational climate in your school, district or institution?

Large potential: 29%
Moderate potential: 41%
Some potential: 29%
No potential: 1%

Have you used or recommended to others any of the following WVIZ/PBS Educational Services?

- Technology Workshops: 31%
- Workshops for Parents and Child Care Providers: 5%
- PBS TeacherLine - Online Professional Development: 25%
- Video On Demand Services: 12%
- Online Content: 20%
- Interactive Video Distance Learning: 10%
- Instructional Television Programming: 16%
- College Telecourses: 9%
- SMART Consortium: 12%
- Regional Alliance for Informal Science Education (RAISE): 3%
- Ohio Math and Science Coalition (OMSC): 5%
- None of the Above: 50%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.
The Listening Project 2008 survey asked questions aimed specifically at educators. Response to this section from primary and secondary educators was about even (Elementary, 32%; Middle, 22%; Secondary, 26%; Post Secondary, 27%), followed by informal educators (providers of education at museums and parks) and human services (providers of literacy, job and health services) at 11% each. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one specialty.

Educators were asked to rate the overall quality of education in Northeast Ohio. More than half (55%) believed that education in the region was very or generally effective, while 35% thought it somewhat effective and only 10% thought it not very effective.

The educators were also asked, “What is the best thing about education in Northeast Ohio?” Their responses were coded and sorted into broad categories. The three prominent education assets that appeared from the results included the range of excellent schools available (29%), educator dedication (26%) and cultural diversity (17%). One respondent wrote that Northeast Ohio has “plenty of opportunities for all kinds of education” including trade schools and associate and four-year degree programs. Another believed that the range of “high quality higher education” is the region’s best educational asset.

So what is the most critical educational challenge in Northeast Ohio? The response to this open-ended question included mention of funding (27%) and community and parent involvement (19%). One person believed that education can be improved by “helping parents understand their role in the process,” while another stated that “funding is the basic issue that affects all levels of education.”

With the educational challenges facing the region, what kind of impact would a single educator have on improving his or her school, district, or institution? More than half the respondents — 61% — believed an average educator in the area could make a moderate-to-large impact in their profession. Where one teacher can make a significant impact, so can public media — 70% believed an educational service provided by a public media organization, such as WVIZ/PBS Educational Services, could also make a significant impact.

“Ohio must make educational funding a priority if it ever hopes to improve the economy and thus the standard of living for future generations.” — a respondent from the online survey
Respondents’ Use of ideastream

**WVIZ/PBS**
- Daily: 18%
- A few times a week: 37%
- A few times a month: 24%
- A few times a year: 16%
- Never: 5%

**90.3 WCPN**
- Daily: 67%
- A few times a week: 13%
- A few times a month: 6%
- A few times a year: 5%
- Never: 9%

**WVIZ/PBS Educational Services**
- Daily: 1%
- A few times a week: 4%
- A few times a month: 9%
- Never: 64%

**The Ohio Channel**
- Daily: 0%
- A few times a week: 2%
- A few times a month: 6%
- A few times a year: 16%
- Never: 76%

**wviz.org**
- Daily: 1%
- A few times a week: 4%
- A few times a month: 16%
- A few times a year: 43%
- Never: 36%

**wcpn.org**
- Daily: 4%
- A few times a week: 10%
- A few times a month: 23%
- A few times a year: 35%
- Never: 28%

**ohiochannel.org**
- Daily/A few times a week: 1%
- A few times a month: 1%
- A few times a year: 5%
- Never: 93%

*Not all respondents answered every question.*
Public Media Use and Awareness

"ideastream raises the questions that no one else is asking. They provide a forum for discussing challenges and solutions that the region is facing."
— a respondent from the online survey

Of the respondents to The Listening Project 2008 survey, 54% of them watch WVIZ/PBS at least once a week; almost 80% listen to 90.3 WCPN at least once a week.

Respondents in this survey confirm that ideastream is addressing the assets and challenges of the region through the organization’s various broadcasts and initiatives. Most (81%) have viewed or listened to a piece of programming focused on the best the region has to offer — the important community assets that provide residents with entertainment and enlightenment; and 81.3% recognized that ideastream covered some of the more challenging topics that create unease in the region.

More than half the respondents — 54% — could identify by name the program they heard on 90.3 WCPN and/or viewed on WVIZ/PBS that addressed one or more regional assets. Fewer could identify the same with regional challenges, 44%.

ideastream asked respondents to identify whether the organization was making an impact on the community. The results continue the positive trend from previous Listening Project reports. A majority feel WVIZ/PBS is contributing to the quality of life in Northeast Ohio (95%), and the percentage was almost the same for 90.3 WCPN (94%).

Respondents were given the choice of answering a series of open-ended questions asking what specifically WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN did to improve the community. Judging by the response, ideastream is efficient at presenting the issues facing the community — without bias or spin — leaving the final decision up to the viewer or listener. Providing a “public forum” for ideas through audience participation in programs and events appeared in responses frequently. Many respondents also feel ideastream offers the opportunity for unheard voices to be heard and that viewing or listening to ideastream stations makes them more informed through the variety of programs available.

"...You speak to us as a friend, a mentor, a teacher. You guide us in our decision-making by giving us the facts in an adult manner of maturity and intellectual fairness."
— a respondent from the online survey

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Even in these uncertain economic times, the residents of Northeast Ohio are content with the region. Northeast Ohio is their home, for better or for worse: almost 91% of respondents anticipate living in Northeast Ohio in five years, an increase of almost 3% from the last survey.

On a positive note, 87% told ideastream they thought the region was a “good” or “excellent” place to live.

And they should know. Most respondents (76%) have lived in the region for 20 years or more, and the number increases when those who have lived in the region for at least ten years — 88% — is included.

Not all respondents answered every question.

Cleveland’s Tremont neighborhood
ideastream’s Responsiveness to the Region

In 2008, ideastream collaborated with Northeast Ohio organizations to build awareness of community assets and concerns. Each of these multiple media projects responded directly to the region’s top assets and challenges as outlined by previous Listening Project research.

In media coverage of community issues, ideastream produced several major multiple media series on WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN. Some of these series include *What Would Merging City & County Government Mean*, *The Foreclosure Crisis: Poverty in the City*, and *21st Century Schools*. Several included partnerships and cross promotions with other media organizations.

ideastream presented three nationally broadcast television programs on PBS: *The Cleveland Orchestra in Performance: Bruckner’s Symphony No. 5*, *Washington Week: Live from Cleveland*, and *The Return of the Cuyahoga*.

More than a half dozen outreach partnerships or media collaborations engaged the community in discussions about the region’s assets and challenges, including:

*By the People: Dialogue in Democracy* — a collaboration about the role of regional universities, with Bowling Green University, WBGU-TV, and Kent State University, as part of a national initiative.

*The Truth About Cancer* — a partnership with The Gathering Place and other cancer support providers to supply resource information for viewers on WVIZ/PBS.

*Depression: Out of the Shadows* — a partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and area mental health boards to supply resource information for viewers of the PBS show.

*The Jewish Americans* — a collaboration with the Jewish Community Federation and the Jewish Community Center to build awareness of the PBS program.

*African American Lives 2* — an all-day institute for educators focused on genealogy held after the broadcast on WVIZ/PBS.

*Northern Ohio Live* — an arts partnership with the regional magazine to collaborate on monthly arts topics to appear in print and on radio and television.

Beyond special programs, series, national productions, and outreach partnerships since 2007, ideastream produced more than 1,500 in-depth, local reports and programs that addressed jobs/economy/business, education, environment, health and science, politics, and arts and culture.

Regional programming about these subjects is delivered to Northeast Ohio audiences on locally produced programs such as *The Sound of Ideas*, *Around Noon*, and *The City Club Forum* on 90.3 WCPN; and *Ideas* specials, *Feagler & Friends*, *NewsDepth*, *Applause*, *the City Club Forum*, and *The State of Ohio* on WVIZ/PBS. ideastream web sites provide a profusion of information available on demand.

ideastream’s broadcast of national programs from PBS, NPR and others helps Northeast Ohioans connect similar topics and events nationally and internationally. Some of these programs include *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, and *Frontline*. 

(Above) Volunteers answer phones during *The Truth About Cancer* broadcast

(Right) Marketplace’s Kai Ryssdal speaks at the Idea Center at PlayhouseSquare

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Respondents' Thoughts on ideastream

I used to think of (WVIZ) as an educational/news related resource. Now I see it as a voice of, and for, the entire community.

(WCPN) creates an intelligent public forum for the community to give voice to its ideas.

Public broadcasting is one of the benchmarks of a quality metropolitan area.

(WVIZ’s) open-minded approach to programming provides less opinion and more information so we can make our own decisions.

WVIZ/PBS is important to the region because it offers an array of thoughtful and relevant educational programming as well as region specific programming. This is such an important resource — and the only one of its kind — on standard programming television.

You are a more informed citizen when watching PBS.

(WCPN) is the only media outlet that invites community participation in intelligent dialogue about how to resolve problems that are barriers to a positive future for the region.

(WCPN) sets the tone, provides leadership, (and) defines the focus of our region’s priorities.

WCPN provides the opportunity to hear voices that would otherwise go unheard by the general populace.

(WCPN) stays on top of the pulse of Cleveland and can immediately put a program on that people can respond to.
Economy and education continue to rank among the top challenges for Northeast Ohio.

Northeast Ohio’s residents rank culture as the region’s top asset; often stating — by name — several cultural institutions as examples.

The region’s livability rating has increased slightly from last year (87% this year to 82% last year).

Approximately four out of five people (81%) have listened to or viewed programming on ideastream stations that addressed regional assets and challenges.

Almost everyone who took the survey believes WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN are contributing to the quality of life in Northeast Ohio (WVIZ/PBS: 95%, 90.3 WCPN: 94%).

People welcome and appreciate ideastream’s balance of coverage and focus on local issues.

There are plenty of excellent teachers and schools in the region, but learning can be hampered by funding issues and lack of community and parental involvement.

ideastream continues to play an important role in the eyes of its audiences. By providing a platform to discuss issues and host conversation, to spotlight assets, to cover pressing concerns, and to inform decisions, ideastream has proved it has lived up to, and continues to fortify, its mission statement to "strengthen our communities by providing distinctive, thought-provoking programs and services that enlighten, inspire, educate and entertain.”
Listed here are series, special programs and other projects and events that have been informed or influenced by the results of **Listening Project** research. They were produced and presented by WVIZ/PBS & 90.3 WCPN ideastream, frequently in collaboration with other organizations.

**SERIES**

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**SPECIALS**

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