ideastream®
STRATEGIC PLAN
2019 – 2021

illuminating the world around us...
Over the past ten years, the media industry has experienced the most dramatic change since the beginning of its relatively short history. More dramatic than transitioning from AM to FM radio in the 50s, more dramatic than the shift from black and white images to color in the 60s and even more dramatic than the rapid expansion of cable programming in the 70s. The advancement of digital technology has provided more choices, and the change in consumer habits has heightened expectations. Audiences are increasingly able to access any information they want, wherever and whenever they want it.

There has been a common adage in public media since the transition from analog to digital, “Technology has finally caught up to our mission.” Those of us in public media have always aspired to provide a greater experience for the communities we serve, and finally we have increasingly innovative technologies to help us do so. As one of the few growing community owned and operated media entities serving Northeast Ohio, ideastream now has the capacity to enhance connections with our audiences by listening, understanding and fostering dialogues across the region. As we continue to provide the credible, quality content and events our region relies on and requests, we are striving to focus on each engaged audience member, our user. We are placing users at the center of everything we do. Users are individuals who interact with all aspects of ideastream, our broadcasts, our digital programs and even our events. We rely on understanding their needs and attitudes about using our service to strengthen our relationship with them.

Because ideastream is a trusted and dynamic multimedia source, we are able to remain relevant and better serve our mission. Since its re-envisioning over fifteen years ago, ideastream has had an eye toward the future. Its very name invokes a time when technological advancements would allow the organization to provide a more robust service to Northeast Ohioans. For the next three years ideastream will focus on enhancing user experiences through greater engagement, and more access to our award-winning educational, journalistic and entertainment content. We are striving to be everywhere you would expect us to be.

ideastream is well positioned for the digital age thanks to previous plans, the successful completion of our Campaign for Community and the long-standing support of our members. The following strategic plan builds on a solid foundation, preparing us to thrive in an ever-changing media environment. As our dynamic roadmap for the next three years, this plan will both serve us as an organization and share our aspirations and commitment to the communities we serve.

Kevin E. Martin
President and CEO

Julie A. Raskind
Board Chair
illuminating the world around us...

CONTENTS

3 Our Past as Prologue
4 Our Strategic Framework
5 Vision | Mission | Values
6 Our Goals
10 What’s Different?
12 Acknowledgements
In 2001, a remarkable innovation in public media took place in Northeast Ohio. The boards of WVIZ/PBS and 90.3 WCPN consolidated eight independent programs and services into ideastream, a unified new multiple media public service organization. The purpose of consolidation was to leverage assets to achieve greater cost-effective community service using all forms of media.

An initial strategic plan created the new organization. The second plan built the integrated organization, established partnerships as an essential strategy and created the remarkable Idea Center® at Playhouse Square that was dedicated in 2006. The third plan established important programs and services and assured the conversion from analog to digital broadcasting. The fourth plan preserved financial stability during difficult economic times and established multiple channels of service on multiple media platforms.

The most recent strategic plan called for increased investments in capacity for development and marketing, content creation, partnership development and endowment growth. It also included the Campaign for Community, a successful $20.3 million-dollar endeavor to support organizational expansion.

With the hard work of a dedicated board and talented staff, the goals of previous strategic plans were achieved securing ideastream as a respected, flourishing public service organization. These past successes positioned ideastream leadership and staff to develop a new three-year strategic plan with bold initiatives designed to grow audience and membership, enhance effectiveness of all delivery platforms, increase platform intentional content, improve internal systems and processes and grow and diversify sources of revenue.
USER EXPERIENCE (UX)
ideastream strives to better know and deeply understand our users and how we fit into their lives. Our focus is to make it easy for them to find, access and engage with the content we provide.

ENGAGEMENT
ideastream seeks to cultivate participation and interaction to better understand our communities and to convene civil dialogues that strengthen relationships.

DISTRIBUTION
ideastream aims to build on the experience of our broadcast capabilities and leverage technology across platforms to be where our community wants us, when they want us.

CONTENT
ideastream aspires to increase and strengthen content that provides users on all platforms with news, information and entertainment that is compelling, relevant and educational.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
ideastream is aligned as a team. We continuously aspire to improve efficiency and agility. We have systems, processes and infrastructure that are informed by data and flexible to deliver value to our users.

FINANCIAL STRENGTH & LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY
ideastream develops lasting relationships to inspire ongoing support. We continue to build a foundation to preserve our service for generations to come.
OUR VISION
ideastream is indispensable and highly valued for its unique ability to strengthen our community.

OUR MISSION
ideastream is a trusted and dynamic multimedia source for illuminating the world around us.

OUR CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES
As a community institution, the ideastream board and staff are committed to:

1. **COLLABORATION:**
   We work well together internally and with our strategic partners to best meet the needs and interests of those we serve.

2. **INCLUSION:**
   We respect the broad diversity of our communities and reflect it in our programs, services, board and staff.

3. **INNOVATION:**
   We incubate and support informed risk-taking and learn from experimentation.

4. **EXCELLENCE:**
   We adhere to the highest standards when creating and delivering quality content and services and carrying out our business practices.

5. ** STEWARDSHIP:**
   We manage the information and resources shared by our users, staff and supporters with the utmost integrity and responsibility, and provide strong oversight.
ideastream strives to be proactive in building strong relationships with its active and potential audiences. Through interactions, the interests, behaviors and needs of individuals within the community are identified. ideastream applies research data and focuses on human centered design to grow support and better serve its users. The customization of programming and services allows the organization to provide valuable, unique experiences.
GOAL 2

Enhance satisfaction with and effectiveness of all delivery platforms to increase accessibility and use.

ideastream provides convenient access to programming and services across Northeast Ohio through consistent, sustainable delivery platforms. Content is available on-demand at ideastream.org, through next generation digital broadcast platforms and through in-person interactions at the Idea Center at Playhouse Square. With a diversity of options reflecting a digital future and broadcast legacy, audiences can choose their preferred way to read, listen or watch relevant content, anywhere at any time. ideastream continues to embrace change and adopt innovative technologies to better serve communities.

GOAL 3

Increase and strengthen platform-intentional content that is relevant, compelling and credible to enrich our communities.

Recognizing new technologies, ideastream produces and invests in dynamic, fact-based content created and optimized for specific platforms. ideastream is committed to telling local stories on key topics, including news and community affairs, arts and culture, education, health and science, in addition to providing the renowned NPR and PBS programming citizens have come to rely on.

Making It, a digital video series, showcases remarkable entrepreneurial endeavors in the region. The series highlights Northeast Ohioans through concise, engaging web videos which are available to view on-demand across devices. Experimentation with podcasts, The Downtowner, Cleveland Talks Serial and I’m Robert Conrad, have attracted unprecedented attention from new audiences and funders.
OUR GOALS

GOAL 4

*Build a strong complement of employees, processes, infrastructure, culture and board governance for more effective performance in a changing environment.*

ideastream recognizes that its greatest resource is its staff and culture. As a proactive, pace-setting organization, ideastream relies on talented and dedicated employees to maintain 24/7 operations. Productivity and team innovation is prioritized with investments in talent, tools, processes and work environment. Continuous access to training, mentoring, job coaching and career advancement opportunities are made available organization-wide to encourage innovation and achieve efficacy. To support the strategic success of ideastream, the leadership updates, implements and documents best governance practices.
With strong assets, limited liabilities and no debt, ideastream is in a firm financial position. The success of the Campaign for Community, along with ongoing support from individuals, foundations, corporations and government investments, is a solid base that will continue to grow through sustained support and endowment growth. ideastream continues to enhance its value proposition and look for new opportunities to expand revenue.

**GOAL 5**

Grow and diversify sources of revenue to maintain organizational stability and long-term sustainability.
WHAT’S DIFFERENT?

THEN: ONE TO MANY

In the past, the broadcast capabilities of ideastream enabled the organization to distribute content to our Northeast Ohio audience. ideastream provided a service and formed collective relationships with listeners and viewers.

THEN: AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

Audiences originally chose public media for its unique and high quality content. An alternative to commercial programming, audience preferences were determined by demographics and psychographics.

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NOW: MANY TO MANY

As ideastream focuses on the future, the organization serves as a link between many users and platforms. ideastream provides content through diverse mediums and cultivates an array of interactions.

NOW: USER EXPERIENCE

ideastream strives to create a user experience that not only includes quality content, but also meets their growing needs. With user preferences discovered by persona development and human centered design, ideastream aims for the entire experience to achieve the attributes listed above.
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