

Input Phase Summary Analysis

WFHB Strategic Plan

O’Neill Research LLC

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Executive Summary

As part of its strategic planning process, WFHB conducted a full range of primary research activities designed to engage the public at large, station stakeholders, other public service agencies, and key leaders in the community. These activities included two focus groups, key informant interviews, a public forum, and a public survey. The focus groups included *Agency Collaborations* with representatives from organizations that are present or potential partners and *Civic Leaders* primarily with present and former elected officials. This primary research has been supplemented by secondary research on best practices in community radio and multimedia. The best practices report is also available through the WFHB website.

The primary research has confirmed that the station is held in high regard by all those who are familiar with it, including key leaders in business, government and community agencies as well as station listeners and volunteers. We will not review the complete list of station strengths in the Executive Summary; these are many and well detailed in the report summaries below. Many of the station's strengths - such as a dedicated listenership and volunteer base, supporters who have remained loyal to the station over decades, an inventiveness born of necessity, its unique community focus in both news and music, the technology to reach an unlimited online audience, and its breadth of voices – will need to be leveraged in order to address weaknesses and threats and to capitalize on opportunities. We encourage you to read the summary reports below and the full reports on the website.

In general, four broad and related themes emerged throughout the research which will need to be addressed as WFHB reviews its mission and sets the goals and objectives that will determine its future. The first is what “community” means in the age of digital media and the internet. How this question is answered will have social, technological, programmatic, marketing, and fundraising consequences. The second is how the station becomes more inclusive. The third is the identity or brand the station proactively creates for itself that sets it apart from the competition; this will involve how it manages and promotes its programming: music and the arts on the one hand; news and civic affairs on the other. The fourth is how it pursues funding – this would include its semiannual fund drives, grant writing, and endowment building. These four themes are interrelated and are tied to a number of threats, weaknesses, and opportunities which surfaced across the research.

Community of Listeners

The most direct discussion of community occurred in the Civic Leaders focus group. Radio is a medium limited spatially by its broadcast area and limited temporally by the number of hours in a broadcast day. Signals have a maximum radius and when the lineup is filled, something existing must be removed for something new to be added. One participant in the focus group called traditional radio the tyranny of time. This tyranny also means that listeners have only one or two (if the program is repeated) opportunities to tune in. This lies in stark contrast to the internet which continues to revolutionize how media, audio and video, are accessed. The digital world allows the individual listener or viewer to access what they want, when they want it. This concept surfaced across our research. But it's also more than the flexibility of access. Florida's digital media industry association, Digital Media Alliance Florida,

defines digital media as “the creative convergence of digital arts, science, technology and business for human expression, communication, social interaction and education.”¹ What is interesting about this statement is not only its breadth but the notion of creativity and interaction. The digital media creates a network of content consumers and creators; it is interactive. This concept surfaced in both our input phase and best practices research.

What a community radio station is depends on what we understand by community. In traditional radio, community was limited by the geographic area your signal could reach. With the advent of digital media over the internet, this community of listeners and potential content providers is virtually unlimited. However, this is not a settled issue for the station. There was clear evidence of disagreement at the Public Forum where some participants expressed concerns about the station losing its focus by providing video content over the internet. There were equally strong opinions arguing that it wasn’t an “either/or” question, that for the station to remain relevant it needed to become a multimedia provider through digital content. This was especially true for those who were most concerned about the station’s delivery of local news.

Inclusiveness

This issue of how we define community also directly relates to our second theme regarding inclusiveness. Demographically, the respondents to our Public Survey are not representative of Monroe County as whole. They are, relative to the community at large, much older, wealthier, more highly educated, and over-represented by males. Since over 90 percent of the respondents are listeners, around 80 percent financial contributors, and over 40 percent volunteers, these disparities in regard to age, gender, and socioeconomic status may be indicative of a lack of accessibility. It may indicate a need to engage in more targeted outreach activities.

Similar concerns surfaced in the key informant interviews represented in the SWOT Profile and in the focus groups. It is generally acknowledged that the volunteers are “aging out,” and that there is a “cliquish aura” in how the station is being governed and managed. There is a clear perception that in a town dominated by the young, WFHB is a station run by older individuals. This criticism should be qualified by the admiration for what the station stands for and has accomplished under this leadership, but there is clearly a need to reach out for more participation from youth and young adults and possibly from women and minorities. A contributing factor is that volunteers and program opportunities are not solicited and promoted in any systematic fashion. This is clear from interviews and the Public Forum. CATS was mentioned across several venues as an example of a user-friendly organization in terms of inviting and assisting individuals in producing their own programs. As suggested by a WFHB veteran at the Public Forum, there needs to be a formal slot for one-time productions; at the present time you must have the capacity and willingness to produce a weekly program, which is intimidating. Offering and becoming recognized for programming over the internet would also provide space and flexibility.

Inclusiveness is also a board governance and management issue. Key informant interviews as well as best practices research, reflected in the SWOT Profile, indicate a need for an updated governing

¹ Cited from http://www.dmaflorida.org/wp/?page_id=162.

framework which may include by-law and policy revisions. There is a perception that the board is insular. However, in response to the best practices research, the board has already adopted a matrix to document and evaluate the social and professional skills of board members. This matrix will allow them to identify skills which may be important to the organization and which are missing among the present members. The missing skills can then become the basis for recruiting new members.

The Station Identity or Brand

This third theme depends on how the station approaches its definition of community and its approach to inclusiveness. Even if it should pursue a multimedia internet presence with a more global community of listeners, it would be in some manner a portal into Bloomington and Monroe County's music, news, and culture. Although there is strong support across our input activities for the reach of the internet, there is equally strong support for a focus on local music and local news, and also a confident feeling that what's being offered and discussed in Bloomington can attract a wider audience beyond Bloomington.

How this might be communicated and marketed is crucial. One of the lower rated activities in Public Survey was how well the station differentiated its mission and programming from other stations and multimedia providers. The lack of systematic marketing was also noted in key informant interviews and in the focus groups. A brand is not just a recognized symbol, trademark, or logo. It is clear set of associations that have been systematically linked to it. Those associations should differentiate the station from its competitors and create a firmer foundation for marketing and fundraising.

Fundraising

How the station defines community, addresses inclusiveness, and creates a brand will lay an important foundation for fundraising, but there are also operational challenges here. It was noted in the interviews and focus groups that the station lacks a director of development. It became evident in the Agency Collaboration Focus Group that this situation has resulted in lost opportunities in funding from the City and given the impression that there is no organization in the pursuit of local grants. As this criticism was leveled, the sentiment was very clearly one of disappointment at being unable to provide some additional support for the station. It was also pointed out that the on air fund drive is well organized and executed and serves as model for WIUX. Nevertheless, it will be imperative for WFHB to become more systematic and disciplined in its pursuit of grants, especially from sympathetic local agencies.

There has also not been a professional and disciplined effort at building an endowment, fully utilizing events for fundraising, or recruiting and securing additional underwriters. Endowment building is a highly refined area of fundraising and includes strategies for soliciting planned giving, the creation of restricted or dedicated funds, and the creation of trusts or legacies. Many organizations in Monroe County also utilize annual events that become associated with a particular agency, develop a following, and raise significant funds. WFHB often engages in special events, but has not made an effort to raise significant funds in conjunction with them. For a media outlet like WFHB, there should be an ongoing and systematic effort to recruit underwriters. Unlike the on air fund drive, it should be formally attached to a staff position and pursued throughout the year.

Given the bleak environment for public funding of human services and not for profit agencies, organizations like WFHB will be competing for local dollars with many social safety net providers. Among the focus groups and interviews, three different areas were cited as suffering from a lack of staff: fundraising (a development director), the management of volunteers, and community outreach specifically in regard to collaborations with other agencies. These are to a certain extent related activities and might be subsumed within one position.

Surviving or thriving will require strategic investments in staff and technology that will drive professional and efficient delivery of services. It will require a sustained, planned, and disciplined fundraising effort that includes on air drives, grant writing, endowment building, special events, and recruitment of underwriters. It will mean forging deeper collaborations in the community that will make WFHB a key partner in providing essential media services that assist other organizations in achieving their missions. This will both raise the station's public profile and ensure that it is viewed as an essential partner in the provision of basic services. This will not be new ground for the station but is a matter of degree and focus.

Conclusion

This executive summary is by no means a representation of all the valuable information and insights gathered in the input phase. Please read the more detailed summaries that follow and then the full reports which are available on the website.

Input Report Summaries

SWOT Profile

Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) tables represent a compilation based on:

- Initial interviews conducted with steering committee members not formally affiliated with the station
- Steering committee input at the first strategic planning meeting
- Interviews with key station volunteers and contributors
- Global and national trends identified by O’Neill Research and SDG as potential opportunities or threats to the station.

The SWOT summary eliminated items which were repeated and consolidated items which were closely related. Items have also been coded in order to group them into generalized categories based on our taskforce action areas:

- Governance and management structure
- Programming – music and news
- Technology and space needs
- Fundraising
- Volunteer management

To these action areas, we added collaborations and partnerships (a key issue to be addressed by each taskforce). We have provided two SWOT tables and: one sorted by the action areas one sorted by the four SWOT areas.

***Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
Sorted by Action Areas***

Action Area	SWOT	Issue
Collaborations & Partnerships	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing partnerships with Ivy Tech, Lotus, CATS, and the City of Bloomington
Collaborations & Partnerships	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborations with other community organizations which can lead to an enlarged customer-base and/or greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering your services, for example the Buskirk-Chumley Theater and deeper relationships with Ivy Tech and IU for volunteers/interns
Fundraising	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New efforts at donor recognition (with more yet to be done)
Fundraising	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding – a challenge for all non-profits
Fundraising	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resources
Fundraising	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for a strategy to create long-term, sustainable funding through the endowment
Fundraising	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need more effective donor follow-up and tracking
Fundraising	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the political environment – leadership changes resulting in less support and funding both locally and nationally
Fundraising	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prospects for a quick turn-around in the economy are generally perceived to be improbable which may mean that the following trends continue into the near future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diminution of the middle-class – less philanthropic dollars available Increases in lower income families Decreases in government revenue Greater demand for social services Increased competition among social service and not-for-profit agencies for diminished local funding from government, business, and individuals
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service ethic – presence at Farmers Market and Lotus
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally independent
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of community needs
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong local support across the community
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone who knows about WFHB likes it and is proud of it
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The “invitation” to join the board is very good – lots of info and lots of contact
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally local and community-based
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perseverance – WFHB has prevailed.
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlimited possibilities – anything can happen and this openness

Action Area	SWOT	Issue
		draws in volunteers
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A low barrier of entry to work as a volunteer or to propose a program
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An openness to possibility as a result of station independence
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have become tremendously inventive as a result of limited financial resources
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience producing quality on a shoestring
Governance & Management	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in a music town and one that has national recognition
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for branding for the organization and for specific programs
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor feedback measures – no rigorous system for assessing quality of service
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for effectively using quantifiable measure on the web – how do you listen?
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with other arts, music, information and cultural organizations and events
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understaffed
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and legacy is both a strength and weakness in terms of old-guard mentality
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential aging & burnout of core staff & volunteers = loss of knowledge & skills
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board effectiveness and best practices – for example: no strategic recruitment of new board members based on assessment of needed skills and representation; board governance documents are weak
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate ownership – which is a result of the volunteer model where individuals may become overly invested
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current dependence on Corporation for Public Broadcasting grant – used for operational funding
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent staff turnover – need for strong staff, a lot of turnover recently
Governance & Management	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key strategic issues which need to be addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The base of support: broad? narrow? ○ Diversity of the Board – can it reach to where we want to go? ○ Lack of clear financial plan? Can Fund Drive extra dollars be put in savings? Or do we have to spend it immediately?

Action Area	SWOT	Issue
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do we market the station? Can it be improved? Have not heard a clear reason to listen to the station regularly.
Governance & Management	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer-driven strategies – which may require market research or outreach activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who are your current customers and what do they want? ○ Are there new markets and new customers to be accessed that are consistent with your mission? ○ Are there new services consistent with your mission and your skills which can be sources of income or profit centers?
Governance & Management	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A change in leadership and possibly support from Ivy Tech
Governance & Management	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Declining interest in radio
Governance & Management	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not-for-profit agencies providing arts, entertainment, information, media, or cultural services will be competing not only among themselves but with social safety-net providers for local funding.
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short-term, selective listeners because of broad programming which appeals to different tastes – potential downside: the lack of “all day” listeners
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unique programming representing many voices and different niches such as Reggae Children
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An unlimited online audience and, therefore, unlimited potential contributors
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generous coverage of non-profits by news department leadership
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diverse music programming
Programming	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CATS Week Partnership
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of familiarity with the lineup – weak program guides which are not well communicated within the station and, therefore, not cross-promoted by broadcasters
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Failure to take full advantage of opportunities to setup mobile broadcasts from events and establish a higher profile presence
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited broadcast options
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited news
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Different generations look to different media for news, but this could be an opportunity as well
Programming	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competition with WFIU for public community space

Action Area	SWOT	Issue
Programming	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 10 years a shortage of broadcaster and DJs.
Programming	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping programs fresh with committed producers
Tech & Space	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFHB <u>is</u> a media outlet.
Tech & Space	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity to broadcast a traditional signal beyond Monroe Country
Tech & Space	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual and digital production makes lack of space less critical.
Tech & Space	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central location in the Bloomington downtown
Tech & Space	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four recording studios
Tech & Space	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of physical space – aging facilities and equipment
Tech & Space	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of capacity for call-in show – no time delay or multiple lines
Tech & Space	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing problems with signal strength and interference
Tech & Space	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in technology may provide opportunities for a higher level of service at less expense
Tech & Space	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of new skills to take advantage of technological changes - improve web site & optimize for news delivery (local print & radio news not doing so)
Tech & Space	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New technologies which can lead to a broader range of services to a wider audience
Tech & Space	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping pace with changes in technology
Tech & Space	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully bridging the rise of digital media with the expense of traditional broadcasting
Volunteers	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number and enthusiasm of volunteers
Volunteers	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The largest strength WFHB has is its volunteer base, not only currently, but also through the years.
Volunteers	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community volunteers are staff on and off the air.
Volunteers	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging out of long-term volunteers – need infusion of younger people to become long-term supporters and volunteers
Volunteers	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to keep the disparate parts of a volunteer organization aligned
Volunteers	W	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of effective volunteer management - volunteer turnover means lack of continuity & skills, esp. in News; weak volunteer training

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
Sorted by SWOT Areas

Strengths	
Collaborations & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing partnerships with Ivy Tech, Lotus, CATS, and the City of Bloomington
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New efforts at donor recognition (with more yet to be done)
Governance & Management – Strategic Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located in a music town and one that has national recognition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlimited possibilities – anything can happen and this openness draws in volunteers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A low barrier of entry to work as a volunteer or to propose a program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An openness to possibility as a result of station independence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have become tremendously inventive as a result of limited financial resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience producing quality on a shoestring
Governance & Management - Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong local support across the community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone who knows about WFHB likes it and is proud of it
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service ethic – presence at Farmers Market and Lotus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The “invitation” to join the board is very good – lots of info and lots of contact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally independent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Totally local and community-based
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of community needs
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perseverance – WFHB has prevailed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term, selective listeners because of broad programming which appeals to different tastes – potential downside: the lack of “all day” listeners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique programming representing many voices and different niches such as Reggae Children
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An unlimited online audience and, therefore, unlimited potential contributors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generous coverage of non-profits by news department leadership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse music programming
Tech & Space Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CATS Week Partnership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFHB <u>is</u> a media outlet.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity to broadcast a traditional signal beyond Monroe Country
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual and digital production makes lack of space less critical.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central location in the Bloomington downtown
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four recording studios
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number and enthusiasm of volunteers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The largest strength WFHB has is its volunteer base, not only currently, but also through the years.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community volunteers are staff on and off the air.

Weaknesses	
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding – a challenge for all non-profits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a strategy to create long-term, sustainable funding through the endowment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more effective donor follow-up and tracking
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for branding for the organization and for specific programs
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor feedback measures – no rigorous system for assessing quality of service
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for effectively using quantifiable measure on the web – how do you listen?
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with other arts, music, information and cultural organizations and events
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understaffed
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and legacy is both a strength and weakness in terms of old-guard mentality
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential aging & burnout of core staff & volunteers = loss of knowledge & skills
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board effectiveness and best practices – for example: no strategic recruitment of new board members based on assessment of needed skills and representation; board governance documents are weak
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate ownership – which is a result of the volunteer model where individuals may become overly invested
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current dependence on Corporation for Public Broadcasting grant – used for operational funding
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent staff turnover – need for strong staff, a lot of turnover recently
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key strategic issues which need to be addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The base of support: broad? narrow? ○ Diversity of the Board – can it reach to where we want to go? ○ Lack of clear financial plan? Can Fund Drive extra dollars be put in savings? Or do we have to spend it immediately? ○ How do we market the station? Can it be improved? Have not heard a clear reason to listen to the station regularly.
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of familiarity with the lineup – weak program guides which are not well communicated within the station and, therefore, not cross-promoted by broadcasters
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to take full advantage of opportunities to setup mobile broadcasts from events and establish a higher profile presence

Weaknesses	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited broadcast options Limited news Different generations look to different media for news, but this could be an opportunity as well Competition with WFIU for public community space
Tech & Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of physical space – aging facilities and equipment Lack of capacity for call-in show – no time delay or multiple lines Ongoing problems with signal strength and interference
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging out of long-term volunteers – need infusion of younger people to become long-term supporters and volunteers Failure to keep the disparate parts of a volunteer organization aligned Lack of effective volunteer management - volunteer turnover means lack of continuity & skills, esp. in News; weak volunteer training

Opportunities	
Collaborations & Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborations with other community organizations which can lead to an enlarged customer-base and/or greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering your services, for example the Buskirk-Chumley Theater and deeper relationships with Ivy Tech and IU for volunteers/interns
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer-driven strategies – which may require market research or outreach activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are your current customers and what do they want? Are there new markets and new customers to be accessed that are consistent with your mission? Are there new services consistent with your mission and your skills which can be sources of income or profit centers?
Tech & Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in technology may provide opportunities for a higher level of service at less expense Acquisition of new skills to take advantage of technological changes - improve web site & optimize for news delivery (local print & radio news not doing so) New technologies which can lead to a broader range of services to a wider audience

Threats	
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the political environment – leadership changes resulting in less support and funding both locally and nationally
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prospects for a quick turn-around in the economy are generally perceived to be improbable which may mean that the following trends continue into the near future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diminution of the middle-class – less philanthropic dollars available ○ Increases in lower income families ○ Decreases in government revenue ○ Greater demand for social services ○ Increased competition among social service and not-for-profit agencies for diminished local funding from government, business, and individuals
Governance & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change in leadership and possibly support from Ivy Tech
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining interest in radio • Not-for-profit agencies providing arts, entertainment, information, media, or cultural services will be competing not only among themselves but with social safety-net providers for local funding.
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 10 years a shortage of broadcaster and DJs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping programs fresh with committed producers
Tech & Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping pace with changes in technology
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully bridging the rise of digital media with the expense of traditional broadcasting

Focus Groups

Agency Collaborations – Focus Group

The purpose of this focus group was to explore the perceptions and attitudes of other key organizations in the community regarding WFHB as a resource for local news and music. In addition, it inquired into the potential for collaborations among the represented agencies with WFHB. The 11 participants consisted of representatives from a wide range of organizations with missions focused on public service and interests. Participants were all familiar with the station, and many were regular listeners.

- There was a strong general perception that WFHB is a unique and valuable asset that serves as a hub for local news, music, and culture.
- Participants raised fundamental questions about the approach toward programming. These questions dealt with:
 - The degree to which community preferences should shape music and news programming:
 - Limited air time and the balance between music and news programming:
- There were serious issues raised in regard to marketing and fundraising:
 - The lack of a development director has clearly placed the station at a disadvantage in pursuing city funding.
 - Participants generally agreed that the station needs to ramp up its efforts to secure corporate underwriters.
- The participants were all very supportive of collaborating with WFHB. Several indicated that their organizations were already collaborating and expressed strong satisfaction with those relationships. Several suggested some potential areas of collaboration with their organizations:
- The lack of adequate staffing was noted both generally and in specific instances. Three different areas were cited as suffering from a lack of staff: the management of volunteers, fundraising (a development director), and community outreach specifically in regard to collaborations.

Conclusions

Throughout the discussion, even during critical comments, it was apparent that the entire group respects the organization, supports its basic mission, and wants to see it succeed in the future. However, many participants perceive that the lack of staff in certain positions has put the station at a disadvantage. The competition for funding among social service agencies and other not-for-profits will certainly increase with the continuing loss of public funding. And since local philanthropy is a finite resource, these staffing deficits could become more serious threats to the present scope of operations and certainly to future growth. Increased funding, increased efficiencies, and creative use of technology and volunteers are all avenues that will need to be explored.

It's evident that the lack of a development director has resulted in lost opportunities in funding from the City and given the impression that there is no organization in the pursuit of local grants. As this criticism was leveled, the sentiment was very clearly one of disappointment at being unable to provide some additional support for the station. It was also pointed out that the on air fund drive is well organized and executed and serves as model for WIUX. Nevertheless, it will be imperative for WFHB to become more systematic and disciplined in its pursuit of grants, especially from sympathetic local agencies.

The responses to station programming were mixed. While there was admiration for the breadth of music programming and the fact that it was volunteer-driven, there were also questions about how programs were selected, the balance between news and music, and the sustainability of an eclectic approach which is driven by the collections and passions of volunteers but which may hinder building a wider audience in the community. There were concerns that this eclectic approach along with the inflexibility of radio scheduling would be eclipsed by the anytime, on-demand services provided by many internet sites catering to individual tastes.

In regard to collaborations with WFHB, agencies with existing ones spoke well of the relationship and the results. Representatives from organizations without present relationships were very willing to explore establishing one and even suggested several ideas. This certainly speaks well for the overall perception of WFHB as an organization worth being affiliated with.

Civic Leaders – Focus Group

This focus group consisted of current and former elected officials, the county commissioners' administrator, the Community Access Television Station (CATS) Manager, and the Chancellor of Ivy Tech Bloomington. These are clearly key leaders in the community, and their willingness to participate is a statement in and of itself about their regard for WFHB. With the exception of the city councilman from Bedford, it was very evident that the other participants are WFHB listeners. Their comments appear to be grounded in substantial knowledge of both programming and operations. Their insights and recommendations are, therefore, significant not only because of their leadership in the community but because they were able to effectively engage key issues regarding strategic positioning and management.

As you review the key findings, it is important to note that these leaders have a very nuanced understanding of what WFHB offers and how it operates. Their praise and their criticisms are both tempered by an understanding that many strategic directions and operational structures have advantages and disadvantages and that WFHB like every similar agency is limited by its resources – human and financial.

Key Findings

- There is deep respect for the station and its history. There was a strong consensus that the “local connection” in both news and music was its defining strength and provides a foundation for maintaining a listenership in a growing competition with internet music providers.

- There are deep concerns about the limitations of traditional radio, the balance between news and music, and the accessibility for broader community participation. However, there was also recognition that the station is quick to recognize a good idea.
- The eclectic nature of the music programming was noted by the entire group as one of the defining characteristics of WFHB. It was perceived as both a strength and weakness: a strength for its development of a cadre of loyal listeners and a weakness in its inability to develop a listenership and volunteers in places like Lawrence County and to increase listenership and volunteers in Bloomington. Although there was a clear respect for the station’s traditional programs and history, there were substantial concerns about
 - The rigid structure of the schedule and programs
 - The lack of flexibility that radio provides as it competes with the *Pandoras* of the internet.
 - The sense that there is a cliquish aura around how the station is managed. It is difficult to break into the lineup.
 - The lack of outreach activities in Lawrence County to justify the infrastructure that extends the signal.
- The news programming received unqualified praise. There was strong consensus on encouraging the station to dedicate more time to local news.
- There was a recognition that the standards are rigorous for developing new programs and should be. However, because of time constraints, even individuals who have credible ideas are “guided into existing slots.”
- There was strong consensus on the need to move forward on establishing a substantial internet presence both for the news and music. There was a strong consensus that there has been very little systematic marketing.

Conclusions

It is apparent that these community leaders have a very nuanced understanding of what WFHB offers and how it operates. On the one hand, there is a deep respect for its history and achievements in both music and the news. On the other hand, there are also clear recognitions of the limitations of traditional radio for the listener and for absorbing new programming. There was a very clear consensus that the station should not abandon radio but create a strong complimentary range of media offerings through the internet.

This question on the use of technology also has a deeper significance in how the station might define its role as “community radio.” On the one hand, it was suggested that as the station reviews its strategy in regard to extending its signal, it may decide that “community” means only Bloomington and Monroe County. This would place extending the signal and developing a listenership in surrounding communities outside its mission. It may simply not have the resources to be a regional station. On the other hand, this led to a broader discussion of what “community” means in the age of the internet. The

“territoriality of time” and location are abrogated by the digital space and global reach of the web. It becomes a “community of listeners” united by mutual interests rather than physical neighborhoods.

The determination of what “community” means, therefore, has a technological and social dimension. How this issue is resolved will include considerations of the procedures for program development, an inclusiveness that balances rigor with broader opportunities for participation, the balance between news and music, strategies for marketing programs and the station, fundraising, and in what direction to develop collaborations with CATS.

Public Survey

The survey has 191 respondents. This represents a self-selected sample and cannot be given a margin of error. However, it does provide valuable information on the attitudes and opinions of key stakeholders of the station. Over 90 percent of the respondents are listeners, 80 percent financial contributors, and over 40 percent volunteers. This survey does not provide information on non-listeners in the community.

Demographically, respondents are not representative of Monroe County as whole. They are more highly educated and have higher annual household incomes by significant margins. Where males comprise 49 percent of Monroe County’s population and females 51 percent², males comprise 55 percent of survey respondents and females 45 percent. There is a significant age disparity with the median age of respondents at 47 and the median age of Monroe County at 27.³ It is also 10 years older than the median age in the state as whole at 37. The respondents are, therefore, relative to the community at large, much older, wealthier, more highly educated, and over-represented by males. Since over 90 percent of respondents are listeners, around 80 percent financial contributors, and over 40 percent volunteers, these disparities in regard to age, gender, and socioeconomic status may be indicative of a lack of accessibility. It may indicate a need to engage in more targeted outreach activities.

It is also clear from the survey findings that for those individuals who are engaged with the station, it is deeply appreciated and valued. For the seven questions for which we asked respondents to rate the station’s performance, the only distinctions were between degrees of excellence. Nevertheless, two areas have much lower ratings than the other five. Taking into account the total percentage of respondents who rate the activity as extremely effective or very effective, promoting volunteer opportunities was at 45 percent and differentiating the programming and mission at 55 percent. These ratings are substantially lower than the other five which were at 77, 85, 72, 67, and 93 percent. It is also important to note that these two lowest rated areas have very few respondents who perceive them as slightly effective or not at all effective; rather there are more respondents who view them as

² Cited from http://www.city-data.com/county/Monroe_County-IN.html.

³ Cited from Stats Indiana at http://www.stats.indiana.edu/profiles/profiles.asp?scope_choice=a&county_changer=18105&button1=Get+Profile&id=2&page_path=Area+Profiles&path_id=11&panel_number=1

moderately effective. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that these areas are perceived to be less effectively managed relative to other station activities.

The other key finding of moderate significance involves the 83 respondents who are not volunteers. Of these, 28 have not made a contribution (about 1/3.) These are listeners for the most part. The prevalent reason among this group for not giving as indicated on the Question 18 crosstab is that other organizations are a higher priority.

Public Forum

There were approximately 30 individuals who attended the WFHB Public Forum. When the facilitator asked how many had volunteered for the station, all but two raised their hands. It is neither surprising nor unexpected that the forum was predominantly attended by people connected with and committed to the station. Both the Public Survey and the Public Forum were opportunities for the general public and for stakeholders to provide direct input into the planning process.

The Public Forum revealed areas of near consensus and areas of divergent opinions and preferences. Those in attendance spanned long-time volunteers, younger professionals, and college and high school students. Although there were clearly areas both of strong agreement and disagreement, participants were uniformly strong supporters of the station.

- There were mostly positive comments about the music programming with only a few complaints about personal dislikes for specific genres and some impatience with the weekday mix. There was also substantial agreement that the genre specific programs could be promoted more effectively.
 - There was an awareness of the station’s commitment to music diversity.
 - Speakers pointed out that genre specific programs were available over the weekend but that there was no “forward” or “cross” promotion for the locally produced shows. There was agreement on developing cross promotional materials for use on the air and on the website.
- There was strong support for developing local news as a hallmark for the station.
 - There was a suggestion to place less emphasis on national news programming and to more prominently feature local news by leading with it at 5:00pm. This suggestion received support from other attendees.
 - Several speakers suggested initiating a phone-in talk show.
- In regard to providing more opportunities for community involvement, it was noted that volunteer participation was not expressly promoted. It was also suggested that there are presently no opportunities to produce a single show; however, providing such an opportunity would get more people creatively involved and provide a source of ideas for future weekly programming.

- There were strong disagreements as to what extent the station should become a full multimedia provider in addition to its traditional radio broadcast. There was also an apparent generational component to this disagreement.
 - Two speakers who self-identified as long time volunteers argued that the station should focus on what it does best, which is radio and audio on the air or over the internet, but not video.
 - Three younger speakers made equally strong and passionate arguments for providing a full range of media products over the internet including video.
- There was some discussion of how to take advantage of the station's digital signal which could support up to four channels but there was no substantial agreement on how to proceed. One limiting factor is that each additional channel degrades the signal. A second limiting factor is staffing; personnel are fully occupied producing programming on the station's analogue signal.

Conclusions

With all of the attendees intimately connected with the station as volunteers or listeners, there was a very informed discussion of the station's present status and its possible future directions. It was acknowledged that there was very little promotion of volunteer opportunities. There were broad areas of consensus regarding both music and news programming. There were extended comments and an important discussion around a disagreement on the extent to which the station should become a multimedia provider over the internet.

In regard to music, the primary issue is the lack of "forward" or "cross promotion." This was generally perceived as a problem that should be addressed through the development of promotional information that could be shared over the air and on the website.

There was strong support for greater focus on local news with less or no national news programming. A number of speakers suggested that local news coverage is widely recognized across the community as a WFHB strength. One speaker observed that WFIU's interest in local news and its community minute were developed in response to WFHB's lead in this area. Many audience members supported the idea of expanding news programming both on the air and over the internet. There were several suggestions for specific initiatives such as a daily local newscast at 5:00 pm, a phone-in talk show, and a local sports program. Several younger speakers involved with the station saw the internet as an opportunity to expand news coverage through both audio and video packages.

This discussion was subsumed in a larger argument about the direction of the station as a multimedia provider. Several speakers who self-identified as long-time volunteers and board members objected to the stations becoming directly involved in the production of video programming over the internet outside of its partnership with CATS. The strongest proponents for becoming a full multimedia provider as well as a radio station were younger volunteers, which gave this conflict a generational dimension. This is a key issue which will need to be resolved by the steering committee and the action planning teams.