

# SUSTAINABILITY & INNOVATION IN PUBLIC RADIO

2019 WBUR BIZLAB SUMMIT

#BizLabSummit



# NEXT: LIGHTNING TALKS



**WAMU - DCist**

WASHINGTON, DC

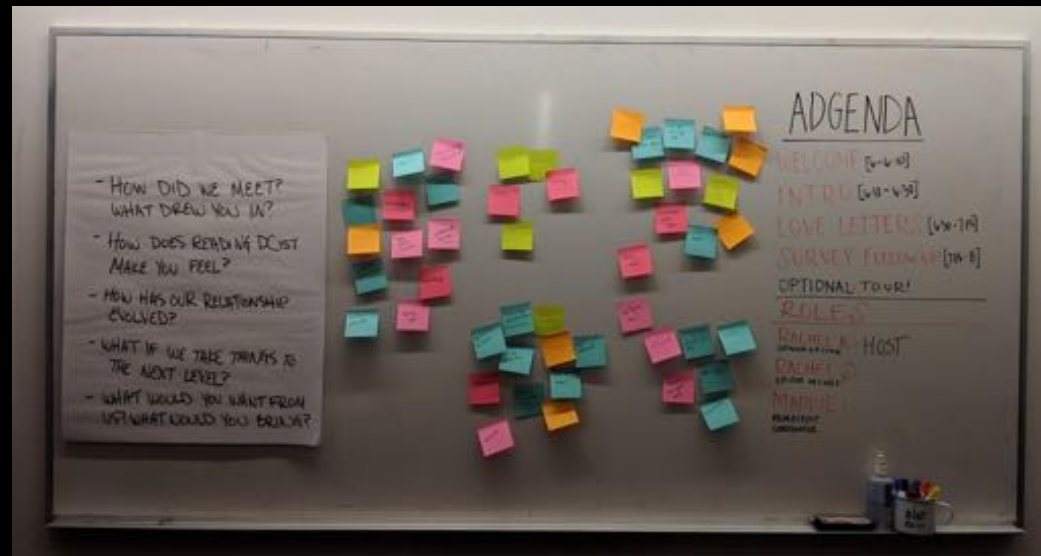


# PROBLEM STATEMENT

How do we develop a distinct membership program for a digital news site within a larger legacy public radio station?

# Discovery research

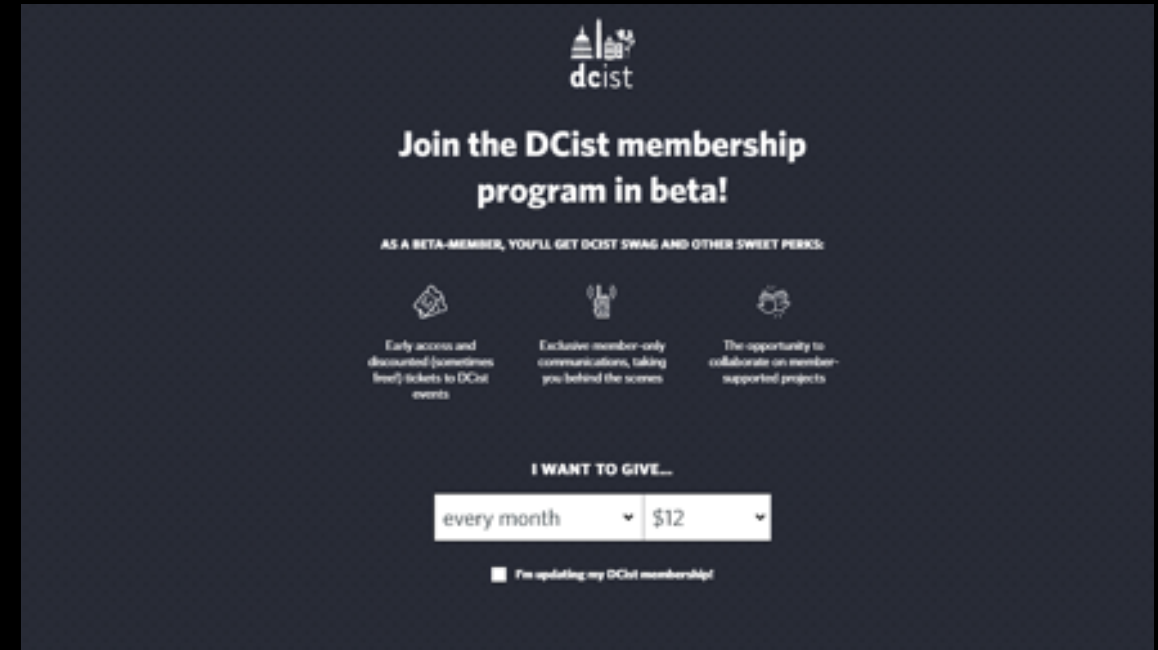
We surveyed readers and hosted two focus groups where we learned about readers motivations and behaviors around DCist, along with what they hoped to get from a membership program. We used analytics to capture usage behavior.



# Proposed solution

We launched membership in beta and ran A/B tests around different types of membership offers.

Specifically, we looked at conversion rates for sustaining vs. one-time donations, thank you gifts, and event invites on conversion.



# Conclusion and main finding

Launched a sustaining only membership program with distinct perks for DCist readers on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

Our goal: reach 500 founding members by the end of 2019.

Currently we have 427 members!

Raising a total of \$6,538.



# Louisville Public Media

LOUISVILLE, KY

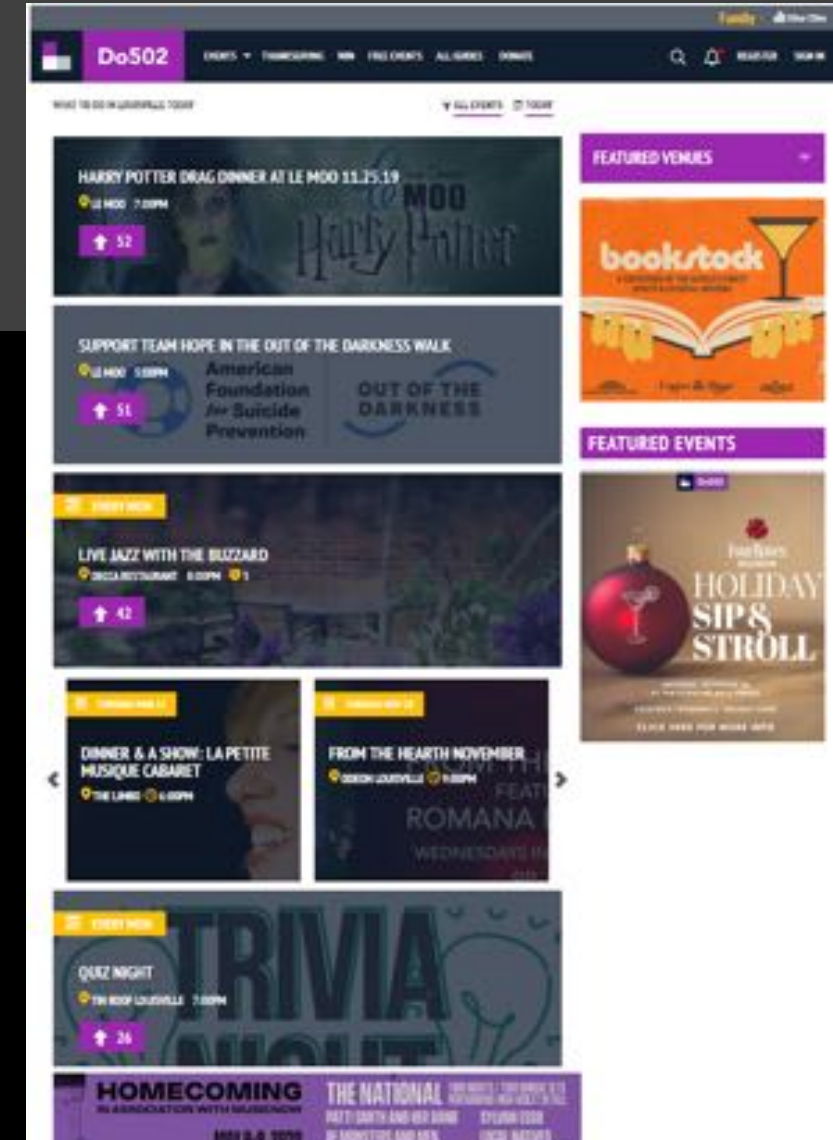


# PROBLEM STATEMENT

2017: LPM purchased Do502, an event listing platform.

Plan: Integrate Do502 into LPM's programming.

Problem: Do502 users were unaware that Do502 is connected to LPM, is a nonprofit and needs support.



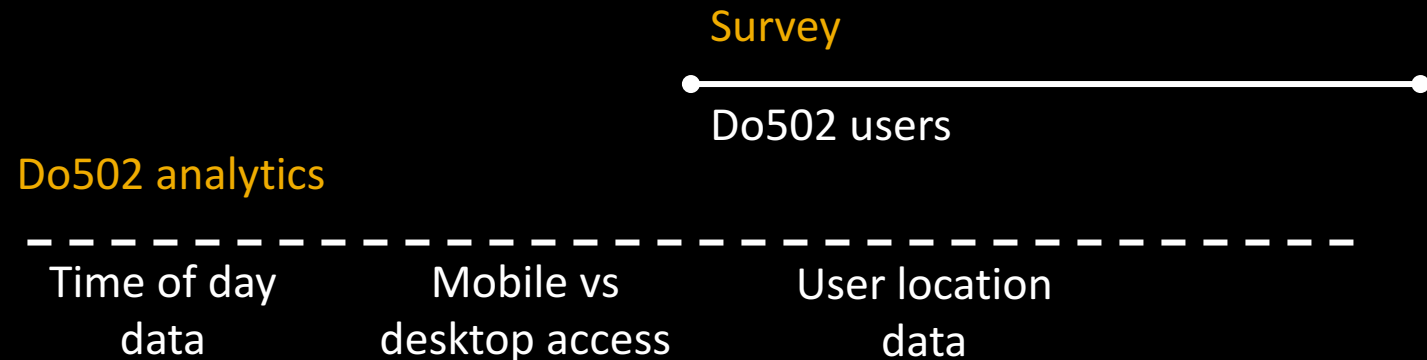
# Discovery research

## Qualitative research

Face to face interviews



## Quantitative research

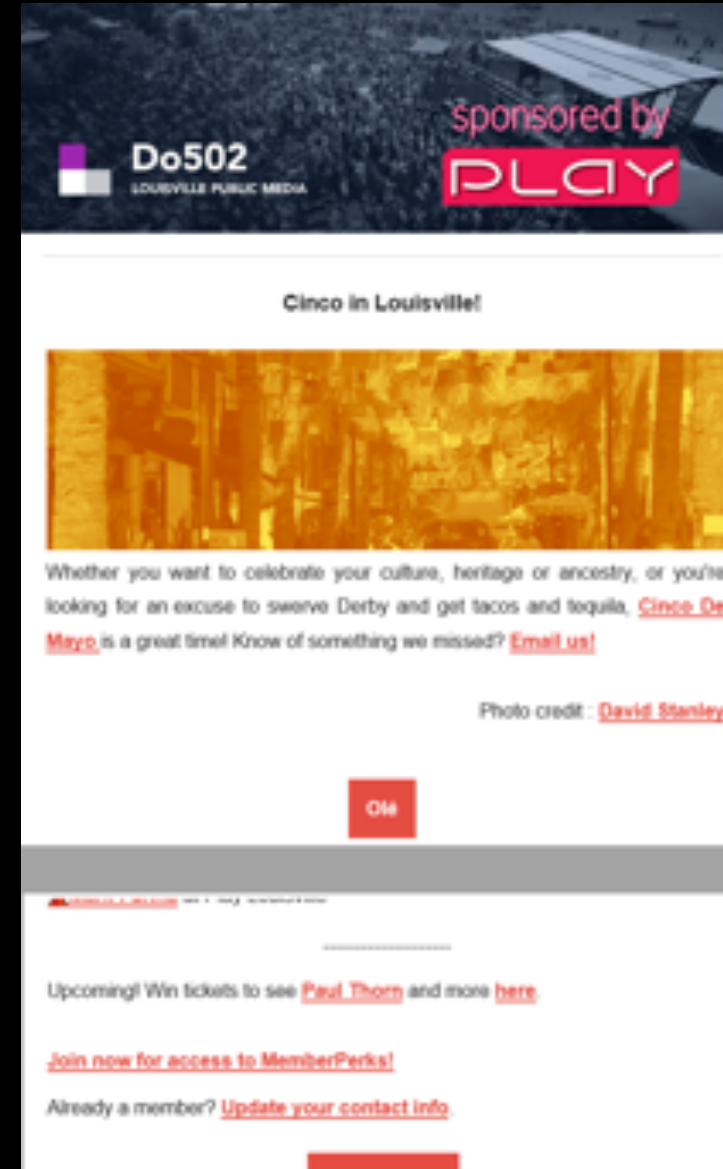


# Proposed solution

## Do502 events



## Newsletter with member perks



# Conclusion and main finding

## Findings

- Folks do come to Do502 events
- We can convert them into members
- Since April we've grown the Do502 members by 500%

## Since end of project

- Continuing to build the Do502 membership program
- Creating “low lift” Do502 events program for 2020

**WDET**

DETROIT, MI

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

WDET has many loyal, local small businesses who cannot afford typical radio promotions.

It's costly for an underwriting rep to go after small businesses.

Can WDET provide a simple marketing solution for small businesses and bring in additional underwriting revenues?



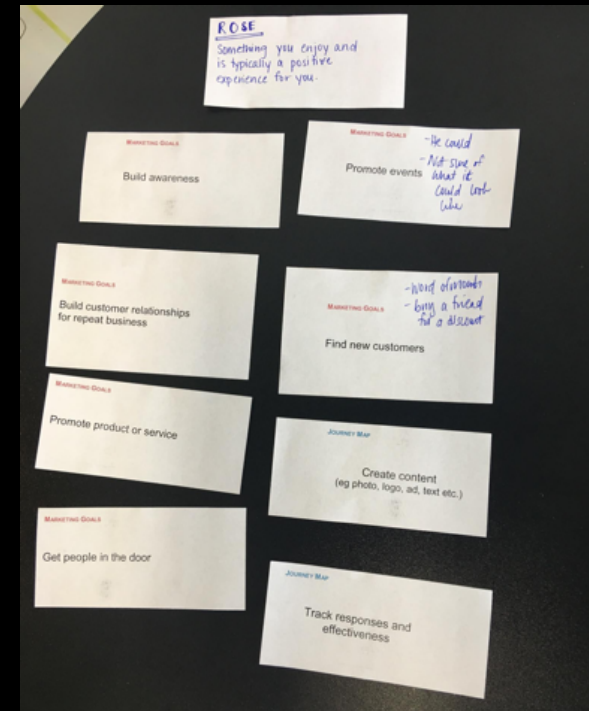
# Discovery research

## In-person interviews with 5 local small businesses

- Script plus cards to guide conversation
- Captured strengths, weaknesses and needs.

## Business profiles included:

- Limited marketing budget and resources
- No traditional media
- Value the local community, being part of the culture
- Align with WDET's culture and mission
- Successfully use social media for promotion
- Target local residents, businesses and worker population
- WDET's audience a good customer match

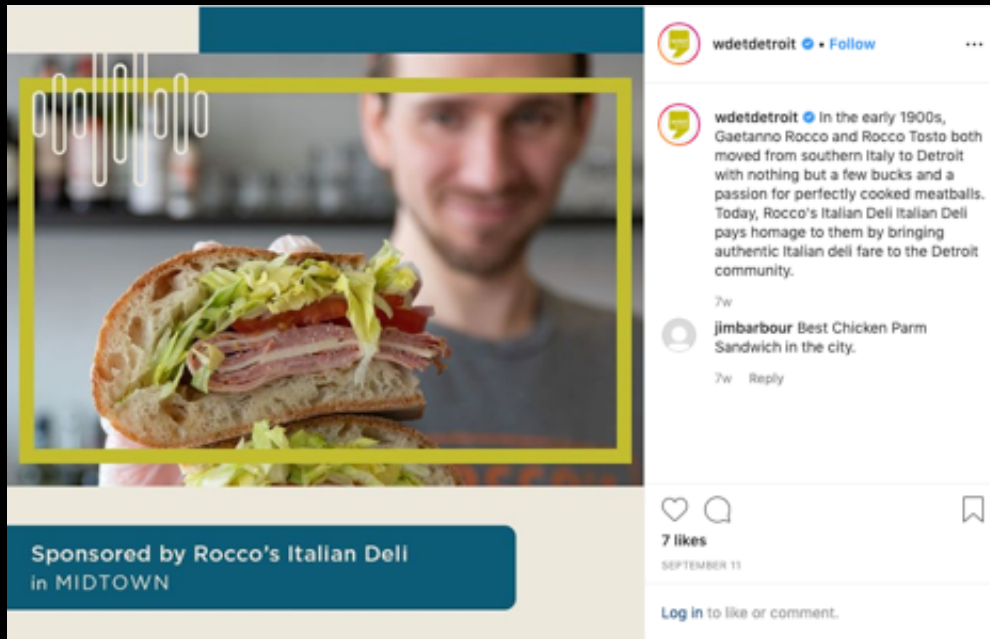




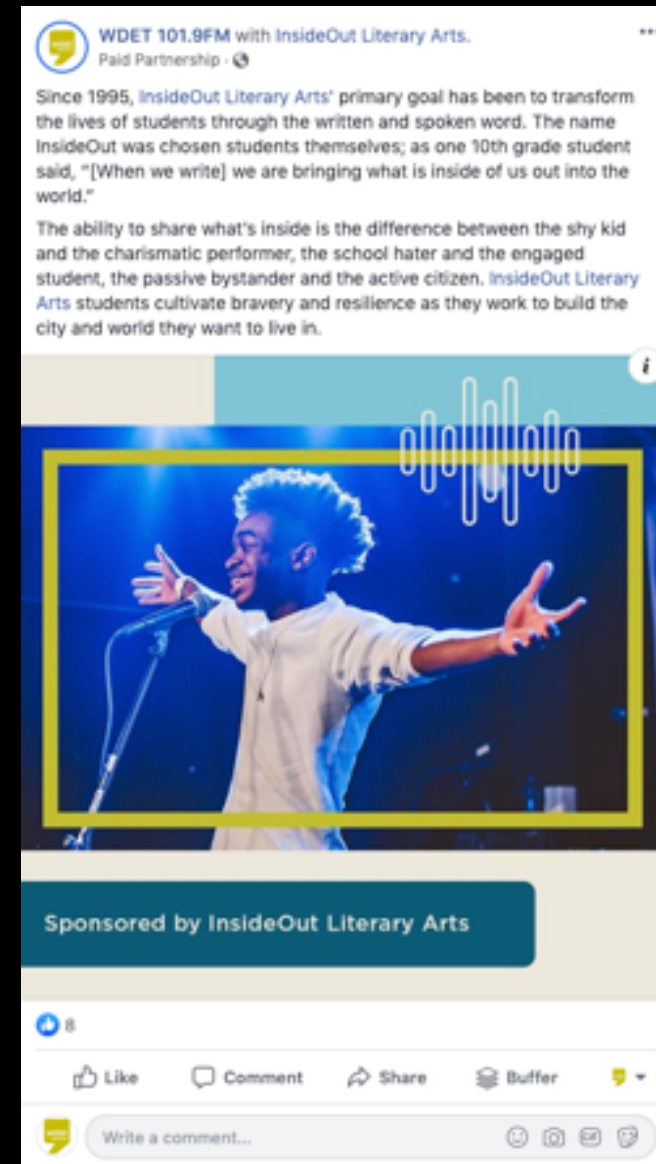
# Discovery research

**Objective:** Create a social media product to promote Detroit's small businesses to WDET's loyal and engaged audience.

## Instagram



## Facebook





# Conclusion and main finding

## What we learned:

- The nuances of Facebook and how their AI affects results
- How to interact with our news/editorial team to “sell” this concept internally
- Solutions to editorial objections before launching tests
- Facebook’s lookalike filter was the most effective audience for reach and cost

## Recommendation:

- Continue to develop sales collateral, basic P&L revenue projections and identify business lead lists to sell this service at \$200 to \$300
- Next steps include an effective, scalable semi-automated process to sell and produce



# Capital Public Radio

SACRAMENTO, CA

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

CPRN is a network of NPR stations throughout California who receive State Capitol reporting in exchange for underwriting units. Its successful revenue model diminished over time.

How can CapRadio restart and reinvent this potential source of revenue?

# Discovery research

- Background research on the status of the partner stations
- Interviewed prospects to capture their perception of NPR and the network
- Built out the complex workflow required to manage the network

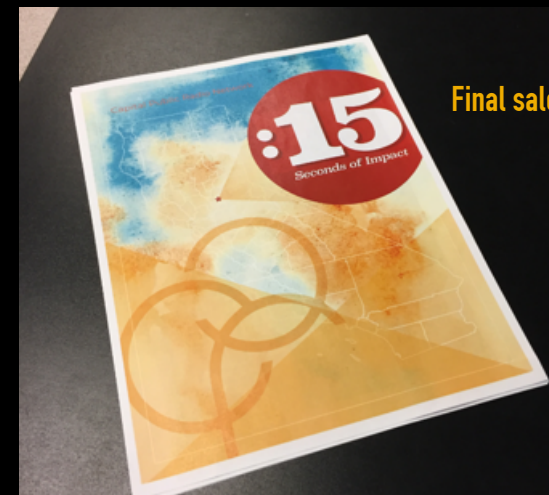


# Current experiments

- Tested a multi-region model to enable geo-targeted underwriting
  - North California
  - Central California
  - South California
- Built a new pricing model
- Met with key prospective buyers
- Experimented with ideas and support software to manage workflow, inventory, and prospects



Test sales deck



Final sales deck

# Conclusion and status

Experiments resulted in an entirely new network model with newly established regions, geographically appropriate pricing, internal structures for inventory management, insertion orders, and underwriting processes.

## To date we have achieved:

- 8 Meetings with key stakeholders
- 3 meetings resulting in sales
- New revenue of \$65,000
- Renewal rate of 66%
- Pending revenue of \$104,000 to date
- First year sales target of \$250,000

**WLRN**

MIAMI, FL

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

WLRN needs a new content delivery system/product to attract and engage new audiences, deliver specific community issue focused content, and generate new revenue through this product.



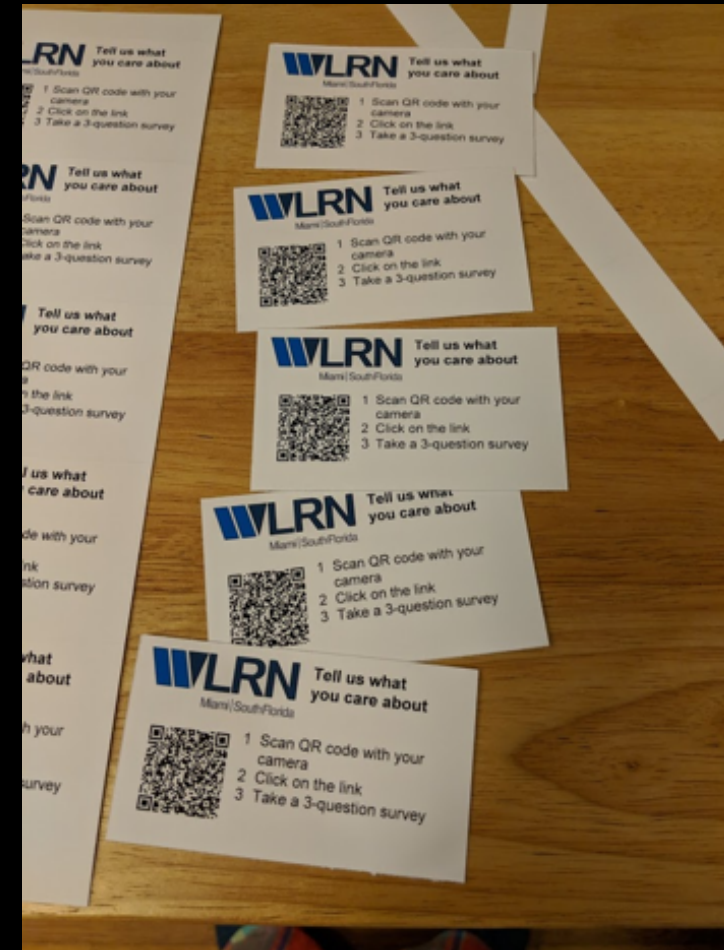
# Discovery research

## Qualitative

- Intercept interviews at an environment conference
- 3 mini-surveys to discover interest level in environmental coverage using QR codes for easy access

## Quantitative

- Analyzed survey data
- Captured behavior of the WLRN website with environmental news



# Solution

**Phase 1:** Develop an environmental newsletter

Six weeks: 6 newsletter tests sent to 120 individuals

Concepts tested:

- Subject lines
- Newsletter tone
- Button design, labels & graphics
- Including a Newsletter Anchor

**Phase 2:** Partnership with News Revenue Hub (NRH)

- Audience survey
- Set up NRH's platform: MailChimp, Salesforce & Stripe
- Scrub and import existing database to MailChimp
- Sign up forms, landing pages and newsletter best practices
- Continue experimentation with best send times
- Launch a soft donation campaign



# Conclusion and main finding

## Success!

- Launched a soft donor campaign with News Revenue Hub
- Newsletter performance data is positive:
- Average open rate of 30%
- Average click through rate of 2.5%.
- Audience is engaged: surveys/questions are highest clicked links
- Audience likes personalized tone and Newsletter Anchor Katie Lepri
- Feedback email – 100% positive responses

## Coming up:

- WLRN's goal is to be a “hub” - combining journalism and community engagement
- Generate new donations
- Develop events
- Explore underwriting opportunities

# Vermont Public Radio

COLCHESTER, VT



# PROBLEM STATEMENT

VPR's vision is 'Exploring The Whole Vermont Story, Together' - but as a statewide service, listeners constantly ask for more coverage of their local communities - especially in areas far removed from Vermont's few population centers, such as Windham County.

How can VPR connect more deeply with audiences in Windham County and feel "more local", and will that increase engagement and revenue from that area?



# Discovery Research



## Research before BizLab

- 2018 Public Service Assessment: Survey and focus groups
- 2018 Tell Me More Tour: Events in all 14 Vermont counties

## BizLab Research

- Regional interviews with individuals & businesses
- Google Analytics: VPR.org and social media usage by Southern VT
- Feedback during experiments: emails, surveys



# Solution

## Facebook

**Vermont Public Radio** · Published by Meg Malone · September 1

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital is partnering with United Way, and the hospital provides the office and a staff dentist. Other staffers at Windham County Dental Center volunteer their time.

VPR.ORG

**'A Dental Home': New Oral Health Center Serves Medicaid Patients In Windham County**

Turn on job features for this post to reach more applicants:  Turn On

14,967 People Reached    397 Engagements    [Boost Again](#)

Boosted on Sep 2, 2019  
By Michele Owens

People Reached	13.4K	Link Clicks	196
----------------	-------	-------------	-----

[View Results](#)

10 Comments 21 Shares

Like Comment Share

## Website

### Howard Weiss-Tisman

REPORTER FOR SOUTHERN VERMONT & THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY



Howard Weiss-Tisman  
DANIEL BISHOP / FOR VPR

Howard Weiss-Tisman is VPR's reporter for Southern Vermont & the Connecticut River Valley. He worked at the Brattleboro Reformer for 11 years, reporting on most towns in the region and specializing on statewide issues including education, agriculture, energy and mental health. Howard received a BA in Journalism from University of Massachusetts. He filed his first story with VPR in September 2015.

### Submit A News Tip About Southern Vermont

Thank you for your interest in sharing a newsworthy story idea or tip about Southern Vermont! For general news, send an email to [news@vpr.org](mailto:news@vpr.org). Do you have an anonymous tip? Learn more here: <https://www.vpr.org/Community/Investigations>

(We require a valid email address in the event we need more information. Stating your email address will not add you to any mailing lists.)

\* Required

Email address \*

Your email

Name \*

Your answer

What's your story idea or news tip?

## Newsletter

**VPR**

Southern Vermont Update  
November 15, 2019

---

**'A Really Beautiful Community': Marlboro College Prepares To Close Its Doors**

Ever since Marlboro College announced last week that it would likely be closing its campus in Windham County, both the college community and people who live in the small town have been coming to grips with the news. [Read more »](#)

**Remember, you can always listen to VPR live at 88.9 FM Brattleboro, 89.5 FM Windsor, at [VPR.org](http://VPR.org) or on your smart speaker!**

**More Recent Stories:**

- "Opening Up All Of That Experience": Putney School Alum Builds Library's Collection Of Books On Race
- "We Are Everywhere": New Bennington LGBTQ Group Reaches For Visibility
- Planned Merger Between Marlboro And Emerson Colleges Would Close Vermont Campus
- Southern Vermont College Campus Might Become Home To Boarding High School
- Vermont Hemp Growers, Processors Look Back On A Season Of Lessons Learned

**This newsletter is an experiment and we'd love to know what you think! Take this quick five-question survey to share your feedback!**

[TAKE SURVEY](#)

**Do you have a question about Southern Vermont or a story idea? Share a news tip with Howard Weiss-Tisman, our Southern Vermont reporter here.**

That's it for now. Like what you read? [Forward this to a friend](#) or [subscribe](#).







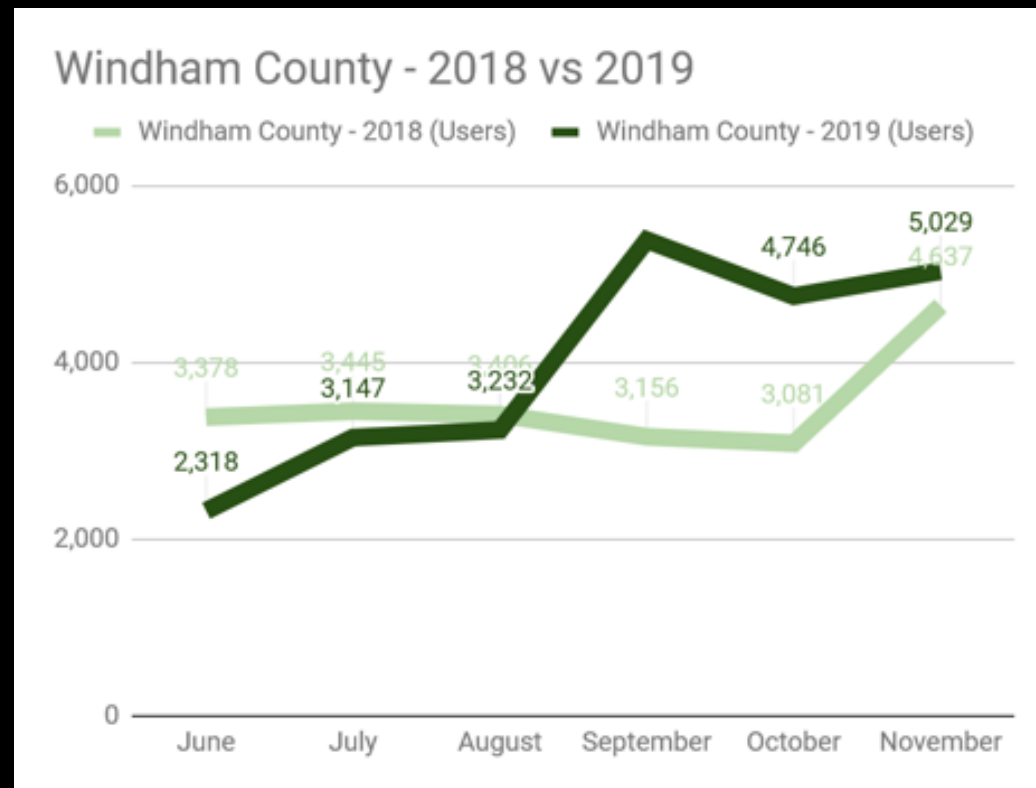
# Conclusion and main finding

## Success!

- “Feeling More Local” works!
- Need to publish AND promote content
- Practices can be easily replicated around the state

## Waiting to learn

- Does increased engagement increase revenue?



Users visiting VPR's website