

A Voice in the Wilderness: A Political Economic Examination of
Three Alaska Public Broadcasting Organizations

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: A Voice in the Wilderness: A Political Economic Examination of Three Alaska Public Broadcasting Organizations

This dissertation examines three public broadcasting organizations in the state of Alaska. Alaska's public broadcasting system was defunded by the state government in 2019. Amidst the cuts and during other times of duress, Alaska's public broadcasters often used narratives like those distributed by national public broadcasting organizations to justify the existence of public broadcasting in the state. The national narratives were often missing a sense of context, history, and purpose about Alaska's public broadcasters and often left them without an identity and voice of their own. Using a political economy of media and communications framework, this dissertation provides the context, history, and purpose of KUAC in Fairbanks, KYUK in Bethel, and Alaska Public Media in Anchorage. The research explores the general history, operational and programmatic trends, and past and present economic trends of the three organizations.

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To my wife Melissa, thank you! I could not have done this without you.

DEDICATION

For my brother, Ryan. 6 a.m. is still too damn early to be watching Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 2019, Republican governor Michael Dunleavy vetoed funding to the Alaska public broadcasting system in a push to balance the state's budget. Governor Dunleavy said that the public system was too expensive for the state to maintain, and that the commercial broadcasting system was more than capable of fulfilling the information and entertainment needs of Alaskans. "It's really the fiscal situation that's driving the need to reduce the budget [...] we believe people will still be able to access programs through other means," said Governor Dunleavy.^{1 2 3}

The long-term effects of defunding the Alaska public broadcasting system are not yet fully understood. However, there were visible repercussions in the short term that impacted how the system fulfilled its historical mandate to provide media services to underserved audiences.⁴ No public broadcasters in Alaska closed their doors as a result of the cuts; however, organizations were forced to reorganize and downsize their operations, including cuts to staff and programming.⁵ The state's defunding of the system also continued a trend of consolidating public broadcasting operations under organizations with the ability to utilize their markets to pay for services. The defunding of Alaska's public broadcasting system affected media diversity in the state and represented both a symbolic and real end to the state's support of its broadcasting system.^{6 7 8 9}

Governor Dunleavy's justifications on why Alaska's public broadcasting system was defunded mirrored dominant narratives that were used to justify discontinued support for public broadcasting across the country – public broadcasting is too expensive to maintain, and the

commercial broadcasting market is more than capable of providing for the educational, informational, and entertainment needs of people. The justifications Dunleavy used were almost identical to those used previously by public broadcasting’s political opponents and by former President Donald Trump in his calls to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).¹⁰

11 12 13 14 15 16

The dominant narratives used by proponents of the Alaska public broadcasting system mirrored those used by proponents of the overall U.S. system. The narratives focused on the value of public broadcasting to taxpayers (“\$1.35 in taxes per citizen per year”), issues of democratic participation through diversity of news coverage, and the value of programming that is geared toward underserved audiences – mainly children and Alaska Natives.^{17 18 19 20 21}

Coordinated contemporary discourse on Alaska public broadcasting was generally reactive to whatever crisis the system was facing at the time, which was similar to coverage of the overall U.S. public broadcasting system.²² Proactive coverage was highly constructed for effect, difficult for the public to find or relate to, not intended for public consumption, or produced for the purpose of soliciting funds and limited in scope.²³ Alaska’s public broadcasting’s dominant narratives tended to drown out other narratives that were important to organizations and their audiences such as localized ethnic and social heritage, system and organizational history, system and organizational purpose, system and organizational evolution, the economic trends of organizations (other than times of fiscal distress), the government’s (both state and federal) responsibility for and involvement in public broadcasting, and how the system’s or organizations’ obligations to audiences have changed over time.^{24 25 26 27 28 29}

Corporation for Public Broadcasting CEO and president Patricia Harrison likened public broadcasting to a “light in the darkness.” The statement claimed public broadcasting offered

“light” (through its programming) in an otherwise “dark” media landscape. Harrison’s statement is a metaphor for the belief that the commercial broadcasting space in the United States suffers from a lack of diversity, and public broadcasting offers a diverse remedy. Lack of diversity in commercial broadcasting is a darkness, and public broadcasting programming is the light. Alaska’s public broadcasting organizations used similar language to describe themselves. For instance, KUAC in Fairbanks identified itself as a “voice in the wilderness.”^{30 31}

This research intended to fill some of the gaps in the discourse of Alaska public broadcasting by examining the general history, operational and programming trends, and past and present economic trends of three Alaska public broadcasting organizations – KUAC in Fairbanks, KYUK in Bethel, and Alaska Public Media in Anchorage. Despite promoting a narrative that public broadcasting provided a product that was different from the standards of commercial broadcasting (“a light”), what was missing from the Alaska public broadcasting system’s contemporary discourse was a sense of context, history, and purpose. A lack of understanding created confusion among Alaskans that left the system open to criticism and actions that were detrimental to its existence (such as defunding). It also created an environment within the system that involved scrambling to find an identity when forced to counter criticisms and actions from opponents.³²

Theoretical Foundations and Research Questions

The political economy of media and communications (PEMC) was used as a framework to inform the direction of this dissertation. PEMC examines how economics and social exchange influence each other, as well as how media and communications resources are produced, distributed, and consumed by media consumers.³³ PEMC also investigates how economic practice can influence or dictate how a system’s social exchange functions -- how resources and

culture are thought about, what beliefs are followed, and what social practices occur within a system. PEMC also considers how social exchange can dictate the functions of economic exchange by influencing who gets access to what resources and how those resources are distributed. PEMC acknowledges that there are power structures that are formed from the interplay of social exchange and economics that both positively and negatively impact people.³⁴ According to Phil Graham, “Political economy is often characterized as studying how different types of values are produced, distributed, exchanged and consumed; how power is produced, distributed, exchanged, and used; and finally, how these aspects are related.”³⁵

There are complex economic forces that influence the Alaska public broadcasting system. If economic exchange affects social exchange within media systems, discovering and examining the economic trends of the Alaska public broadcasting system is paramount under a PEMC lens. Governor Dunleavy’s justifications for defunding the system were based on monetary considerations. State funding was vitally important to the creation and maintenance of individual stations, especially for markets that were deemed unable to support commercial stations (federal funding continues to serve this purpose). Contemporarily and historically, the loss of funding has been detrimental to the operation and morale of most public broadcasting stations in the state, as well as its oversight organization. Examining the economic trends of the state of Alaska, and individual stations in system, can highlight narratives and power structures within the system that may be absent from already existing dominant narratives.^{36 37 38}

If we recognize that economics influence social exchange within a media system, the following questions must be asked:

RQ1: How have KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media developed economically?

How has state support changed over the course of the stations' lives? What were the fiscal trends of the organizations prior to the state's defunding of the system?

PEMC is well suited to study the Alaska public broadcasting system, because by critically examining not only the economics of the system, but the interplay of economics with social exchange, narratives and power structures are revealed that can be analyzed and critiqued. PEMC provides perspectives that might otherwise be absent in the dominant narratives of public broadcasting, as well as other narratives that would otherwise be excluded. The inclusion of non-dominant narratives and power structures allows those narratives to have representation (a voice), which is a form of power. It has been argued that history and morality have been essentially removed from contemporary economic analyses because they are viewed by economists as subjective, and economics is considered a "value-free" discipline.^{39 40 41 42}

Golding and Murdock say that critical political economy (CPE) differs from "value-free" economics for four reasons. The first reason is that CPE is holistic. The second is that it is historical. The third is that it is centrally concerned with public intervention (changing the world as well as analyzing it). The fourth is that CPE engages with moral questions of justice, equity and the public good. Vincent Mosco builds off the work of Golding and Murdock and describes four (similar) central characteristics that differentiate PEMC research from contemporary economics -- history, social totality, moral philosophy, and praxis. Mosco, Golding, and Murdock's criteria are briefly discussed below.^{43 44}

History. History in PEMC research shows that media and communications systems are not static. Political economic changes occur over time and do not just happen on their own. Development and change in media and communications systems are not supernatural or

disconnected from human influence. Media and communications have evolved over time, and that evolution can be revealed through historical examination. PEMC involves histories of media and communication that are not set in stone and allow for critique and revision as more information becomes available or as the lens of examination changes. History is also used to expose power structures and give marginalized people within a system a voice by giving them a history.

The political economic climate of Alaska once supported a publicly funded media system in the state. So much so that there are currently twenty-seven public radio stations and four public television stations in Alaska, each with a distinct history, that have been partially funded with state dollars. If the justification for defunding the system were the costs associated with the maintenance of the system, there was an obvious shift in Alaska's political economic climate where certain actors no longer believed that public broadcasting was worth the investment. To gain a better understanding of the context and purpose of the system, it is important to understand why the state felt the need to become involved in public broadcasting in the first place, and why the state no longer felt the need to support the system it created. It is also important to understand the how and why KYUK, KUAC, and Alaska Public Media developed in their respective markets – and how and why they have changed over time.

If we recognize that media and communications systems are not developed and maintained in a static state, the following question must be asked:

RQ2: How and why were KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media originally created and how did the organizations evolve over time?

Social Totality. According to Golding and Murdock, critical political economy (CPE) research is valuable because it uses a holistic approach. PEMC is holistic in its approach in that it

aims to include analysis of how culture (communications, media, information, etc.) both influence and are influenced by the wider social totality (society as a whole or within a “bigger picture”). CPE examines cultural spaces, and how they function (production, consumption, distribution) as part of the overall societal whole. Golding and Murdock reinforce that CPE examines how politics, cultural life, and economic organization are all intertwined, and that the effects of interlinking create power dynamics that impact the diversity of “cultural expression” throughout the whole of society. Different groups often have different access to cultural expression as a result. According to Mosco, using social totality as part of PEMC research allows researchers to understand the relationships among “many aspects of social life,” and not solely on research that is conducted on economic analysis alone (as with contemporary economics).^{45 46}

Moral Philosophy. Vincent Mosco says that moral philosophy “refers to social values and to conceptions of appropriate social practices.” In other words, understanding how culture (communications, media, information, etc.) impacts society morally is important to PEMC research. Taking a moral stance on how to improve society is also important. Mosco also says that contemporary economic analysis tends to avoid using morally-based positions, because taking a moral stance goes against the value-free intentions of scientific inquiry. He further notes that examining subjects in a value-free way can be damaging, because certain subjects (he mentions climate change and world poverty), have inherent moral consequences. Not addressing those consequences leaves any analysis incomplete.⁴⁷

Golding and Murdock say that critical political economy (CPE) differs from the “value-free” space of economics as CPE engages with questions of justice, equity and the public good -- all inherently moral issues. They note the work of Adam Smith who said that the market was unable to provide everything for a “good society.” Smith recommended that public intervention,

or government intervention, was sometimes needed to promote “wholesome entertainment and knowledge”. Golding and Murdock describe how CPE research aims to promote greater ability for people to become better citizens. The authors take a moral stance in saying that cultural systems have a responsibility to “provide people with access to information or advice and analysis that would enable them to know their rights and to pursue them effectively.”^{48 49}

Media Diversity. As noted previously, PEMC research often focuses on issues of media diversity and democratic participation as a form of revealing and critiquing power structures in a system. Diversity in culture and information is believed to help democracy. The idea is that people will be better informed with information that is available from a wide variety of sources, and that an informed population will make informed decisions about the political process and other decisions in their lives – healthcare, finances, etc. People who are exposed to a multitude of cultures are generally more accepting of cultural differences.

A common narrative from proponents of advertising-based media and communications systems is that the market can establish and maintain environments that provide a multitude of voices and opinions. This narrative also assumes that the market naturally redistributes power imbalances, reinforcing Smith's "invisible hand" metaphor. PEMC research has shown that media and communications systems generally do not offer a variety of voices and opinions when operating in advertising-based environments, and that alternative voices and opinions often alienate advertisers.

Media diversity and concentration is also important to PEMC research due to the focus on power structures. The dissemination of culture and information is associated with power. If few people, corporations and/or government entities control how culture or information is disseminated and in what quantity, those people hold an enormous amount of power over what

information is received by others. The control of culture and information by few people also reduces the diversity of information, thus affecting the democratic process or the ability for people to make informed decisions beyond the information or ideologies of a few producers.^{50 51}

52 53 54 55 56

The historical intent of public broadcasting in the United States and Alaska was to enhance programming diversity and to provide media services to underserved audiences. If the dissemination and control of media material is a form of power, and the diversity of information affects the democratic process and people's ability to make informed decisions, how Alaska's public broadcasters program their stations and function operationally have tremendous impacts on what material audiences receive and how audiences interpret that material. If the programming and operational decisions and functions of Alaska's public broadcasters (even after defunding) affect the interpretation of material and in some ways, reality, it must be asked:

RQ3: How have the operations and programming at KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media developed over time, and how have the organizations' obligations to their audiences changed? How has defunding the Alaska public broadcasting system affected the diversity and concentration of media in Alaska?

Praxis. Praxis is used to affect change. A goal of PEMC research is highlighting power structures and power inequality within media and communications systems. However, highlighting power inequality may be useful from an informational standpoint but offers does not always help to shift power imbalances. PEMC research suggests how people can take action to redistribute power. Suggesting change based on the information from PEMC research offers links between research and action that can be used to affect change.

Praxis is important to political economy because, as Mosco explains, the discovery of knowledge involves not only theory but practice, and that knowledge comes from the mutual constitution of conception and execution. For Golding and Murdock, the critical study of political economy "...is concerned with changing the world as well as with analyzing it." They say that as governments have become increasingly involved in managing culture, it has become necessary to find a balance between letting the market work on its own and requiring governmental intervention to prevent the alienation of cultural producers and audiences.^{57 58}

If PEMC research acts as a link between research and action, the question must be asked:

RQ4: What actions can be taken by Alaskans, the state and local government, and the Alaska public broadcasting system to ensure that the system continues to fulfill its historical mission of service to underserved audiences?

The goal of this dissertation was to provide context and purpose of the Alaska public broadcasting system, and to aid Alaskans in making contextually informed decisions about an important media resource. Utilizing a PEMC framework accomplishes that goal by exploring how economic realities have impacted the function and development of the system, and how the function and development of the system have impacted it economically.

Methods

This study examined the general history, past and present economic trends, and operational and programming trends of three individual public broadcasting organizations – KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media (AKPM). The three organizations were chosen due to their similarities and their differences. The organizations were similar in that they all received funding from the CPB, and they all previously received funding from the State of Alaska. The organizations also operated both radio and television stations. Organizations that operated a radio

and television station were sought, because it was easier to compare the operations and finances of each organization when they offered roughly the same services. Funding from federal and state governments was also easier to analyze with organizations that offered roughly the same services.

The three organizations' differences were also important to the research. Though they offered similar services, each organization operated in markets that were vastly different from the others. AKPM operated in a large market, KUAC operated in a mid-sized market, and KYUK operated in a rural market.⁵⁹ The audience needs for each market were different. Each organization operated in places that varied in weather, natural resources, economic variety, infrastructure, and ethnic variety. Examining the three organizations revealed perspectives from public broadcasters that existed in vastly different operating conditions. Such differences added context to how and why the broadcasters developed and operated as they did.

This study utilized a mix of historical analysis and document analysis to examine the research questions. Email correspondence with officials of the three organizations was also used to clarify information. The areas of focus (history, economic trends, and operational and programming trends) relied on gathering and analyzing primary and secondary documents from a wide variety of sources. The historical and economic analyses especially relied on document analysis to reveal trends and narratives. Operational and programming trends were also gleaned from analyzing documents and via email correspondence with station officials. Email correspondence with organization officials was especially useful as the information they provided added additional context to information found within documents.

Journal articles and books were utilized to examine what had already been written about the U.S. and Alaska public broadcasting systems. There were few published journal or book

resources that specifically dealt with the Alaska public broadcasting system in its entirety. As will be explored in the literature review, much of the available literature explored how public broadcasting fit within the broader telecommunications infrastructure of the state, or how access to modern media (including public broadcasting) had been used by and affected Alaska Native audiences. Several journal articles also addressed how using modern telecommunications technology, like satellite, microwave, and cable systems would work in telecommunications-light environments. Literature on Alaska Natives was extremely valuable from a cultural perspective to assess how media affected underserved minority audiences. However, most of the material was written prior to the year 2000.

Documents from various governmental entities and from various public broadcasting organizations were also analyzed for this study. U.S. broadcasting media is heavily regulated by federal and state governments and thus the amount of government documents available pertaining to the public broadcasting organizations under review was substantial. Budgetary documents, underwriting schedules, hiring information, regulatory files, station and programming applications, testimonies, and other primary sources were available for the organizations. Government-produced and government-required primary documents were extremely valuable in revealing how the government regulated, viewed, and reacted to Alaska's public broadcasting organizations. Those documents also revealed historical narratives on how public broadcasting was created and developed. The documents were also valuable in exploring how public broadcasting organizations reacted to a variety of situations.

Every broadcast station in the United States produces documents that are freely available for public view. Those files are called "public files." Public files included information such as ownership (operator) documentation, contour maps of a station's signal, lists of donors who

supported certain programs, time-share agreements, and political requests. Such information gave considerable insight into how organizations operated and who was involved in their operation. Organizations that received funding from the CPB were also required to produce certain documents every year. CPB-required budgetary documentation was especially useful.

Despite easy availability of most government-based documents, creative methods were sometimes used in procuring documents that were not easily found. Most of Alaska's public broadcasters only hosted required documents on their websites for short periods of time. For example, KYUK only had two fiscal years available for their CPB-required audited fiscal reviews. Other organizations would only keep minutes of their meetings until the next meeting. I often reached out via phone call or email to the respective organizations to acquire documents that were not available. Some organizations made the requested documents available without issue. Others met my request by questioning what the purpose of acquiring the document was or outright denying the request for documents. It should be noted that all of the requested documents were required by the CPB, the FCC, or the State of Alaska to be made available to the public.⁶⁰

Documents that were unable to be obtained directly from an organization for whatever reason were often obtained by other means such as archiving websites, non-profit organizations that kept information archives, or via government websites. Archive.org was especially valuable in acquiring documents that had been removed from the web or were not available directly from organizations. Archive.org snapshots often provided copies of files or uniform resource locations (URLs) to files. Several years of financial information for various organizations were acquired using the service.

This study analyzed seven years of financial data from AKPM and KYUK (fiscal years 2015 through 2021), and eight years of financial data from KUAC (fiscal years 2014 through 2021). Audited fiscal reviews required by the CPB and non-profit financial documents required by the Internal Revenue Services were examined. The years chosen for review were based on the time distance from the state's defunding of the system and the availability of the financial data. I wanted to make sure that at least three fiscal years of financial data were analyzed before the state cut funding to the system. Three fiscal years felt like enough time to determine trends before the cuts. Fortunately, more than three years were eventually found for all of the organizations. KUAC provided eight total years of financial data at my request, but the other two organizations only had data for various years. I utilized the methods described above to gather documents for years that were unavailable. Financial data for fiscal year 2014, which was provided by KUAC, was unavailable from both AKPM and KYUK (the data was unable to be found on archive websites as well). Fiscal year 2015 was available from all three organizations, however. KUAC's fiscal year 2014 data was used, because it was assumed more data was better in determining trends. Fiscal year 2021 was chosen as the ending point of the analysis, because that was the latest fiscal year that was available from the three organizations when I started the analysis.

The intent was to visit some of the Alaska-based archives in person; however, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the availability and access to some archives became very difficult. Fortunately, archives from Alaska's government library in Juneau and the Rasmussen Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks had online catalogs for many of their archived holdings. While some of the content was digitized and available online, other information was not. After speaking with librarians at both libraries, non-digitized assets were sent via interlibrary loan or

scanned upon request. However, assets that were fragile, were not cataloged, were unable to be digitized, or were of considerable value, were unable to be accessed.

Various newspaper archives were extremely valuable resources for finding information about the reviewed organizations. Newspaper archives were heavily utilized in creating the study's historical narratives. Subscriptions to the newspaper archives from newspaperarchive.com, adn.newsbank.com, and newsbank.com were utilized. The archives allowed me to search Alaska's newspapers using various criteria such as keywords and dates. For example, it was possible to look at every article in the archive that mentioned KSKA from 1980 to 1999. Newspaperarchive.com has over 100 years of scanned daily and weekly newspapers from all over the state of Alaska. Almost every market was represented on the site. Adn.newsbank.com was the archive of the Alaska Daily News, Alaska's largest newspaper. It also includes archives of defunct newspapers both within and outside of Anchorage (such as Bethel's Tundra Drums). Newsbank.com, which is the root website that hosted the Alaska Daily News's archive also hosted archives for other newspapers. Similar to Newspaperarchive.com, Newsbank allowed for keyword and date searches.

Email correspondence was used to confirm information or fill informational and narrative gaps that emerged from the document analysis. Email correspondence, when combined with document analysis, allowed for a more thorough informational picture than what was provided by document analysis alone, because additional information could be acquired from someone at the source.

There were often holes in the narratives and intentions of documents that sometimes made it difficult to move beyond speculation without more information. An example of the benefit of using information from the source involved KUAC and its programming. Using

publicly available documents alone, it was difficult to determine how KUAC thought the cuts to the system would affect its ability to afford programming in the future. There were some hints in the documents, but email correspondence with the organization's general manager allowed for the possibility of clarifying points that weren't mentioned in the documents.

Literature Review

This review focuses on some of the literature related to the study of educational public broadcasting in the United States and Alaska that informed the dissertation's direction.

U.S. Public Broadcasting

A common thread that ran through the literature on the U.S. public broadcasting system was that the system had been stymied by commercial broadcasting interests. Jack Mitchell's *Listener supported: The Culture and History of Public Radio* detailed the history of U.S. educational non-profit media and its historical ideals as a utopian media space accessible to all people. The book documented how the U.S. broadcasting system developed into a market-driven system that catered to commercial interests, which in turn kept non-commercial interests at the periphery. Educators, pacifists, socialists, and to some extent, religious groups were mostly relegated to the edges of the broadcasting system. Mitchell described how National Public Radio (NPR), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) were born from the interconnected ideals of each group (and the ideals of the Ford and Carnegie foundations). Ideologies like educating the public were easy to sell to politicians, while other ideas, like pacifism, were not. Mitchell explored how those who disagreed with the commercial media structure that developed in the United States formed community-based radio stations that often encompassed non-mainstream ideologies.⁶¹

Continuing Crisis in Public Broadcasting: A History of Disenfranchisement by Willard Rowland also explored the history of federal policy for U.S. educational and public broadcasting. Rowland addressed how the development of the radio and television industries favored commercial interests from the 1920s until the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967. Rowland described a “neo-liberal” environment that favored the market as a better provider of programming — a belief that began during broadcasting’s earliest days and “not because of Reagan.” The pro-market environment affected how the non-profit education system and the eventual public broadcasting system developed (and how it was hampered from the start). Rowland also explored PBS, NPR and the CPB and showed how their intentions shifted after threats from the Nixon and Reagan administrations.⁶²

A History of Public Broadcasting by Witherspoon et al. also addressed how public broadcasting was affected by a pro-market environment. The study, while primarily a general history of public broadcasting, also provided an in-depth pre-history of educational public broadcasting in the United States. The authors analyzed the dominant market forces at play and the belief that the market was better able to serve the public interest than any government-supported entity. They also discuss the Broadcasting Act of 1967 and how market forces dictated how the CPB was structured to give money to public stations.⁶³

“From Class D to LPFM: The High-Powered Politics of Low-Power Radio” by Alan Stavitsky, Robert Avery, and Helena Vanhal examined the political battles that shaped the development of low-power FM (LPFM) radio stations in the United States. The piece explored how non-commercial broadcasters, commercial broadcasters, and religious organizations tried to affect LPFM policy and restrict the technology’s growth. The authors discussed how LPFM was

envisioned as a technology that could democratize the broadcasting space as the radio spectrum continues to be controlled by commercial interests.⁶⁴

“‘Guys in suits with charts’: Audience Research in U.S. Public Radio” by Alan Stavitsky detailed how public broadcasting shifted from developing what it believed to be “culturally significant” content (more in line with what public broadcasting advocates envisioned) to content geared toward a dominant audience. Stavitsky explored how audience research influenced the programming decisions for public broadcasters.⁶⁵

To Serve the Public Interest: Educational Broadcasting in the United States is one of the best accounts of the intentions and actions that led to the current public broadcasting system. Robert Blakely, the piece’s author, was a member of the Ford Foundation and provided a thorough account of how the foundation distributed money to non-profit educational stations across the country, leading up to the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. Blakely provided a personal perspective on the formation of the U.S. educational non-profit media system, and how the structures of funding from influential organizations (such as the Ford and Carnegie Foundations) were carried over into the eventual public broadcasting system. The author also highlighted actors who were influential in creating the funding structure, operational, and distribution rules of the CPB. Blakely also discussed issues that have developed in funding public broadcasting using private and public money.⁶⁶

Alaska Educational (Public) Broadcasting

Literature on Alaska’s educational public broadcasting system was surprisingly sparse. Most of the literature was provided by organizations within the system, by the system’s oversight organization, and from media sources such as newspapers. For example, brief histories can usually be found on the websites of individual organizations or can be pieced together from

archived materials and media records. As was described earlier in the chapter, contemporary discourse about the system was generally reactive to whatever crisis the system was facing at the time or designed to serve a public relations function. Examinations on how the system functioned under previous and current political economic climates, how the system impacted media diversity, or what purpose the system (and individual stations within the system) held, especially at the state level, were sparse.

The literature that was available tended to address two themes. The first was how public broadcasting fit into the overall telecommunications infrastructure of the state. The second was how public broadcasting and media access affected audiences, such as Alaska Natives, who previously had little to no access to modern broadcast technology.

A large amount of available literature on educational broadcasting in Alaska examined the development of telecommunications technology in the state. As will be discussed in chapter 2, telecommunications technology had to develop quickly as the 20th century brought natural resource extraction and military development to the state. The creation of the public broadcasting system (and the state's involvement in its creation) were usually described as a smaller piece of the overall development of Alaska's communications infrastructure. As a result, literature tended to use the Alaska public broadcasting system as a sort of "footnote" to the overall telecommunications whole.^{67 68 69}

The most comprehensive history of the Alaska public broadcasting system was part of a larger history of Alaska telecommunications and broadcasting in a 1982 Ph.D. dissertation by Thomas Duncan. *Alaska broadcasting, 1922-77: An examination of Government Influence* described how Alaska's harsh remote environment, late economic development, natural resource development, and military importance played key roles in the federal government (and

eventually the state government) becoming involved in the development and maintenance of telecommunications and broadcasting in the state.⁷⁰

Duncan's examination of the roots of public broadcasting in Alaska said that the state became involved in public broadcasting for many of the same reasons that prompted the federal government to become involved in telecommunications and broadcasting in the state. The commercial broadcasting environment was either non-existent, incapable, or unwilling to support the informational needs of Alaskans in rural or non-militarily important areas. Those areas were especially left behind in terms of telecommunications and broadcasting development and availability. Duncan discussed the creation of KUAC in Fairbanks as the first public broadcaster in the state, and KYUK in Bethel as the first state-supported Alaska Native owned and operated public broadcaster in Alaska. Most public broadcasting stations created during the study's examination period received little attention. Duncan's work, while incomplete, focused on broadcasting in Alaska as a whole (not just public broadcasting) and still offered one of the most in-depth historical accounts of the history of early Alaska public broadcasting.

Additionally, *Connecting Alaskans: Telecommunications in Alaska from Telegraph to Broadband* by Heather Hudson recounted Alaska's telecommunications development from the start of the gold rush era through 2015. Similar to Duncan, Alaska public broadcasting was included as part of the overall telecommunications infrastructure of the state and was not the sole focus of the book. Hudson's account used a similar chronological structure and many of the same sources as Duncan, whose work was heavily referenced. Hudson also provided brief histories of the first ten or so public stations in the state. Because public broadcasting was examined as part of a larger telecommunications infrastructure, and because Duncan's work was extensively relied upon, the nuances of why most stations were started, and why the government supported stations

in certain areas became lost in Hudson's narrative. However, Hudson provided more recent and valuable information about the public broadcasting system, such as how the decline in oil prices affected the system in the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. The declines resulted in the state legislature cutting funding to the system, which affected how television was broadcast to “bush” areas and how stations developed.⁷¹

Other studies also focused on how public broadcasting or “public interest content” was part of the overall telecommunications infrastructure of the state. “Instructional telecommunications in Alaska” by Walter Parker examined the use of satellites for programming and educational feeds to Alaska’s rural locations. Parker summarized how the state of Alaska participated in setting up receivers/transmitters to receive and send signals to and from NASA’s AT1 and AT6 satellites in 1971 and 1974. Parker said that Alaska was the ideal place to test the technology because of the state’s need to interconnect rural locations and the inability of commercial telecommunications to keep up with the state’s demands. Parker noted that by the time the AT6 was decommissioned in 1979 and systems switched to more modern communications satellites, the state of Alaska (including the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission) had set up 42 receivers and transmitters across the state and planned to (and successfully did) buy and maintain hundreds more. The receivers allowed public broadcasting stations (as well as commercial stations) to both receive and transmit satellite signals, ensuring that the stations no longer had to rely on one another to “bicycle” programming from one market to another.⁷²

State Sponsored Television in Alaska: Alternatives for Delivery and Distribution. One in a Series of Papers on Alaskan Telecommunications was prepared by Richard Rainery for use by the Alaska senate’s Rural Research Agency. Rainery’s paper was similar to Parker's work, in that

it examined telecommunications and television distribution in the state. Rainery looked at satellite delivery of television content through interviews of state officials and station personnel on the benefits and pitfalls of satellite television transmission. Included in the piece was a summary of communities in the state that did not have commercial television service by 1982, as well as a fee structure for satellite use. Rainery also included a section on the programming struggles of public television stations, even as they used satellites to send and receive programming, as well as the cost and limited time resources that were associated with satellite usage. The study also examined alternative methods of transmission such as using microwave transmission and cabled systems to save on costs for broadcasters and the state.⁷³

Cable Television in Alaska: The Need for State Incentive is another early piece prepared by Monroe Price in 1972 that examined Alaska's telecommunications infrastructure as it related to television broadcasting. The piece described an Alaska broadcasting environment that was unable to be supported by traditional commercial broadcast means due to the cost of setting up outlets and the inability of many Alaska markets to support such stations commercially. The author suggested that the state of Alaska become involved in supporting cabled and antenna systems of program delivery that allowed for the reception of multiple content channels over one cabled line. Price noted that offering multiple channels over one line was cheaper than setting up one broadcast station over one frequency. This piece indicated that multiple ideas were being discussed in the state about how broadcasting and telecommunications should develop. Not everyone believed a one-station method of content delivery was in the best interest of underserved audiences. It should be noted that the results of the AT1 satellite experiment would not be known for another two years, and cable systems seemed like a viable option at the time.⁷⁴

Another major theme that was apparent in the literature about Alaska educational broadcasting was how access to media affected Alaska Natives, especially those who had sparse access to modern media and telecommunications.

The Social and Behavioral Effects of Broadcast Television on Previously Untouched Audiences by Orvik et al. was a cooperative report by the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) and the U.S. Department of Health Education & Welfare that examined eight Alaska Native communities and two Alaskan “Anglo-American” communities that did not have access to television services but were planning on developing services in the near future. The study was meant to provide sets of baseline social and behavioral data that could be compared when services became available in the ten communities. The study used controlled observation and questionnaires to assign values to variables such as people’s behavior, roles, and world view. The behavior variable included sub-variables that measured people’s aggression, conflict resolution, and “pro-social behavior.” The role variable included sex roles, power roles, and ethnicity and the world view included occupational aspirations, motivation, expectations of violence, and geocentricism.⁷⁶

In hindsight, the Orvik study had methodological problems and the data was never compared after it was compiled (the purpose of the study). In addition, Alaska public broadcasting was not mentioned other than through the broad term “television.” However, the study was useful for providing historical context about Alaska’s public broadcasting development and the idea of how underserved audiences “should” be served.⁷⁷ The study also showed the paternalistic mindset of governmental institutions (and quantitative media research) toward Alaska Natives (“less modernized peoples”) and their media usage in the late 1970s.

There appeared to be an underlying assumption that television use will have detrimental effects on audiences.

“Origination of State-supported Entertainment Television in Rural Alaska” by Beverly James and Patrick Daley examined the dissemination of new technologies that occurred in Alaska compared to the Lower 48. The authors said that prior to the 1970s, technologies that promoted the idea of nation building (like radio and television), were paternalistic in nature and often alienated cultures who felt they had little agency in how the technologies were utilized. In the 1970s, a different approach emerged as local communities (primarily Alaska Native communities) became involved in how their stations were constructed and operated. James and Daley noted that the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission and the CPB preferred to remain as hands off as possible, especially with programming, and expected that communities do the legwork as a form of ownership over their station.

The “community” approach was problematic in some areas depending on the actual license holders of the station. The authors cited a study conducted by the state that found license holders who had little direct obligation to the community tended to program their stations in a “laissez-faire” fashion that generally ignored the interests of the community, especially underserved audiences. On the other hand, license holders who had a direct commitment to the community tended to include more community-oriented programming. James and Daly also noted that this “community” approach, when it worked, was especially important in Alaska Native communities which had often been left out of decisions about how technologies would be utilized. The authors warned against a one-size-fits-all approach to how the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission and the CPB encouraged stations to operate.⁷⁸

Publicly Funded Satellite Television in Alaska: Lost in Space by Rosemarie Isett

examined how Alaska's policy of promoting satellite television usage impacted Alaska Native culture. The author studied the use of the Rural Alaska Television Network (RATNET), which was governed by an Alaska Native council, coordinated both public and commercial television programming for delivery over one publicly-funded satellite channel to many Alaska Native villages. Isett's study focused on five Inupiat Eskimo villages in 1991 that had no previous access to television. She relied on information reported directly by the inhabitants of the villages and found mixed reactions to RATNET programming. Respondents indicated that while they were appreciative of having television service in their villages, they were also disappointed that the network did not offer much in the way of "culturally relevant programs." Respondents were worried that television programming that was not culturally relevant would lead to a decline in Inupiat traditions.⁷⁹

"Radio's Influence in the Alaska Bush: Cultural Transmission or Diffusion?" examined three radio stations in rural Alaska that were owned and operated by and served mostly Alaska Native audiences: KYUK in Bethel, KOTZ in Kotzebue, and KBRW in Barrow (Utqiagvik). The authors' primary goal looked at how the stations influenced the culture of their markets, and how the stations served the informational needs of intended audiences. A secondary goal examined how active Alaska Natives were in the operation and control of the stations. Feedback from the stations' audiences were examined and the authors found that there was a demand in all three locations for the preservation of Alaska Native culture and language in the stations' programming. The researchers also noted that there was a dichotomy of sorts at all three locations in that Alaska Native audiences wanted to experience a modern American lifestyle,

while also keeping native traditions alive. As a result, the stations' programming was "pulled in many directions" while trying to meet audience needs.

Generally, the effectiveness of the stations' service to their audiences was difficult to ascertain and the authors noted that soliciting feedback from Alaska Native audiences often had to rely on "traditional measures [that were] expensive [and] culture bound." They also noted that traditional measures of audience polling used in the Lower 48 did not work well with Alaska Native audiences. Recruitment of participants was found to be challenging as well, especially for journalists whose job was to report on their communities. The authors observed that "finger-pointing" was generally an uncomfortable prospect for Alaska Natives as pointing out issues publicly is problematic in their culture. All of the stations reported an increase in Alaska Natives working at their stations despite the difficulty in recruitment. However, staff, especially for non-entry level positions, continued to primarily be filled by non-Natives.⁸⁰

"KYUK in Bethel: Pioneering Native Broadcasting in Alaska" by Jerry C. Brigham and Bruce L. Smith examined KYUK radio and television. The stations were predominantly funded by the state initially and eventually expanded into television and newspaper services for the southwest region of the state. Brigham and Smith noted that KYUK was revolutionary for Alaska public broadcasting and functioned as a test case for new stations in similar remote areas. Bethel did not have the capacity at the time to sustain a commercial station. The area was also cut off from road access to the rest of the state (and still is), and as a result, the natural and economic environments presented challenges in the construction and maintenance of the station. Bethel's remote area and lack of a strong economic base made finding qualified engineers, operators, and management difficult, as well. The authors said that KYUK was revolutionary because it was the first to be entirely owned and operated by Yupik Alaska Natives in an area

that did not have a history of broadcasting (and thus no expertise or expectations). Volunteers, station employees, and audiences in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta went through a series of growing pains as they learned how to properly operate the station and offer programming that was of interest to those in the region.⁸¹

Filling Gaps in the Literature

A common thread that ran through the literature on the U.S. public broadcasting system was that the system had been drastically affected by the interests of commercial broadcasting. The literature about Alaska public (educational) broadcasting tended to address how educational broadcasting fit into the overall telecommunications infrastructure of the state, and how educational broadcasting and media access affected audiences -- especially audiences who had little to no access to modern programming and broadcast technology.

Similar trends naturally came out in the chapters to come, especially the history-based chapters. However, the historical research for this project expanded on previous research trends in a few different ways. How the organizations under review developed and continued to exist on their own as singular entities was an important part of the research. Previous research would generally focus on the public broadcasting system(s) as a larger whole and not necessarily how organizations developed and operated on their own as parts of larger systems. Perspectives that reinforce previous research about the larger whole as well as newer individual perspectives were achieved by focusing on organizations individually. The individual organizations in this project were given a larger political economic voice.

Another important contribution this dissertation provided was that the Alaska public broadcasting system and stations within the system were the sole focus of the research. Previous research on Alaska public broadcasting mostly focused on the system as part of the larger

telecommunications environment in the state. With a few notable exceptions (mainly the work on KYUK described earlier in the literature review), very little research had been done which focused solely on the organizations within the system. As a result, organizations in Alaska's public broadcasting system have struggled to find their own research identity (context and purpose). While this dissertation does sometimes place the organizations under review within the larger telecommunications whole (it would be foolish not to), the intention was to place the organizations first.

This dissertation also expanded on existing literature by examining past and present economic trends for the organizations under review. Economics has always been a main theme in public broadcasting's discourse. Public broadcasting's funding methods were frequently threatened, and organizations were always under pressure to find new funding sources, however, despite economics being an ever-present theme in the literature, there had been surprisingly little research on the actual financial trends of organizations. The Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission and organizations within the Alaska public broadcasting system pushed out information that explained the benefits of public broadcasting and used some financial data that they compiled and interpreted for themselves. That made sense, it's expected that public broadcasting would push its own interests. However, the information tended to be constructed for effect and provided to the public when the system was under threat. There was almost no research on the financial trends of individual organizations, whether the trends were long-term, short-term, or historical. That gap is partially filled with this research. A better understanding of the financial trends of organizations within the Alaska public broadcasting system helps to provide context on how organizations impact and are impacted by the overall U.S. system. An understanding of financial trends also helps to provide understanding on why the system and

organizations within the system make the choices they do concerning operations and programming, and how the system developed as it did.⁸²

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of the structure and importance of the Alaska public broadcasting system. The overview contains demographic information about Alaska and the markets of the organizations under review in the study. The chapter also gives a brief history on the creation of the Alaska public broadcasting system, and how the system was created on the heels of the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, and as Alaska acquired unprecedented wealth from natural resource extraction. The chapter also explores the development of the public broadcasting system in the United States as an alternative to the failings of the commercial broadcasting system and explores the political and financial precarity of the system.

Chapter 3 examines the history and development of KUAC radio and television from the early 1960s to the late 1990s. KUAC played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of telecommunications and public broadcasting in Alaska's Interior and statewide. The chapter explores the evolution of the University of Alaska's mission for KUAC, and how it transitioned from a student-run organization to become a tool for achieving the university's educational goals throughout the entire state. The chapter also discusses how the university's support for its public broadcasting stations evolved in response to Alaska's boom and bust economy.

Chapter 4 examines KUAC's finances spanning from fiscal years 2014 to 2021. The chapter shows the financial trends of the organization leading up to and following the state's decision to withdraw funding for public broadcasting in 2019. The chapter shows the delicate nature of KUAC's finances and sheds light on how the organization both readied itself for and

responded to the cuts. Chapter 4 highlights how operating a public broadcasting station posed a precarious challenge for KUAC financially, and how the cuts further intensified the organization's financial instability. The precariousness of operating as a public broadcaster during times of financial insecurity is also highlighted as finances during the COVID-19 pandemic are also explored.

Chapter 5 reviews the history and development of KYUK radio and television from the early 1970s to the end of the 1990s. In the early 1970s, Southwest Alaska faced a significant lack of telecommunication and broadcasting infrastructure. The newly formed Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission (AEBC) identified Bethel as the ideal location for establishing KYUK as Alaska's first state-supported public broadcasting station. The chapter studies how KYUK advanced Alaska Native representation while navigating the demanding and isolated conditions of its remote operating environment. How the organization expanded, the obstacles it faced, and the lessons it learned while serving as the sole broadcaster in rural southwest Alaska will also be explored.

Chapter 6 examines the finances of KYUK spanning from fiscal years 2015 to 2021. The chapter highlights the financial patterns of the organization leading up to the state's cut in support to public broadcasting in 2019. The chapter also explores how KYUK contended with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its fiscal health. The chapter illustrates the organization's response to the state's budget cuts while simultaneously evaluating the pandemic's influence on the organization. Chapter 6 highlights KYUK's existence in a precarious fiscal environment along with its precarious natural environment and how the organization has adapted to such precarious circumstances.

Chapter 7 explores the history and progression of KAKM television and KSKA radio and what would eventually become Alaska Public Telecommunication, Inc. (APTI) and then Alaska Public Media (AKPM) from the middle of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. The chapter shows how public broadcasting was on the rise in Alaska during the organizations' inception in the 1970s, but by the mid-1980s significant setbacks hit the stations as a decline in the state's oil revenue began to impact support for public broadcasting. By the mid-1990s, the survival of public broadcasting in Anchorage was in doubt as Alaska's oil production continued to dwindle. Chapter 7 examines how KSKA and KAKM (APTI) were compelled to make challenging decisions regarding their future. The decisions resulted in the consolidation of public broadcasting resources in Anchorage and had a tremendous effect on how the organizations served their audiences.

Chapter 8 explores the finances of Alaska Public Media in Anchorage from fiscal years 2015 to 2021. Alaska Public Media operates in Alaska's largest market which presents both advantages and disadvantages for the organization. Operating in such a market has afforded the organization certain benefits, including increased access to contributions and underwriting revenue. However, it has also exposed the organization to vulnerabilities, primarily its reliance on its market during economic downturns in Alaska, as well as during reductions in state and federal support. The chapter explores how Alaska Public Media leverages its market in ways that organizations in smaller markets cannot, yet this reliance on its market renders its financial standing equally precarious. Chapter 8 examines the organization's financial trends leading up to and immediately following the state's cuts, while also considering the organization's response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 9 reviews the study's research questions and summarizes how the information from the previous eight chapters provided context and purpose for the three stations under review and for the Alaska public broadcasting system overall. The chapter also provides an account of the difficulties of examining Alaska's public broadcasting stations and give suggestions for future research. Suggestions for what actions can be taken by Alaskans to ensure that their public broadcasting system continues to fulfill its historical mission of service to underserved audiences will also be provided.

CHAPTER 2

U.S. and Alaska Public Broadcasting: Brief Histories

In February 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996.¹ Section 3 of the act allowed for the relaxation of ownership rules in every media market in the United States, and following the passage of the act, commercial radio stations saw a period of mass consolidation by corporate interests.^{2 3} The effect of corporate consolidation resulted in programming at commercial radio stations that became less focused on locally produced content (using local talent and administrators) and more focused on programming that could be produced cheaply and broadcast to audiences on a mostly national scale.⁴ Locally produced content is generally thought of as being better able to serve communities in terms of social and political awareness needs. The idea is that broadcasters who operated and produce in their communities are better able to address the needs of their communities.⁵

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 formed the public broadcasting system in the United States.⁶ The act created a structure for educational public radio and television stations with the intention of giving those stations relative independence from political influence in their programming. The system came under attack almost from the start however, from opponents who believed that public media perpetuated a one-sided political ideology – mainly that of “liberal elites”, pacifists, and educators. Opponents also believed in the commercial media market’s ability to program to the same audiences.^{7 8} The 1980s saw a large reduction in public media funding by the Reagan Administration. Emboldened by those cuts, opponents to the public media system have sought to completely defund the system in the last 40 years.⁹

Due to repeated calls to defund the system, public media organizations have become more aligned with commercial-market interests of making money to survive, and organizations

have become less reliant on federal and state funding to supplement their operations.¹⁰ Public media organizations have increased their dependency on corporate financial support, underwriting (advertising) revenue, donation drives, and philanthropic donations that reduce the dependency for government funding.¹¹

In their earliest days, radio and television were envisioned by some as technological advancements that could modernize people. There were no longer barriers to how information was delivered to people. Instead of information being hindered by terrain or weather, radio and television gave the ability for information to overcome those barriers – and quickly.¹² The ability to transmit information over long distances had the effect of fascinating and terrifying people. The invention of radio specifically brought to the forefront the idea that “uneducated” people needed to be “saved”, “modernized” and brought into the fold of modernity. Children, the “poor”, and ethnic minorities such as African Americans were who educators felt needed to be “educated.” Some people felt that radio could be used as a tool that brought education to those who lived in areas that were cut off from developed educational services.¹³

While some saw the potential benefits of an educational broadcasting system, those same educational concepts also frightened people. Some felt that should the wrong type of information be given out over the airwaves, people in rural or “less educated” areas would be susceptible to influence and coercion.¹⁴ There was a paternalism that took root that stated that it was the duty of the enlightened (the educated) to teach those in the “hinterlands” who were unenlightened (uneducated). That paternalistic attitude was directly responsible for the development of educational media, and subsequent development of publicly funded media in the United States.¹⁵

President Lyndon B. Johnson, as part of his Great Society campaign, supported a broadcast system that focused on audiences who were believed to be underserved by the

commercial market.¹⁶ The idea was to provide educational programming that couldn't exist in a commercial market.¹⁷ Children, "the poor", the elderly, African American and Latinos were the audiences that proponents of a federally funded educational broadcasting system thought were being underserved by the commercial broadcasting market. In a vision that today's media consumers may find Pollyannaish, proponents of the Public Broadcasting Act, including the president, saw a publicly funded broadcasting system that could exist alongside the "free" market of commercial broadcasting.¹⁸ The idea was that public broadcasters would fill the gaps in programming that were left by commercial broadcasters – although programming to the public interest was a mandate also given by the FCC to commercial broadcasters.¹⁹

Television was initially the only broadcast medium that was targeted for this part of Johnson's Great Society.²⁰ While the Public Television Broadcasting Act (the original name for the Public Broadcasting Act) was being debated in congress, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) lobbied to include radio, stating that radio was able to reach more people than television, and because of that reach, radio should be considered an important part of a public broadcasting system.²¹ The NAEB was also concerned that if congress choose to fund only television stations, already existing educational and non-profit radio broadcasters would find themselves without much needed monetary resources.²² Fortunately, congress agreed, and the legislation was amended to include radio. What was once The Public Television Act of 1967 became The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. Congress passed the legislation on September 21, 1967. It was signed into law by President Johnson on November 7, 1967.²³

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, promoted and signed by Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his Great Society Campaign, gave many people hope that educational public media would

take root in the United States, and that audiences who were thought to be underserved by the commercial media marketplace would have the tools necessary to be “successful” in the United States.²⁴

The Public Broadcasting Act created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), and what has been described as “the world’s most decentralized broadcast system.”²⁵ As part of the corporation’s mandate, it helped create the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the television arm of U.S. public broadcasting, and National Public Radio (NPR), the radio arm of U.S. public broadcasting. The CPB was designated to provide federal funds to non-commercial television and radio stations, act as a gatekeeper to those funds by setting standards for public broadcasters and assist in the creation of a network of non-commercial education radio and television stations that were relatively independent from the CPB and the government.²⁶ It was the first time that federal dollars were consistently spent on non-commercial education broadcasting in the United States. It was also the first time “public” had been used as a moniker for non-commercial educational broadcasting in the U.S.²⁷ The idea being that the usage of taxpayer monies made the system “public.”

The creation of the CPB as a federal oversight organization, and the decentralized structure of the public media system overall, were purposeful system design features meant to assuage the fears of commercial broadcasters who felt that non-commercial broadcasters with funding from the federal government were given an unfair advantage. The creation of the CPB was the government’s guarantee that there would be no favoritism or subsidy in the overall broadcasting marketplace.²⁸

Federal funding to non-commercial broadcasters looked like a form of government favoritism to commercial broadcasters that had to sell airtime to survive despite the deliberate

decentralized structure of the public media system. Wanting to avoid the appearance of market favoritism, public media organizations' ability to fund themselves financially through traditional means like advertising was restricted.²⁹ When public broadcasting was formed, public media organizations could not mention individual products, overall business status, business locations, open and closing times, or offer calls-to-action in their underwriting announcements – unlike commercial broadcasters. They were only allowed to mention business names and as little information as possible.³⁰ The rules for underwriting have been relaxed (and basically ignored) as CPB funding requirements became stricter and public media's purpose and funding came under fire from local and federal lawmakers.

The CPB, responding to pressure from within its own doors and from lawmakers, established strict criteria on how public stations were funded. Stations had to fulfill certain requirements before the CPB would fund them. The requirements ranged from the type and amount of programming a station aired, the size of the market the station served, and how many employees a station had.³¹ ³² Also, under consideration was the reach of the station into the market it served. Faced with new bureaucratic barriers, educational non-commercial stations with hopes of entering the public system either chose not to or were prevented from doing so. The barriers limited the reach of public media in the United States.

Along with the CPB's implementation of funding barriers, public media's opponents took the narrative that public broadcasting in the United States was the ideological playground of liberal elites.³³ President Richard Nixon, who disagreed with how CPB funding was being disseminated to public broadcasters and PBS, vetoed the CPB's funding in 1972.³⁴ His administration also put pressure on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to change its rules and made it harder for public stations to apply for and receive broadcasting licenses.

Nixon believed that the media (both commercial and public) was biased against conservative viewpoints; however, he became vocally critical of the public media system when PBS aired coverage of the Vietnam War that questioned the United States's efforts in the country. He felt federal funding should not be spent on a media system that was critical of the government.^{35 36}

The Director of the White House's Office of Telecommunications Policy further outlined Nixon's dislike of the public media system by saying, "[there needs to be a] strong statement from you to our friends on the [CPB] Board that, until CPB has demonstrated a more responsible attitude toward funding of controversial programming [Vietnam War coverage] ... the Administration will be unwilling to support long-range funding or significant increases in CPB funds."³⁷

Ronald Reagan was the next president to target the CPB. President Reagan felt that federal funding for a public broadcasting system went against ideals that the market was able to program to audiences better than something funded by the government could. Reagan also believed that government funding of a broadcast system would prevent that system and other (commercial) systems from growing as they would under a system with no federal intervention.³⁸

³⁹ In 1981, Reagan asked for about \$37 million in cuts to the CPB's funding.⁴⁰ Congress gave him what he wanted in 1983 by cutting the CPB's budget by 20%. Reagan also achieved another revamping of the CPB's rules and regulations – making it even more difficult for stations to receive funding.⁴¹

Following the call by the Nixon administration to cut funding to the CPB and following the Reagan administration's successful cut to the corporation's funding, the dominant pro-market political discourse of public media's opponents was set firmly in place. The same discourse was used in subsequent calls to defund the system by House Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1994, the

chairman of the CPB in 2005, the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform (following the government shutdown and the Juan Williams scandal) in 2010, by Mitt Romney on the campaign trail in 2012, and from former President Donald Trump.^{42 43 44 45 46 47 48}

Most of the CPB's funds come from federal dollars. According to a 2016 report from the corporation, the funding they provide to public television and public radio stations varies between 10% to 15% of a station's budget.⁴⁹ In reality, the percentage of a station's budget from the CPB can rise to around 30% for stations located in small markets.⁵⁰ Some public broadcasters could probably stand on their own after having federal funding removed, but others, especially those in small markets, would suffer the brunt of the fallout. Underserved populations living in small markets were one of the original intended audiences for educational public media.

Financing public media in the long-term has always been an issue, even before the creation of the CPB. Beginning with its roots in the 1920's, the educational broadcasting system (pre-CPB) had been forced to figure out methods to ensure its survival in a commercially dominated broadcast marketplace. It often failed.⁵¹ The frequent calls for defunding combined with President Reagan's actual cuts to the system further created a belief that government funding for media organizations was bad. The belief forced organizations of the public media system to take measures to ensure their survival. Unfortunately, many of those methods fall outside of the bounds of the original intent of the educational public media system. This has caused public media broadcasters to shift their focus to concerns aligned with achieving results at the bottom line instead of being focused on underserved audiences.⁵²

Attempts to cut funding to the CPB and the possibility of complete cuts to the system in the future have had the effect of causing public media organizations to become more like commercial broadcasting entities. Public broadcasters have been forced to look for more market-

based methods to fund their stations. The frequency of pledge drives each year, increasing calls for philanthropic donations, and solicitations for corporate giving have all increased at public media organizations as threats to funding have been imposed by legislators.⁵³ Some public media organizations that once relied only on funding from the corporation switched to a multiple pledge drive system, where there can be as many as three or more pledge drives a year.^{54 55}

The prevalence of corporate underwriting (advertising) has also increased. It has become increasingly necessary to sell airtime for commercial purposes on stations. Selling airtime can affect program length, quality, and leave stations open to the influence of prominent contributors. It has been documented that influence on programming choices have occurred as a result of government agencies or parent agencies (station license holders) threatening or promising more funding, from underwriters who spend a large sum of money on station underwriting, and from the benefactors of philanthropic donations of large sums of money. While increasing reliance on monetary contributions is now a necessary function at most stations, it has become a cause for concern among public media insiders, and members of the audience that the historical independent intent of public media organizations is slowly being eroded away.⁵⁶

Due to muddled guidelines and minimal enforcement of underwriting rules, some public media organizations are choosing to blur the lines between what is considered non-commercial and commercial in regard to its underwriting content. Radio and television underwriting often includes business opening announcements, opening and closing times, product sales, product mentions, and light calls to action. There is no clear definition of what the functional difference is between an advertisement and a piece of underwriting. Some stations choose to design their own standards for underwriting that fit in with the non-commercial intent of public media, but

some also design standards that fit their own monetary needs. This has fueled further arguments that public media can stand on its own and does not need government subsidy to survive.

There are some who believe that the public media system in the United States, although created with the best of intentions, currently acts only, “as a palliative to the weaknesses of commercial broadcasting.”⁵⁷

Glenda Balas sums up the current state of public media adequately by saying:

Affiliation with market driven media alters public media’s form and function and makes it vulnerable to attack, especially by those who would eliminate public funding. Even more critically, the absence of an institutional identity built on shared public goals and a power sense of its own history precludes public media from moving with confidence in the American social landscape. The system has become timid, oriented toward the bottom line, and victimized by internal struggle and in fighting, public broadcasting falters in the competitive media marketplace.⁵⁸

Alaska Public Broadcasting: The Basics

Alaska’s public broadcasting system provides an area twice the size of Texas (663 thousand square miles) with locally and nationally produced public media content. However, Alaska only has 2.5% of the population of Texas. The system has 27 radio stations, four television stations, and almost triple those numbers of television and radio repeaters.⁵⁹

The public media audiences in Alaska are small compared to audiences many public media organizations serve in the contiguous United States (the Lower 48).⁶⁰ Alaska’s 2019 population was estimated to be approximately 730 thousand people. In contrast, Texas’s estimated 2019 population was estimated to be approximately 29 million people. Anchorage, Alaska’s most populous city and borough, had an estimated 2019 population of about 288 thousand people.⁶¹ An additional 174 thousand people resided in Southcentral Alaska communities outside of the Anchorage area (Wasilla, Palmer, Valdez, Seward, etc.). The city of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough had a 2019 estimated population of around 97

thousand people. Approximately 150 thousand (18%) people reside outside of Alaska's most populous areas. Bethel's 2020 population was estimated to be approximately 63 hundred. The Bethel Census Area was estimated to have a population of just over 18 thousand people.^{62 63 64 65}
66 67 68 69 70

The number of people in Alaska's most populous areas barely matches the numbers that can be found in the Lower 48, however, that does not mean that Alaska's public media system is less important to the people it serves. Alaska public broadcasting stations share the historical mission to program to underserved audiences. Alaska's underserved audiences are considered to be people in areas with little to no media alternatives. Those areas are comprised of mostly Alaska Natives. However, like the overall public media of the United States, Alaska's underserved audiences also include elders and children.

Alaska's lack of media diversity is also considered an underserved resource. Alaska's urban areas are fairly rich in the media they receive locally and nationally from commercial broadcasters and the Internet. However, certain types of public broadcasting news programming and niche programming, that are not popular on commercial stations (such as government proceedings and certain genres of music), are an important part of Alaska's urban broadcasting landscape. Rural and remote areas often have little to no access to media resources beyond what they receive from public broadcasting outlets or via satellite transmission. Internet access is also underdeveloped in those areas.⁷¹ In some cases, the local public media station is the only local non-religious accessible media organization in the area.⁷²

Organizations operate within distinct and often harsh climate zones that range from oceanic (islands) to temperate coastal to mountainous to subarctic to arctic.⁷³ Public media organizations in Alaska often operate with minimal access to infrastructure that public media

organizations in the Lower 48 take for granted, such as roads, available labor, cheap fuel, and affordable power. The Alaska public media system faces economic and cultural demands from the three main population centers of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau as well as many smaller towns and villages that include many distinct Alaska Native cultures and subcultures.⁷⁴ The economic and cultural demands vary wildly from place-to-place and the needs of people in Valdez can be vastly different from people living in Igiugig.⁷⁵ Alaska's natural resource-based economy, land size, sparse population density, harsh climate, and geographical disconnection from the contiguous United States do not always allow for a commercial media climate that can adequately provide people outside of the state's urban centers with the media resources to be informed and engaged citizens – commercial media simply isn't profitable in some places.⁷⁶ Alaska is a land of extreme conditions and requires a media system that can adequately operate within those extremes. Public media has filled that role in the state – by necessity.

Alaska Public Broadcasting: A Brief History

The State of Alaska's involvement in noncommercial broadcasting has a varied and complex history; however, there were two main influences on the system's development. The first was the discovery of oil on the North Slope and the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The second was the development of public broadcasting's infrastructure following the passage of The Public Broadcasting Act and the creation of the Alaska Educational Broadcasters Association (AEBC).

Alaska's infrastructure was primarily the concern of the federal government prior to becoming a state in January 1959. Although district and territorial governments directed some portions of Alaska's infrastructure, other portions, especially those that held military importance, were developed and administered by the federal government. After statehood, much of the

responsibility for the state's non-military infrastructure, including communications infrastructure, shifted to the state. There continued to be military development of communications infrastructure after statehood, but civilian access was limited. Access was virtually nonexistent in remote areas that did not have a military presence.^{77 78}

A reason the territory of Alaska sought statehood was to control its natural resources – mainly fishing, mining, and (later) oil extraction. Natural resource extraction prior to statehood had very little benefit for Alaskans beyond indirect trickling down of jobs and services revenue. The ability of the territory to set tax structures and resource limits was limited (or hampered by the federal government). Alaskans were upset over resources being taken with little perceived benefit for Alaskans.^{79 80}

Alaska's petroleum reserves had been a focus of federal and territory officials since the early part of the 20th century. Areas of the North Slope and Cook Inlet were known to have large petroleum fields but were not highly developed by the military or federal government. Alaska's petroleum and natural gas development ramped up on the North Slope and Cook Inlet following statehood. The state had more of a say in how its natural resources were permitted and extracted. Alaska had operating oil and natural gas fields and some money coming in from those operations by the early 1960s.^{81 82}

The Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) hit a major oil deposit at Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope in 1968. The discovery and subsequent sale of oil extraction leases in 1969 saw close to a \$1 billion in revenue for the state. Alaska as a state had its hands on a reliable source of revenue for the first time. North Slope lease holders started to develop plans for a pipeline system that could bring Alaska's oil to the market. The proposed pipeline system was initially met with some reluctance by state and federal officials, conservationists, and Native groups.

However, the energy crisis of 1973 caused the United States to review its dependence on oil from foreign producers. President Richard Nixon signed the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act late the same year. Although the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) would not be completed until 1977, the oil-leases sale in 1969 and the demand for Alaska oil following the energy crisis of 1973 fueled the state's belief that oil would fund the state for decades to come.⁸³

84

The state created the Statewide Educational Television Committee (SETC) in 1962 to examine the feasibility of an educational television system. However, the committee received little funding and did not gain much attention from lawmakers or the public. The committee had no full-time committed leaders or support staff and was led entirely by volunteers. The committee only held intermittent meetings until it was disbanded in 1964. A large earthquake and subsequent tsunami occurred in March the same year. Whether the quake influenced the disbandment of the committee is unclear, but most of the state's attention (including a sizeable portion of its budget) went toward relief efforts.^{85 86}

The state was slow to act after the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The new act was passed without funding, and the state did not want to delve into public broadcasting until federal funds became available to help offset the cost of construction for new stations. The state's reticence to spend money on broadcasting until federal funds were available came as Fairbanks was reeling from a flood that had inundated most of the town that same year. As was seen with the 1964 earthquake, most of the state's attention went to disaster relief for the Fairbanks area, and revenue from the North Slope would not flow for another two years.^{87 88}

The U.S. Congress did eventually fund a small amount to the corporation starting in 1969. Congress passed funding to the CPB on a yearly basis until 1975, when the two-year funding structure the CPB uses today was enacted. Receiving appropriations on a two-year schedule meant that public broadcasters had more planning flexibility than what was possible with a year-to-year funding appropriation. The federal appropriation of funds to public broadcasting, and the subsequent sale of North Slope oil leases for the first time, were enough to spur Alaska's Governor Keith Miller into authorizing the Public Broadcast Authority (PBA) in 1969. The PBA was supposed to act as the figurehead for public broadcasting in the state. The PBA moniker did not last long as it became the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission that same year.^{89 90}

The AEBC functioned much like the CPB and acted as a buffer between public broadcasters and the state government. The AEBC acted as the central organization that worked with existing (and prospective) public broadcasters. The commission held the responsibility for lobbying the state government on behalf of the interests of Alaska's public broadcasters, helping public broadcasters understand regulations, and administering state funding allocations to organizations.^{91 92}

Why the name of the Public Broadcast Authority was changed to the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission reflected the educational intentions of early public broadcasting in Alaska and the United States. The PBA operated as part of Alaska's Department of Education. The word "educational" in the commission's name reflected the early intentions of some U.S. noncommercial broadcasters to be educational institutions in the same way land-based educational institutions functioned.^{93 94} The educational model was envisioned by public media advocates and early AEBC members for most public media stations in Alaska. However, as the

U.S. public media system became focused on public service and underserved audiences as its grounding ideals, the Alaska system also chose to focus on public and underserved aspects and not necessarily on educational orientation. Though merely operating a public broadcasting station was considered educational due to many stations serving as the only reliable source of information, news, and programming for some areas.⁹⁵

The name change may have also been a result of the commission's first director. One of the reasons the SETC (the precursor to the PBA and AEBC) had not been effective was the absence of a figurehead and a sense of direction to guide how the committee should proceed. The commissioners of the AEBC realized that a figurehead was needed for the commission to avoid the same fate as the SETC. Charles Northrip was appointed as the AEBC's first director after Governor Miller made support (both monetary and administrative) available for the position. The appointment of Northrip made sense, as he was the General Manager of KUAC -- the state's only noncommercial educational public broadcaster at the time.^{96 97}

The change of the commission's name from the PBA to the AEBC came after Northrip's appointment and reflected Northrip's interests in public broadcasting's possible educational components and the interests of the University of Alaska to provide education resources to the state. Northrip (and the university) aspired to start an educational television station at KUAC. KUAC's interests often differed from public broadcasters in the rest of the state. KUAC generally held educational objectives for public broadcasting as it functioned as an arm of the university. Other public broadcasters operated (or would eventually operate) as the primary broadcasting service or as a programming alternative in their areas. Northrip did not (initially) serve on the commission long but was influential in spearheading the initial years of the AEBC

and securing the early interests of the system. He was also instrumental in assuring the state that public broadcasting was worth the investment.^{98 99}

The AEBC hired a California broadcast engineering firm in 1970 to study the feasibility of constructing a series of “educational” stations in underserved media markets around the state. The study, *Educational Communications in Alaska*, detailed areas that could not (at the time) support commercial stations but showed interest in having a station in the area (Educational communications in Alaska, 1971).¹⁰⁰ Areas that received support for a station from the commission usually were in the areas that were outlined by the study. However, the AEBC did not initiate the application processes for stations. The commission preferred that interested parties initiate the application process before becoming involved. It is unclear if the AEBC was in contact with interested parties to encourage applications, or if those areas were promoted as potential public broadcasting sites. While most of the locations in the study received a public station, some locations that were not listed, such as Dillingham (KDLG), had enough community support to apply for a license from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and receive funding from the AEBC.^{101 102 103}

Bolstered by the prospect of more oil revenue, and with the initial legwork finished by the AEBC, the legislature fully funded the committee and Alaska’s public media in 1970. The development of public media organizations in Alaska came quickly after the state government committed to funding. The first state-funded radio station (KYUK radio) and television station (KUAC television) started broadcasting a year later. The first ten state-funded public radio stations (a total of 11 stations), three new public television stations, and dozens of mini-television stations were broadcasting in Alaska by the time pipeline construction had finished in 1977. In the latter half of the 1970s, public media broadcasters represented approximately 30%

of the broadcasters in the state. Six public radio stations and one public television station constituted the only licensed broadcaster in their areas of operation though some markets like Fairbanks and Anchorage already had commercial and religious stations operating by the time that state-funded stations started broadcasting in those markets.^{104 105}

This chapter gave brief histories of the U.S public broadcasting systems and the Alaska broadcasting system. The U.S. system has faced difficulties both politically and economically throughout the course of its existence, as its purpose and funding have been repeatedly questioned and scrutinized. The result was a public broadcasting system that had to come up with methods of economic survival that did not rely on government funding. Public broadcasters became reliant on the audience's preferences for programming and appealing to those preferences to bring in more donations during fundraising events. Broadcasters also appealed to corporate interests to choose and maintain programming and support. Those market-based methods were criticized for leaving the system vulnerable to fickle market forces to ensure its survival. Relying on the market for economic survival put public broadcasters in a precarious position that impacted the type and quality of programming, sometimes calling into question whether public broadcasting was fulfilling its historical mandate to serve underserved audiences.

Alaska's public broadcasting system was born out of necessity due to the scarcity of telecommunications infrastructure in the state at the time. After statehood, and the responsibility of most non-military telecommunications infrastructure development was passed from the federal government to the state, the state recognized that market-based telecommunication development would be slow or nonexistent in places that could not support such development. Development in those places wouldn't be profitable. The state had to become involved in the

development of telecommunications infrastructure or that development would be stunted or not occur.

The passage of The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and the subsequent funding of the system came at the perfect time for Alaska as it was looking to expand telecommunications and educational access for Alaskans at the time. With the early commitment of the federal government to public broadcasting, and Alaska's newly gained natural resources wealth, the state decided that development of public broadcasting stations in the state would be a workable solution to part of its telecommunications issues. Unfortunately, support for public broadcasting at the federal and state level would not be consistent.

In the next chapter, the historical trajectory of KUAC radio and television spanning from the early 1960s to the late 1990s will be examined. KUAC emerged as a crucial force in influencing the telecommunications and public broadcasting landscape in both Alaska's Interior and across the state. The chapter will explore the transformation of KUAC's role from a student-managed entity to a strategic instrument for fulfilling the University of Alaska's educational objectives. Additionally, how the university's backing for its public broadcasting stations adapted in response to the dynamic economic shifts experienced in Alaska during this period will be examined.

CHAPTER 3

KUAC: Educational Broadcasting for Alaska

Alaska's Interior was recovering from unprecedented flooding that inundated large portions of the area in late summer of 1967. The University of Alaska's (UA) campus in Fairbanks housed approximately seven thousand people during the floods. Troth Yeddha', the hill where the campus is located, is one of the highest points in the area and was relatively unaffected by the flood waters. KUAC radio acted as an emergency messaging and information center. KUAC reported on the effects of the flood and delivered information to evacuees. Emergency information was also relayed through the station. Evacuees sent and received messages via the station about the services they needed. They were also allowed to send point-to-point messages to loved ones.

There's no question that the flood was devastating for the people of the Interior, however, KUAC and the university benefited from the disaster. The station had been on the air for about 5 years by the time the flood occurred. UA wanted people to associate KUAC with the educational goals of university, and people's use of university resources (including KUAC) during the flood accomplished that goal. Acting as a respite for evacuees, and relaying information to the community, reflected well on the intentions of the university and KUAC to be perceived as active members of the community. UA started to professionalize KUAC prior to the flood and leading up to the signing of The Public Broadcasting Act the same year. There were no other educational broadcasters in Alaska in 1967, and the university intended for KUAC to be an educational broadcasting hub for the rest of the state. The university got a taste of the station being a broadcasting hub during the flood as KUAC relayed information to the rest of the state via news updates and reports.^{1 2}

This chapter examines the development of KUAC radio and television from the early 1960s to the end of the 1990s. As Alaska's first public broadcasting station, KUAC heavily impacted the development of telecommunications and public broadcasting in the Interior of Alaska and across the state. How the University of Alaska's goals for the organization shifted from using the station to offer quality educational experiences for students, to using the station for its educational objectives for the state will also be explored. This chapter will also show how the university's support for the organization shifted as the natural resource fortunes of Alaska shifted.

Early Educational and Public Broadcasting in Alaska's Interior

KUAC radio was the first educational public radio station in Alaska. The University of Alaska (UA) applied to the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) for a construction permit to broadcast at 104.9 "megacycles" on the FM spectrum in early 1962. The original construction plans had the station's range at about 60 miles to the south and 20 miles north, west, and east of Fairbanks. The range was based off the proposed transmitter site on a nearby "dome" that had few obstructions (good line of sight) to the south. The other directions were either obstructed by the dome or by other features. A clear line of sight allowed FM waves to travel further.

Don Wheeler, assistant professor of speech and radio at the university, was appointed as the director of broadcasting in advance of the new station going on the air. Wheeler defined KUAC as an "educational FM" radio station before it had aired any content. The educational distinction was based on the station's plans to operate as a function of the university. The University of Alaska wanted to invest in methods of communication that allowed the university to expand its instructional capabilities in the state. KUAC was one of those methods. The

educational moniker was also used, because the term “public broadcasting” would not be widely used until years later.

The university’s Department of Speech as well as the Department of Electrical Engineering came up with the plans for the station. The Department of Speech was initially responsible for the station’s programming and operation, and the Department of Electrical Engineering was responsible for the station’s engineering. Dr. Charles Northrip, who taught speech and broadcasting at the university, was the station’s first manager. Dr. Northrip, along with four student administrators and 12 student announcers, operated the station.^{3 4 5 6 7}

UA operated a station using the call letters KUOA prior to the creation of KUAC. KUOA was also entirely operated by students. The station’s call letters were not designated by the FCC because the station did not transmit a radio signal. The station operated on a closed circuit that could only be heard on campus. KUOA was a moniker the station used to identify itself as an unlicensed station of the university to whomever was listening on campus. KUOA could not be used when it came time for the university to apply to the FCC for a broadcasting license, because the call letters were already being used by a licensed station in Arkansas. The KUAC call letters were recommended, because like KUOA, which was an acronym for University of Alaska, KUAC was an acronym for University of Alaska College. The new call letters reflected the station as a function of the university. KUOA stopped operating in 1961 a few months before the university applied for KUAC’s construction permit.^{8 9 10}

KUAC went on the air at 3 p.m. on October 1, 1962. The first piece of music heard on the station was Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto. The station was the first educational broadcasting station in Alaska, and it was also the only FM station in Fairbanks. Its broadcast schedule, which was designed to not conflict with the schedules of its student operators, was originally Monday

through Saturday from 3 p.m. until 10 p.m. However, the schedule quickly shifted to from noon until 10 p.m. KUAC was dependent on its student operators to run the station, because radio automation technology was not yet a thing, and a licensed radio operator had to be available at the station when it was operating. The station switched to broadcasting on Sundays in early 1963. The move was prompted by listeners' request to hear programming on Sundays.

KUAC's studios were originally located in Constitution Hall on UA's main campus (now called the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus) when it went on the air in 1962. The station used some of the same equipment that had been used by KUOA. KUAC tried installing a new transmitter on the third floor of the building in the fall of 1967; however, the installation was delayed when the 33-inch-wide transmitter would not fit through the building's 32-inch-wide doors. The station hired a crane operator to lift the transmitter through a window that was larger than 33 inches. Despite the transmitter installation issue, the station began broadcasting in multiplex stereo in late 1967 and received approval from the FCC to increase its power output from 27 hundred watts to 10 thousand watts in 1968.^{11 12 13 14}

KUAC radio was an important development for the Fairbanks media market. The station expanded the educational goals of the university in Alaska's Interior and was able to expand UA's academic availability from solely in-person offerings to include remote offerings. KUAC's existence on the FM spectrum also helped to push for the spectrum's usage among radio users. Nationally, the AM spectrum was jammed with commercial stations, and educational radio stations had a rough time operating in that space. FM radio (using a homestead or free land metaphor) offered room for educational stations to exist because the space was not (yet) difficult to get a license on and was not (yet) completely driven by commercial interests. KUAC radio looked for programming that utilized stereo sound, but a lot of the music in the station's library

and most of the national programs it received were recorded in mono. The audio standards of AM broadcasting (that primarily broadcasted in mono) were still dominant at the time.^{15 16 17}

The development of KUAC radio slowly pushed the utilization of FM radio technology in the Fairbanks market. The sound improvement of FM (when KUAC broadcast content that featured it) was used by the station to sell itself to both prospective listeners that were looking for high-quality content and to commercial interests in Fairbanks that wanted to make money from the developing spectrum space. An advertisement in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner (FDNM) on October 13, 1962, showed the Northern Commercial Company advertising the sale of AM and FM radios.¹⁸

The advertisement read: “For Your Pleasure...STOP LOOK LISTEN!”¹⁹

“Stop” was underlined with one line. “Look” was underlined with two lines, and “Listen” was underlined with three lines. “Your” was also underlined three times. The advertisement used underlined words to entice potential customers to associate the radios with themselves and their potential ability to listen to radio in Fairbanks. The advertisement also showed that the radios were made by Zenith and contained large speakers, clear radio signals, and a large antenna. The words “Yours for Only \$58.95” were included in the middle of the ad. “Only” was underlined three times. The company wanted potential customers to think that the price for the radio was not that high, even though prices for goods and services in Fairbanks were always higher than those in the Lower 48. Adjusting for inflation, \$59.95 in 1962 would be just over \$600 in 2023. The end of the advertisement showed that listeners who bought the radios could listen to KUAC.^{20 21}

The advertisement also said: “FM STATION – UNIVERSITY OF ALAKA – KUAC – Broadcasting 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. Daily Except Sunday.”²²

Northern Commercial Company's advertisement highlighted important aspects of the Fairbanks broadcasting marketplace in the early 1960s. The ad showed usage of the FM spectrum in Fairbanks was sparse at the time. The company recognized that FM broadcasting was a technological advancement that offered more variety and improved radio service to Interior residents. KUAC was mentioned in the ad, because it was the only station available over FM in Fairbanks in 1962. The station was new, fresh, and a novelty that could be used to promote the sales of radios.

The advertisement also showed a blending of the commercial market with the non-commercial broadcasting space. Northern Commercial Company benefitted from the existence of KUAC, because it used the existence of the station as a promotional tool to sell radios. KUAC benefitted from Northern Commercial Company, because the retailer sold the tools that enabled people to listen to the station. Even in commercial and non-commercial spaces that were not heavily developed yet in Alaska, the relationship between the two entities created a type of symbiosis that benefitted them both. The symbiotic relationship between commercial interests and non-commercial broadcasters was around before the creation of the nationwide and Alaska public broadcasting systems. The relationship is readily apparent when looking at how public broadcasting's funding methods developed over time and how public broadcasting funding functions today.^{23 24}

Early KUAC radio functioned as a type of "laboratory" station, furthering the University of Alaska's educational mission. Employees were asked to perform their regular job tasks, but they were also asked to supervise University of Alaska students (such as student newscasters and engineers) who were working at the station. Students had access to hands-on experience as part of their university instruction, and broadcasting majors had access to most methods of

broadcasting operation, administration, and engineering. Students experienced unique situations due to KUAC's location and lack of telecommunications access to the rest of the country.^{25 26}

One example was when electrical engineering students created a device that could receive signals from the United Press International (UPI) news services. The device converted the UPI signals into a teletype signal that allowed content to be printed and easily read by newscasters. Teletype machines were nothing new in the 1960s; however, teletype technology, especially utilizing a signal from a distant news service, was uncommon for Interior Alaska broadcasters. KUAC's station manager Dr. Charles Northrip contacted UPI about the device and asked if the station could use its content for broadcasts (for educational purposes). UPI allowed the station to use the service for test purposes for 60 days without cost. "As a result, we now receive news from all parts of the world on a regular basis," Dr. Northrip said.²⁷

KUAC's creation of a teletype device for UPI content shows how sparse communications technology was in the Interior in the early 1960s. Programming that was delivered via readily available technology in the Lower 48 was not available initially for KUAC, and the station depended on student labor to innovate and adapt. The station (students) employed ingenious methods to program to its audience. As a function of the University of Alaska, KUAC existed as part of a broadcasting environment that allowed (and even encouraged) employees and students to innovate and take chances. The station was also somewhat sheltered from the monetary realities faced by the area's commercial broadcasters. KUAC was part of the university's plans for future educational outreach efforts, and as such, the university supported the station's development (both ideologically and monetarily).²⁸

The station's identity as an educational laboratory ran by students slowly started to shift around 1965 when it started to professionalize its operation and sound. The university's

aspirations for the station shifted to focus even more on its educational outreach goals. The laboratory moniker and student labor were still used by the station, but operation and control of the station started to slowly shift from students to dedicated professional employees. The shift came as the station received increased funding from the university and a series of grants from the federal government. Increased funding allowed the station to purchase more equipment, especially production equipment, and hire more dedicated staff. KUAC had been operating with some of the same equipment that had been used by KUAO before it signed off. The new equipment helped develop the quality of KUAC's sound, which in turn increased the station's ability to sell itself when asking for more funding from federal and state government sources. Increased support also allowed the station to purchase high-quality network programs and produce more local programming.²⁹

As will be discussed later in the chapter, the UA started discussing the feasibility of developing an educational television station in Fairbanks starting around 1966. A link to the university's interest in educational television and its investment in the quality of its educational radio station was difficult to find, however, the university's investment in KUAC radio in 1965 would have made sense if it intended to develop an educational television station. A commitment to developing educational radio would have shown a commitment to educational television in the eyes of those who were funding such projects. The professionalization of KUAC also helped it qualify for funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).³⁰

KUAC Radio's Early Programming

The initial programming schedule of KUAC consisted of mostly classical music with a mix of national and local programming. Classical music was underrepresented on Fairbanks' radio stations (its AM stations) and the genre was cheap to acquire. Classical music sounded

great with FM technology when it wasn't recorded using AM standards. KUAC's hourlong classical music blocks were labelled in the FDNM as just "Music" on most days. Opera was a staple on weekends.^{31 32}

KUAC expanded its classical music and opera offerings in the latter part of the 1960s. The station produced Performance, a program that featured local musicians and performers. The program was intended to help support fine arts at the local level. A secondary focus of the program was to expose Interior residents to the art that was being produced in the area while associating the university with the art's creation. Opera produced in the Lower 48 started to become desired broadcast "events" for the station about the same time. Richard Strauss's Salome was a featured opera on KUAC in early April 1965. The station ran a national program called Opera News before the performance. The programs were heavily promoted by KUAC (on the station and in the FDNM) and offered musical analyses of operas before the programs aired. The FDNM printed an article about KUAC's broadcast of Madame Butterfly by Giacomo Puccini the same month the station aired Salome. The nine-paragraph article gave a complete rundown of the opera and what listeners could expect from the broadcast.^{33 34}

The promotion and "hype" of KUAC's opera programs were different than what is found on public broadcasting stations today. The lack of programming diversity and demand for high-quality programming were what drove the fervent reception of opera in the Interior. Opera broadcasts were meant to be a type of audio event that had not been experienced on the radio before. The audio was high quality, and the audience was prepared ahead of time for what they were going to experience from the broadcasts. Stations today still promote their content, and that content is often reviewed or promoted in other media outlets such as newspapers. However, contemporary promotional materials are fast. Audio promotions offer descriptions of a program

with maybe a soundbite or two. They rarely last more than 30 seconds. Newspaper or online promotions of public media content utilize high-quality photographs with maybe a few words about what people can expect from the program. The promotion of *Salome and Madame Butterfly* showed that listeners of operatic productions would be invested enough in the content to consume large quantities of promotional materials. Those materials would be both expected and consumed by listeners.³⁵

Local programs, educational programs, current affairs programs, documentaries, and news (both United States and international) provided by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) (among others) filled the rest of KUAC's schedule. Other programs included a "show" music show with performance music, BBC World Report, Business Review, Carnival of Books (a story reading program), Doctor Tell Me, European Review, French in the Air, International Report, Law in the News, Medical Milestones, South American Press Review, Theatre of Pirandello Timetable, Washington Report, and World of Song. The format of some programs has been lost to time, but the content of some can be inferred based on their names.^{36 37 38 39 40}

KUAC's early schedule was also highly political. The inclusion of political programming was a natural progression for the station as it looked to fill its schedule before technology was available to bring in current (or live) content from outside of Fairbanks and Alaska. The station did carry "Outside" political content, but that content was usually aired on a delay of a few days to a few weeks. Though there was a precedent for news and political programming from educational stations and educational broadcasting networks that had been around for a while

(like the NAEB), KUAC was still trying to figure what content worked and didn't work for Interior listeners.

The station aired a program on the civil rights movement in October, 1962. Hate is a Wrong Way Street examined the civil rights movement as it was happening that year. It included perspectives about Alabama Governor George Wallace, Mississippi Public Safety Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Conner, Malcom X and others. The program was produced by WINS in New York and distributed to educational broadcasters around the United States. The program was a highly political piece of content at time when civil rights were being hotly debated in the country.⁴¹

KUAC radio also aired eight 30-minute programs of national political programming in 1964. The programs came less than a year after the assassination of John F. Kennedy and followed the political landscape of the country as it was adjusting to his murder. The programming included question and answer sessions from Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Barry Goldwater, and William E. Miller as they outlined their party's platforms. Politicians were asked to answer specific questions such as "Should Foreign Policy be an Issue in the 1964 campaign?" and "How Far Should We Go in Viet Nam?"⁴²

Local political programming also occurred frequently on KUAC's early schedule. Politicians would often visit the radio station either on the campaign trail or just to have their voices heard. They were often heard having impromptu debates with political rivals. Issues related to their respective political ideologies would be discussed along with various Alaska issues such as energy production, job development, and even communications infrastructure development.⁴³

By the end of 1963, Charles Northrip said the station hoped to increase its focus on the University's educational offerings and objectives. That included airing concerts and other events that were held on campus. KUAC also offered some of its programming to commercial stations. Broadcasting students would produce the programs and offer them to other stations around the state. The intent of offering content to other broadcasters was to promote UA as the state's primary educational institution and show that the station (via its programming and instruction) was part of the university's educational offerings. The university also intended for KUAC to act as a sort of flagship station for other possible educational broadcasters in the state. The idea of "public" radio wasn't heavily developed in the United States (yet), but the university knew that there may eventually be interest in educational broadcasting stations in other parts of the state. KUAC was to be a model station of sorts for stations that might have come online with similar educational objectives.⁴⁴

KUAC's earliest offerings also included programs that focused on Alaska Native life and culture – such as Athabascan language tutorials. The station produced the Things Worth Hearing series that included students from the Eskimo Workshop at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. The programs were intended to preserve Alaska Native folklore and provide a cultural exchange between Alaska Natives and non-Alaska Natives. One program focused on the cultural distinctions between northern, southern, and southwestern Alaska Natives.⁴⁵ KUAC produced a show called People Talk. One of the episodes discussed how Alaska Native languages could be standardized for continued usage in Alaska Native villages. The show also featured local contemporary music produced by Alaska Natives. Contemporary music from the 1960s was often translated into the "Eskimo language" for broadcast on the program.⁴⁶

Children from the village of Chalkyitsik travelled to Fairbanks to experience “the big city” on May 5, 1967. The children had financed their spending money for the trip by doing various jobs such as hauling water and chopping wood. The village financed the rest. KUAC recorded and broadcast the children singing in the Gwich’in language.^{47 48}

Two years after KUAC produced content from the Chalkyitsik children’s visit to Fairbanks, the station produced and aired a program about Abraham John of Arctic Village. The station followed John, who was nicknamed “Pin”, on a trip to Rochester, New York. The trip was the first time that John had left Arctic Village. The program highlighted John’s experiences with using a telephone, climbing a tree, and eating a hamburger – activities they had never experienced before. Jim Ludwig, KUAC-FM’s program director and producer of the program, said that the trip amounted to a “cram course [sic] on today’s society in the United States.” “When he stayed with us in Moore Hall [a dormitory at UAF] he got his first ride on an elevator,” Ludwig said. “He also gave me my first ride on a dog sled in Arctic Village. At first, he was shy. Later he got used to meeting people and began shaking hands like a politician.”^{49 50}

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KUAC produced 13 half-hour programs on the future of Athabascan Alaska Natives. *Crossroads In Time* focused on the social and economic changes Athabascans were facing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The programs discussed how Alaska Natives were living in an environment that mixed traditional and “modern” ways of life. KUAC staff had travelled to Interior villages to record the perspectives of Athabascans as they faced cultural changes in their villages. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting partially funded the program for about \$5 thousand. *Crossroads in Time* was submitted to the National Educational Radio Network for

nationwide distribution. NPR, which was founded the same year, was not available to KUAC yet.^{53 54 55}

Economic programs that were created for rural Alaska Native listeners were sometimes broadcast on the station. The Discussions program aired an episode in March 1969 that interviewed speakers from the Regional Job Development Conference that year. The conference's speakers shared information about how economic and natural resource development in the Interior would increase job access and prosperity for rural Alaskans (primarily Alaska Natives). The episode was one of many for the Discussions program, but the episode highlighted how residents of the Interior were thinking about economic development in the area (and the rest of the state) at the time. The Trans Alaska Pipeline System had not been constructed yet and job access was a big concern for Alaskans.⁵⁶

Alaska Natives were heavily underrepresented in Alaska's educational and broadcasting spaces. KUAC's inclusion of Alaska Native content reflected the university's intention to include Alaska Natives as part of its educational objectives. The station (and the university) included one of the state's most underserved (if not the most underserved) audiences well before underserved audiences was outlined as a dictum in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.

While the quality of the KUAC's programming continued to improve moving into the 1970s, the quantity and subject matter of the programming continued to be highly varied. KUAC had not yet performed any real measurement of audience reaction to its programming.

According to an article published in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner on April 5, 1971:

Public radio's listening audience is composed of many small groups which tune in for their own fields of study or inquiry. In its programming, public radio strives to provide a greater depth of knowledge in public affairs as well as to stimulate the listener to some course of action. KUAC is well programmed in the range of special interests that public

radio offers. Local as well as network programs are provided in the areas of serious music and public affairs to drama and line arts.⁵⁷

The article said that public radio audiences of the time were small and fragmented into their own interest groups, and that fragmentation was acceptable to both public broadcasters and consumers of the time. KUAC was being supported by the university, was seeing money coming in for the first time from the CPB and was starting to see more support from the State of Alaska and the AEBC after the state's sale of oil extraction leases in 1969 saw close to a \$1 billion in revenue for the state. KUAC offered a wide range of programming because its financial position was fairly secure and improving. The variety of the schedule did not show a disregard for audiences, but a realization that the station could be a one-stop-shop that served multiple audiences while still being somewhat financially secure.

The Public Broadcasting Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Johnson in 1967. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was subsequently incorporated in 1968. Only 73 of the approximately four hundred educational radio stations in the United States qualified for funding in the early days of the CPB. KUAC was one of those stations. As a CPB funded station, KUAC radio continued to develop its sound and programming schedule going into the early 1970s. The station continued to broadcast a mix of classical music, local music, and public affairs programming with a heavy dose of U.S. and international programming. Non-KUAC produced programming was either shipped in by tape or recorded via unreliable phone connections – that would change in the decade ahead.^{58 59 60 61}

KUAC sent “bicycled” programming to KYUK when the Bethel public radio station began broadcasting in 1971. Bicycling was a process where a station would receive a program on tape, broadcast the program, and then copy the tape to send to another station. Programming was bicycled all across Alaska before the state's telecommunications infrastructure became more

developed. KYUK served Bethel and the Kuskokwim Valley with educational radio material. Bethel Broadcasting, Inc. (BBI) developed KYUK along with the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission (AEBC). BBI was a nonprofit organization formed by various Alaska Native groups and residents of Bethel. The creation of KYUK meant that educational broadcasting in Alaska was no longer solely influenced by the interests of the University of Alaska, though the university still promoted KUAC as a type of educational broadcasting flagship for the state. The creation and development of KYUK is explored further in chapter 5.⁶²

Alaska received its first civilian satellite linkup in April 1970. The satellite earth stations started testing connections to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) ATS-1 satellite that month. The tests lasted about three weeks and consisted of quality tests, calibration tests, and studies of how the radio signals to and from the satellite functioned. The Fairbanks Community Hospital was also expected to participate in the tests by sending electrocardiograms and other information via the satellite linkup. "I have been informed that attempts will be made during this period to transmit the first color slow scan TV for medical diagnosis. I believe it is significant that the university has started to move in this direction even without resorting to outside procurement," Alaska Senator Mike Gravel (D.) said about the tests.⁶³

A grant of approximately \$10 thousand from the Foundation for the Needs of Others paid for most of the two earth stations' construction costs. The first station was constructed in Fairbanks, and the second was constructed in Bethel. KUAC-FM and nine other university-based public radio stations were selected by the CPB to participate in using the ATS-1 satellite for educational radio broadcasts. The 10 stations were selected from an application pool of 200. The CPB's choice in choosing KUAC for the tests was based on the resources the station had access

to as part of the university. The university and the station had the technological expertise, land resources for construction of the earth station, and monetary support from the university to properly conduct the test. The CPB also chose KUAC, simply because the university was willing. Satellite access furthered the university's educational and outreach goals as it allowed the university to access the rest of the world.

KUAC conducted successful tests broadcasting VHF signals to and from the satellite. The university had not yet committed to the construction of a television station when the ATS-1 tests were run. However, the development of KUAC radio's sound and schedule leading into the 1970s, the professionalization of its facilities and staff, the university's desire to increase its educational outreach across the state, and the eventual success of the ATS-1 tests likely influenced the university's decision to bring educational television to Fairbanks.⁶⁴

KUAC Brings Educational Television to Alaska

The UA started studying the feasibility of an educational television station in late 1966. The university's board of regents studied the possibility of only producing educational content that could be distributed to television stations, but the operation of an educational television station that could both produce and broadcast content was studied as well. The second plan ultimately won out. Dr. Arthur Buswell of UA's division of statewide services, Charles Keith, dean of the college of arts and letters, and Dr. Charles Northrip, manager of KUAC radio, proposed the benefits of an educational TV station to the regents, and why it was the right time for the university to step into educational broadcasting. Their timing was right, as the Public Broadcasting Act was passed a year later.⁶⁵

Alaska's telecommunication infrastructure developed quickly in Alaska in the 1960s, but it still lagged far behind the Lower 48. Telecommunications and media diversity were especially sparse in rural areas. Satellite service did not yet exist in Alaska, and educational television offered a perfect solution for remote instruction. Remote instruction was attractive to the university as a way to further its higher education goals for the state. Educational television allowed the university to offer a televised curriculum to anyone that had access to a television set. Installing and using television translator stations in remote areas was more reliable and cost effective than developing traditional telecommunications infrastructure. There was also the possibility that the federal government, the state (other than the university), and private sources would never expand telecommunication infrastructure to remote areas.⁶⁶

Studying the feasibility of educational television came at the same time as the university was looking to expand its physical presence. The board of regents approved preliminary plans for the buildings that would house the library and the fine arts building at the Fairbanks campus. The university health center and a recreational center were also being planned. The preliminary plans for an expansion of Anchorage's campus were also approved.⁶⁷

Dr. Charles Northrip was elected as president of the Alaska Association for the Arts in the spring of 1971. The association was "open to all persons interested in the cultural betterment of the community." Dr. Northrip's involvement in the promotion of the arts in Alaska and their involvement in educational broadcasting show that promotion of the arts and education were intertwined. The mutual involvement of arts and education was readily apparent in the development of KUAC radio's programming schedule in the 1960s. As noted earlier in the chapter, KUAC broadcast programs that featured local musicians as a way to associate the university with artistic production. The schedule relied heavily on classical music and opera,

which were considered by many to be “higher” forms of artistic musical expression. Though classical music and opera were staples at public stations across the country (due to its underrepresentation in the commercial broadcasting market), KUAC radio’s reliance of the genres fit perfectly with Dr. Northrip’s arts and education ideals, which also happened to fit the university’s ideals. Those ideals were an easy sell to the university, which was looking to expand.⁶⁸

Dr. Northrip was named as UA’s Director of Media Services shortly after their appointment as the president of the Alaska Association for the Arts. Northrip oversaw the public service activities of KUAC radio, what would become KUAC television (five months after their appointment), and the University's Audio-Visual Service. All three services were part of UA’s Media Services Division. Dr. Arthur Buswell, outgoing vice president of public service, had been acting as director of the division when it was created in 1970.⁶⁹

The UA applied for a television construction permit from the FCC in October 1970 and received permission for construction in February 1971. KUAC television was scheduled to go on-air in September 1971. However, the station’s construction faced a series of problems in the summer and fall that year. “A strike prevented us from telegraphing for bids and quotes. Also, there was a dock strike at Seattle and all the racks for our electronic gear were sitting in Seattle waiting to be loaded,” said KUAC television’s general manager, Don Upham.⁷⁰

The difficulty of shipping large equipment to Alaska from the Lower 48 also posed a problem for the United States Postal Service. The postal service was slow getting parts to the station due to the equipment’s size. KUAC television also had trouble finding a site that was suitable for its transmitter. Similar to what had occurred with KUAC radio’s transmitter site, management had initially wanted to construct the transmitter on Ester Dome, which is a small

mountain to the west of Fairbanks. However, the cost to supply the site with electricity was expensive. "Ester Dome was our first choice. But we weren't able to put it there for a number of reasons, one of which was that it would have cost \$75,000 just to get the correct kind of AC power supplied to the site," Upham said.⁷¹

KUAC's transmitter was eventually installed at a site on Farmers Loop Road at an elevation of about 13 hundred feet. The transmission tower was 151 feet high. The 5-thousand-watt transmitter could produce 50 thousand watts of effective radiated power. The site was closer to the university and had better access to power resources. The drawback of the site was that it was at a lower altitude than the proposed Ester Dome site. The lower site meant that KUAC's signal, even at full power, could not broadcast as far as was originally planned. KUAC conducted a test of its broadcasting equipment on Monday, December 13, 1971, after the shipping and construction delays were resolved. The test broadcast consisted of a test pattern with audio. Don Upham travelled around the Fairbanks area with a portable television to see how the test signal was performing.⁷²

KUAC television's facility was housed in the new Fine Arts Building on the UA's Fairbanks campus. The television studio was located next to the radio station's relatively new studio space. The KUAC television facility cost upwards of \$550 thousand to construct. A \$425 thousand grant was provided to KUAC by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to purchase television equipment. That equipment included a \$90 thousand videotape recorder that was used to duplicate and playback tapes sent to the station from the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and other content providers. The recorder also copied tapes that were to be sent to other television stations in Alaska, such as KYUK. The university supplemented the rest of the station's costs within its own budget.^{73 74}

KUAC television's original broadcast schedule was Sunday through Friday from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. (sometimes 11 p.m. depending on the availability of content). The station was a PBS affiliate from the start. Sesame Street, Mister Rogers, and The Electric Station were promoted to Fairbanks residents as some of the programs that would be available via KUAC. "...the UA station, using channel nine, will offer the Fairbanks area a full range of cultural information and public affairs programs. The station is affiliated with the Public Broadcasting Service," Don Upham said. "One of our future plans is to receive, via satellite, national programs for same-day programming on KUAC."^{75 76 77 78 79}

The university and station officials stated that KUAC television (before it went on-air) had two purposes. The first was to function as a station that offers public television programs to the Fairbanks area. The second was to be a "broadcast classroom" that offered programs for use in the classroom. Officials wanted to provide content for higher education classrooms and primary education classrooms. The classroom aspect also meant that the station was to be used as a "laboratory" for students who wanted to learn television broadcasting (management, programming, production, and engineering). The laboratory was intended to function similarly to how KUAC radio functioned as a laboratory for students. College students received credit for working at the stations. Some of the courses that involved KUAC were television production, radio-television advertising [an odd choice given the commercial free nature of the station], and radio-television news. "Using the resources available through the University of Alaska and the Fairbanks area, the UA stations will provide instructional programs for all ages," Don Upham said.⁸⁰

The dual function of the station as public media and educational broadcaster also meant that the University intended it to operate as a producer for both kinds of content. KUAC was

intended to produce both public and instructional programming. “It is the UA station’s production unit function that makes it most important to Statewide [sic] development,” Dr. Charles Northrip said after he took over as the chair of the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission.⁸¹

At first glance, Dr. Northrip’s usage of “Statewide” is difficult to decipher, because the word could be interpreted as the statewide development of public broadcasting, or the statewide development of the university. Both interpretations would be correct. By the early 1970s, the Alaska Educational Broadcast Commission was looking to expand public broadcasting in the state and the university was looking to expand and solidify its educational foothold. The presence of a public television and public radio station at the University of Alaska, and an executive director of the AEBC who helped develop those stations, meant that the stations and the fledgling Alaska public broadcasting system had operational and fiscal support from the university. The UA would have tremendous influence over how the system would develop.

Public broadcasting in Alaska initially needed stations that were operating on solid footing and could act as a sort of “production house” or “big brother” that supported smaller stations that would eventually come online. The existence of KUAC (both radio and television) meant that stations in the rest of the system gained a solid foothold at the start of their own operations. KUAC meant stability.

KUAC television (channel 9) officially went on air at 8:12 p.m., December 22, 1971. It was the first educational television station in the state. There were two commercial television stations operating in Fairbanks at the time, KFAR (channel 2) and KTVF (channel 11). At KUAC television’s first sign on, it had a staff of four people and was broadcasting in color at one thousand watts. “We were soldering and wiring up to the last minute,” Don Upham said.

Following a station identification, UA president Dr. William R. Wood made introductory remarks about the station. They noted that KUAC was an important historical development for Alaska and that the hard work of many people made the television station a reality. Wood also stated they hoped that Alaskans would find KUAC television “an excellent investment.”^{82 83 84 85}

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“Initially, the programming will be beamed to the Fairbanks area. And ultimately as our facilities and systems mature, it is our intent to broadcast on a statewide basis,” Wood said. Wood followed with statements about the desire to work with commercial broadcasters in Alaska, as well as with all local print and news media. The statement ended with Wood saying: “We hope KUAC TV will be a new dimension in Alaskan education. Our plan is to augment and to complement what is now available from commercial and other sources. We’re extremely pleased to bring this new part of the University of Alaska to you, the citizens of Alaska.” KUAC television showed a local production of *The Nutcracker* following Dr. Wood’s remarks.⁸⁷

Dr. Wood’s announcement during KUAC television’s first broadcast mentioned a few key topics that would continue to show up over the next few decades of KUAC’s development – public broadcasting as a wise monetary investment and the intentions of the university to promote itself and its media offerings on a statewide level. Dr. Wood’s mention of KUAC television as an excellent investment speaks to federal, state, and university officials who were deciding the trajectory of public television both in the state and across the country. The Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission was starting to develop how public broadcasting would develop in the state, and state lawmakers were already debating how much of an investment the state should make in public broadcasting. The university also had plans for expanding its educational offerings in the state, and that expansion would rest on the shoulders of university

and state officials. KUAC television, defined as a worthwhile investment, was an attempt to show that the university's intentions to grow were worth the expense.

Dr. Wood's comments may have also reflected the state of public media funding at the national level in late 1971. The CPB requested and was approved for \$45 million in funding from congress for fiscal year 1973. President Nixon vetoed the \$45 million appropriation and said that his administration intended to keep the CPB's funding at a flat level and fund the corporation for \$35 million. The CPB had received \$35 million for fiscal year 1972. "The Nixon administration cut of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's federal appropriation from \$45 million to \$35 million for fiscal year 1973, will do the opposite of what the administration claims to have wanted a year ago," said Dr. Northrip.⁸⁸

In 1971, the Nixon administration said that it would provide Congress with a long-range financing plan for the Corporation that could be used by 1973. "It's impossible for the Corporation to plan coherently for the development of public broadcasting throughout the United States, when it must depend on year-to-year funding from Congress. Certainly, the Corporation must be responsible to the Congress, but some kind of long-term situation needs to be worked out so that stations will know from year to year what to expect," said Dr. Northrip. Dr. Northrip also said that public television stations were concerned that the CPB was focusing too much of its efforts and money on a national network. "The Nixon veto helped the station managers in the contention with the CPB that more money needed to be spent locally," said Dr. Northrip.⁸⁹

President Nixon said that the system needed to be revised because a national public television network negatively affected the amount of money that went to stations. Nixon had referenced the launch of PBS a little over a year before. In Nixon's eyes, if more money and attention were given to PBS, less money and attention would go toward programming production

at individual stations. PBS produced about 12 hours of programming per week for adults, and roughly the same amount for children's programming in 1971. Dr. Northrip said that flat funding would be detrimental to public broadcasting due to increasing costs of using private corporations for interconnection capabilities to receive PBS. The CPB via PBS paid the costs of interconnection access from AT&T for public broadcasting television stations in fiscal year 1973. The interconnection charges increased by about \$1 million from fiscal year 1972 to fiscal year 1973. The CPB had also said that 30% of its budget would go to public television stations as community service grants if it received \$45 million for fiscal year 1973. The corporation had previously used about 15% of its budget for community service grants.⁹⁰

The CPB announced its intention to increase its community service grants to stations in response to the administration's localism concerns. KUAC's community service grant came to approximately \$20 thousand for fiscal year 1972. It was announced that if the CPB's funding increased to \$45 million, KUAC's community service grant would increase to about \$67 thousand for fiscal year 1973. Dr. Northrip expected that the grant would be less than \$20 thousand if Nixon's flat funding was approved. Oddly, KUAC would have been affected by an interconnect system that it couldn't use, because the interconnect did not extend into Fairbanks at the time.⁹¹

How KUAC perceived attracting audiences will be explained ahead in the chapter, but a major concern of public broadcasters after the launch of PBS was how to balance the production of local content and feature national content. Broadcasters believed that high-quality national content attracted viewers to stations and thus viewers to local productions.

“We [public television] couldn't go along fully [with Nixon's statements on local production of content], however, since all public television stations need the prestigious and

worthwhile national programs like Sesame Street, Electric Company, Masterpiece Theatre, International Performance, and Washington Week in Review, in order to attract and hold even a minority audience. The new national service provides the kind of programming that is impossible for us to produce at KUAC. Programs that bring to sizeable, if not majority audiences; programs of significance produced with good style and professionalism. Without those programs to enrich our schedule, it would be difficult to attract enough viewers to even fund the significant local programming we could produce. That local station support is what we need in order to produce the kind of quality local programming that the administration says has been missing from the public television scene. I don't think you can find a station manager in the country who would like to see the national service reduced at the expense of the local service," Dr. Northrip said.⁹²

Nixon's 1971 veto of funding for the CPB is an example of how funding for public broadcasting had always been in a precarious position and rarely stable. Funding for public broadcasting at the national level was insecure in the early 1970s. However, public broadcasting in Alaska was just getting started and funding was not yet an issue for the developing system. The expected wealth from oil development led the state to continue its development of a public broadcasting system. The precarity of national funding was not enough to dissuade the state from continuing to develop the system, however, that initial precarity at the national level offered a glimpse of the precarity the Alaska system would face in upcoming decades.

Northrip's comments also reflected a belief that national programs helped counter the idea that public television, and educational television, was not of the quality at the local level to attract large audiences. Stations needed national programs to bring in viewers. Northrip's comment reflected their expectations for the quality of product that was produced by KUAC television at the time. Local programming wasn't high quality like national programming. That

expectation contradicts statements made by KUAC officials about the kind of programming style and audience reach that was expected by the station in its early years. As will be explained ahead in the chapter, KUAC said that its programming style was not based on attracting large audiences (despite Northrip's comments above). The station started to rely on ratings and fundraising to determine the popularity of its programming in the 1980s and 1990s when funding from the federal government and State of Alaska started to come under threat.

By 1973, KUAC's ability to send and receive content was still hampered by Alaska's telecommunications system. Phone line connections were inconsistent, satellite links were still developing, expensive, and in high demand. Microwave links were also generally reserved for military use. An example of the limitations faced by the station using Alaska's limited telecommunication infrastructure came in January 1973 when KUAC television planned to air Governor William Egan's Affairs of State address. Plans were made by the FCC and RCA Alaska Communications Inc. (RCA Alascom) to relay the speech from Juneau to Talkeetna via the Intelsat IV communications satellite. The signal was supposed to use a microwave link from Talkeetna to Fairbanks where the speech would be aired on KUAC. However, the Department of Defense, which was the primary operator of the microwave link, did not release the lines for the broadcast to proceed. KUAC was unable to broadcast the speech live and instead broadcast it on a delay.⁹³

Dr. Northrip said that the biggest hope he had for public television broadcasting in the early 1970s was that satellite transmission and reception would be able to be utilized in the state. Satellite broadcasting allowed for a centralized broadcasting source to provide content to (most of) the state. Installation of satellite receivers was less costly than setting up terrestrial communications infrastructure. Satellite usage was essentially an evolution of using repeater

stations to provide content to remote places. Dr. Northrip's desire for the development of satellite usage made sense, because a station like KUAC could be the centralized provider of content for other stations in the system.^{94 95}

One of the biggest steps forward in the development of KUAC occurred in July 1974 when the UA was asked to participate in tests using NASA's ATS-6 satellite – an experimental communications satellite launched in 1974. The goal of the tests was to determine the effectiveness of sending and receiving educational content and medical information to more than a dozen Alaska communities using satellite technology. A few communities in the Lower 48 also participated in the tests. The UA installed two ten-foot satellite dishes on top of the Gruening Building on the lower part of the Fairbanks campus. KUAC television's production director Myron Tisdel said that the educational content being sent over the satellite system consisted of early childhood development content, health education content, and KUAC's Alaska Native Magazine program.

According to Tisdel, Alaska Native Magazine was produced to focus on “matters of interest to the Native community in the state.” Tisdel said that the program was produced with the help of Alaska Natives. They mentioned that while English was the primary language used in the programs, other programs would use Athabaskan, Tlingit, and “Upick [sic].” Villages participating in the tests installed satellite dishes to receive content. Two television sets were connected to the dishes and allowed viewers to watch the programs. About \$750 thousand was spent on dish installation and production of educational material by the start of the tests.

KUAC (via the ATS-6 satellite) also participated in the WAMI program that provided medical communications from Fairbanks to Seattle. Juneau, Tanana, Galena, and Fort Yukon also had the ability to receive content, though the UA in Fairbanks was the main transmission

site. Medial students also participated in the WAMI program. They gathered on Thursday mornings in the KUAC television studio for 50-minute lectures from Seattle. Following the lectures, students participated in long-distance discussions.^{96 97}

As a result of UA's participation in the ATS-6 tests, the University of Alaska Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) was asked to participate in the Educational Satellite Communications Demonstration (ESCD) in September 1974. The ESCD was a project facilitated by the National Institute of Education (NIE) and NASA. The purpose of the demonstration was to highlight the benefit of satellite usage for educational and informational transmission and reception in the nation's remote places. Alaska's ESCD participation included the transmission and reception of educational and informational content from 18 sites in Alaska over the span of two years. 13 of the sites were in small villages. Communities (in eight states) in the Rocky Mountains and Appalachia were also part of the demonstration. "Emphasis will be placed upon village use of the satellite-beamed television programs and the impact of these programs on the village viewers," said Dr. Frank Darnell, CNER director. KUAC was asked to produce educational content for the demonstration.^{98 99}

The ATS-6 tests in Alaska won an award from the National Education Association (NEA) in 1975. The School Bell Award was given to KUAC for the production of Alaska Native Magazine. The Alaska Native Magazine episode that won KUAC the award focused on education issues in Alaska's native villages. KUAC won the award for "making an outstanding contribution, through the use of public media, which advances the cause of education," said the NEA.¹⁰⁰

According to an announcement in the Fairbanks Pioneer All-Alaska Weekly on November 19, 1971, promoting the start of KUAC television, Dr. Charles Northrip said:

KUAC [television] programming is designed to appeal to the tastes of many different people. It could be described as a selective station for an on-again-off-again audience. We don't expect that any one person will sit down and view KUAC television straight through the broadcasting day. If we were operating a commercial station, that's what we would want him to do. We are not attempting to appeal to the majority's taste all the time.¹⁰¹

Dr. Northrip's tune on the type and quality of KUAC's intended programming changed from a perspective where viewers were not expected to stay tuned into the station (as noted in the quote above), to one where high-quality national programming was expected to keep viewers around to consume the station's local offerings (1973). However, there are many examples of the kind of chances public broadcasters took in their programming choices all throughout KUAC television's broadcast schedule in the 1970s. The "public" in public broadcasting was defined by the Carnegie Report on Educational Television published in 1967. The report defined the ideals of public television into two parts. The first being educational television, where people could take college courses for credit. The second was for television that was community focused and did not cater to advertising interests to determine programming choices. The goals set forth in the report make it easy to see where the University of Alaska was influenced by what it wanted from its educational broadcasting stations. KUAC television's early programming reflects the Carnegie report with a mix of local and national content and educational content.¹⁰²

As described early in the chapter, KUAC television's original broadcast schedule was Sunday through Friday from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Local programming was produced in-house at KUAC's newly built television studios. The station also broadcast a "full schedule" of programming from PBS. KUAC television would broadcast the most anticipated or popular national programs twice weekly. Scheduling changes were recommended to management by the station's advisory board, which met regularly in the 1970s, though final programming decisions were always made by the management. PBS programs were shipped to Fairbanks via videotape,

because Alaska's communications system did not have satellite capabilities for public broadcasters yet. Rudimentary satellite capabilities were made available to the station through the Educational Satellite Communications Demonstration (ESCD) via the ATS-6 satellite starting in 1974. PBS content was not available via satellite to KUAC television until 1978.¹⁰³

KUAC Television's Early National Programming

This section explores KUAC television's programming from when the station went on the air (1971) to when it started receiving satellite content from PBS (1978). The national and local programming that was offered by the station will be explored. The programs are not at all representative of the station's complete schedule, but they do offer a glimpse of the kind of content being offered by KUAC television at the time. The arts, national politics, media analysis, the early "War on Drugs", abortion rights, and criticism of 1960's counterculture were all topics that appeared on KUAC via national programming. Local programming included Alaska Native issues, examination of life in rural Alaska, Alaska politics, health, the arts, and education. The examples ahead will also show how public broadcasting took chances on programming formats that had never been explored by television before – such as the first reality television documentary, and the first popular foreign-produced drama series.

KUAC television received its PBS programming for "free" initially because the network was directly funded by the CPB (and not public broadcasters themselves). PBS did not offer Carte Blanche programming options to stations until years later. Shows were scheduled on a multiweek (usually two to three weeks) delay. *Sesame Street*, *The French Chef* (Julia Child's cooking show), and *The Advocates* (a debate program about national issues) were promoted by the station in the days leading up to the first broadcast. Residents saw *Sesame Street* at 5 p.m., *The Electric Company* at 6 p.m. and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* at 6:30 p.m. for the first time

on Friday, December 31, 1971 – about a week after KUAC television’s sign on. By 1975, KUAC television’s schedule included programs that would become PBS staples for decades, including *Bill Moyers’s Journal*, *Masterpiece Theater*, *Washington Week in Review*, and *NOVA*.^{104 105 106}

Fairbanks residents had already been viewing *Sesame Street* for at least a year before KUAC television started broadcasting the show. Commercial television station KTVF (Channel 11) started carrying *Sesame Street* in 1970. The show debuted in 1969 and was still new when KTVF started broadcasting the program. Though *Sesame Street* was intended to be broadcast by public television stations, there were no public television stations in Alaska in 1970. *Sesame Street’s* production company, Children’s Television Workshop, allowed 50 commercial television stations to carry the program in areas that had no public television stations.¹⁰⁷

KUAC television broadcast *Youth Drug Ward* in September 1972. The PBS program looked at young drug users in therapy sessions and showed how young people could overcome their issues. The promotional copy for the program read: “Using the medium of television, we try to make childhood reappear. We return with our young patients to the joy, pain, separation anxiety, and excitement they experienced in childhood. The medium which worked the hippies over, contains the very means of healing the disorders it created.”¹⁰⁸

The “medium” referenced in the quote refers to television itself. The show’s promotional materials claimed that some people believed that television had exploited “the younger generation” and “helped spread the drug culture.” The program called its subjects “victims” of the influence of television. *Youth Drug Ward* painted commercial television as something that promoted the “hippie” drug culture to such an extent, that the medium desensitized teens to using drugs. It was unclear from the promotional materials how television “worked the hippies over” or influenced teenagers to consume drugs. What is clear is that *Youth Drug Ward* functioned as

counter programming to what the creators found was being shown by commercial broadcasters. The program fit the “public” dynamic of early public broadcasting by offering programming that wasn’t represented by commercial outlets.

Youth Drug Ward also represented the same ideals that led to the creation of programs like *Sesame Street*. Children might be inclined to change their behavior when exposed to alternative images and messages. Part of *Sesame Street*’s goal was to expose children to the lives of people in inner-city conditions. Except the conditions were the opposite of what were usually shown by commercial broadcasters. The interaction with *Sesame Street*’s human and non-human characters was positive and presented learning lessons about understanding people. *Youth Drug Ward* attempted to do the same thing by showing the fallout teens experienced from drug use.¹⁰⁹

The PBS program *Behind the Lines* was broadcast on Saturday evenings in late 1972 and featured critiques of popular media and news media available to Americans. A description of the show said, “At a time when many Americans are showing an unprecedented concern about the sources of their information. *Behind the Lines* will offer a regular means of evaluating the media and the pictures of reality they present.” Echoing concerns about media representation and literacy today, *Behind the Lines* discussed how information was gathered and delivered to American audiences and whether the media was properly serving the interests of democracy. Media literacy was a concern, because the U.S. was continuing to debate the merits of the Vietnam War. The release of the Pentagon Papers a year before put a spotlight on how media outlets represented the war effort. The program examined how different news outlets gathered and presented information to Americans.¹¹⁰

An episode of *The Advocates* that aired in early 1973, which was dubbed “The PBS Fight of the Week,” posed the question, “Should women be permitted abortions on demand?” The

program was produced as the U.S. Supreme Court was deliberating *Roe v. Wade*. The court released its decision later the same month. KUAC television aired the program in a prime-time weekday slot. KUAC's willingness to air the program showed it had the ability to broadcast contentious subjects, because those programs fulfilled the public broadcasting mission of airing alternatives to the commercial market. It's unclear if today's public broadcasters would be willing to air similar content.¹¹¹

Informational balance and the inclusion of dissenting opinions is a staple of news production for contemporary public broadcasters. Balance is also part of the complaints lobbied against public broadcasting's news coverage. *The Advocates*, though not necessarily a news program, was an early example of how public broadcasting content tried to encourage multiple perspectives in the debates it presented. Public broadcasting continues to wrestle with informational balance; it is a concern it has tried to wrestle with since the beginning.

KUAC broadcast the PBS documentary, *An American Family* in 1973. *An American Family* was another example of public broadcasting taking chances with its early programming. The program followed the Loud family and recorded their lives for seven months. The depiction of the Louds, which showed parents on the verge of divorce and the lifestyle of a gay son, influenced how television represented middle class American families. The lifestyle of the Louds was common in American, but the issues that the family faced rarely appeared on mainstream American media. *An American Family* was recognized for its accurate portrayal of a modern American family and was widely considered to be the first instance of "reality" television in the U.S.^{112 113}

An Advertisement promoted KUAC television's carriage of live broadcasts of musical performances at Wolf Trap Farm Park near Washington D.C. Wolf Trap Farm Park, according to

the advertisement, was “founded to promote public interest and involvement in the performing arts.” The music was a mix of classical, jazz, and folk. The program was produced by WETA-TV in Washington D.C. Though the programs were offered live to other public broadcasting stations in the U.S., KUAC carried the show a few days after they were originally broadcast. ARCO was the program’s major sponsor. The corporation’s name and logo were presented in a larger text than the advertisement.¹¹⁴

KUAC television flew in video recordings of the U.S. Senate’s hearings on the Watergate scandal in May 1973. PBS made the hearings available over the network, but KUAC did not yet have access. Other forms of access to the hearings were not available to Alaska from the Lower 48. KUAC arranged with Pan American World Airways, and Alaska Airlines made an agreement with the university to ship to the video tapes each day. KUAC broadcast the hearings and then sent them to other broadcasters in the state. The hearings were aired with a one-day delay in Fairbanks and with longer delays for broadcasters who received the tapes after. The tapes were recorded at KPEC television, which was a public broadcaster and PBS member with access to the network. KPEC operated in the Tacoma Washington area.¹¹⁵

The acquisition of the Watergate hearings from outside sources highlighted the difficulties public broadcasters faced while operating in Alaska. However, the difficulties also show that Alaska’s public broadcasters were scrappy. They did what they had to do to deliver their product. The university and KUAC recognized that the hearings were of vital importance to the Interior and solicited help from private sources to broadcast the hearings. Broadcasting the hearings showed the willingness of public broadcasting to offer political content that might not have been broadcast otherwise. The hearings were well represented on commercial stations, but commercial broadcasters would often cut away for other programs. Full coverage of the Senate

hearings wasn't necessarily the best content for advertisers. However, public broadcasting outlets carried them in their entirety (with commentary).¹¹⁶

KUAC television aired *The Adams Chronicles, 1750-1900* in late January 1976. The historical drama series about the lives of John Adams and his family was produced by WNET and distributed by PBS. The program was the most expensive production produced by any public broadcaster up to that point at just over \$1.4 million. *The Adams Chronicles* was popular because it was produced similarly to *The Forsyte Saga* and *Masterpiece Theater*. The series was produced in color and used high-quality costuming, sets, and sound. The series focused on the lives of historical figures and featured dramatic, somewhat realistic, and often "scandalous" storylines. *The Adams Chronicles* also had the benefit of being about a family that was prominent in the history of the United States and mired in controversy. The production of *The Adams Chronicles* was one of the first times a public broadcaster recognized there was a program format that had worked in the past (Masterpiece, etc.) and subsequently invested a large amount of money in the creation of similar content. Past experimentation led to future success. "I think the quality of our programs has increased in four years. The Adams Chronicles is an example of that," said KUAC general manager Don Upham.¹¹⁷

KUAC Television's Early Local Programming

KUAC television's local programming in the early 1970s consisted of content that was underrepresented by the area's commercial broadcasters. Programs which focused on rural issues and Alaska Native issues were frequently seen on the station. KUAC television also programmed around a variety of topics that affected the state as whole. Politicians and their political platforms were also frequently seen on the station. The station's programming on the issues of rural Alaskans was bolstered by a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1974. The

corporation awarded KUAC television a grant of about \$77 thousand that year. The grants helped support the creation of programming that benefited rural Alaskans. The grant was created in an attempt to balance the production and broadcast of national PBS programming with programming produced at the local level.¹¹⁸

KUAC television produced *Alaska Native Magazine* which discussed topics related to Alaska Natives. The show was the first of its kind in Fairbanks, as it was hosted by an Alaska Native discussing Alaska Native issues – on television. Episodes discussed how rural Alaskans were often victims of mail order fraud (mail order was one of the main ways to receive goods from the Lower 48), high air carrier costs, and housing finance fraud. *Alaska Native Magazine* showed how programming for underserved audiences could be distributed to remote locales using satellite technology. The program was sent to multiple villages in the Interior and Southeast Alaska via the Educational Satellite Communications Demonstration (ESCD) and the ATS-6 satellite. In 1975, Moses Wassilie, the host and producer of *Alaska Native Magazine*, was awarded a grant from the CPB through the corporation's Public Minority Training Grant Program. The grant paid 50% of Wassilie's salary for 2 years. The other half was covered by KUAC television. The CPB's grant ensured that *Alaska Native Magazine* continued to be produced by the station until at least 1977.^{119 120}

Bailiwick was a weekly 30-minute program that featured Alaskan interests such as art, music, cold-weather home improvement, gardening, and vacation safety. The show aired at 10 p.m. on Thursdays. Once a month, *Bailiwick* focused on Alaska Native interests and would often showcase Alaska Native artistry. By 1976, the show was carried on KYUK in Bethel as well as on KAKM in Anchorage. A commercial broadcaster carried the show in other Alaska communities around the state as well.

On April 2, 1973, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner wrote about how KUAC's local efforts focused on one program:

KUAC-TV puts most of its local production effort into one vehicle *Bailiwick*. *Bailiwick* attempts to highlight local and statewide activity of various kinds from the local government project of the Cooperative Extension Service to covering a plan to get more use by the community from local school buildings. The station strives to make each *Bailiwick* program more than just talking faces. In a recent program about a local dramatic production, 'Celebration,' KUAC-TV video-taped in advance the entire production and then used parts of that tape in an interview with the play's director and designer.

Bailiwick was an excellent showcase of Alaskana in that it took topics that might only receive a few minutes on a commercial news program, or a brief write up in a newspaper, and expanded them into longform episodes. One episode featured the work of artist Bill Berry. Berry at the time was making a mural for Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, and *Bailiwick* followed them as they worked. The program also captured the silk screen printing process Berry used in their work. *Bailiwick* combined footage of Berry working with footage of them talking in the studio. The program was captivating, because the viewer could see the art process in action as the artist talked about it.^{121 122}

A program aired in late 1975 that examined Alaska Governor Jay Hammond's task force on malpractice insurance. KAKM in Anchorage produced a call-in program where the public could ask questions about malpractice insurance and its effect on health care. The program was created because many physicians in the state were not able to renew their malpractice insurance policies and were forced to stop practicing as a result. Alaska's physicians typically received their malpractice insurance from Lower 48 companies.

A promotional article in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner published on September 27, 1975, contained details on the program. The article's text was wrapped around an advertisement for an insurance agency. Though KAKM (and KUAC) was not responsible for the article's

publication, there was an obvious combination of non-commercial content with commercial content in the News-Miner's promotion. It was noted earlier in the chapter that KUAC content was associated with the sales of radios by a commercial retailer and that association created a symbiosis of promotion for both the station and the retailer. Both benefited from the relationship. The News-Miner's promotional article appeared to work in a similar way. KUAC benefitted from the promotion of its content, and the News-Miner and its advertiser benefitted from the advertising's attachment to the program.¹²³

The station produced local content on a smaller scale as well. The production of local content was important for the organization because local programming was believed to further the educational outreach goals of the university. KUAC television broadcast the inauguration of the UA's 5th president Dr. Robert Hiatt on May 4, 1974. The inauguration of the new president wasn't necessarily a special event for the university (any more than a new president is for any university), but it did mark a change of the guard of university officials who had proposed and developed KUAC. KUAC also produced a program called *Fairbanks: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* that aired on Sunday evenings. The program explored the history of the Fairbanks area, how the area had changed in the previous 20 years, and how the area was going to change due to the development of natural resource extraction. The program was funded by the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The League of Women Voters also presented a program that aimed to help voters understand the structures of local governmental bodies (such as the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough). *Right On!* examined the use of "bush radio" to send and receive medical information. The program was made available to public broadcasters in the state via the ATS-6 satellite.^{124 125 126}

KUAC Television's Early Educational Programming

In 1973, KUAC collaborated with the UA English Department, and the Division of Statewide Services, to offer one-credit course called *The Novel on Television*. The class was open to the community and students did not need to be enrolled in a degree program to take the course. Students watched *Masterpiece Theater* and then listened to a weekly lecture on KUAC radio. KUAC also collaborated with the Cooperative Extension Service to offer a certificate to people who watched the program, *How Do Your Children Grow?*

The UA and KUAC also had plans to produce or purchase educational programs that could be targeted to people in areas that were not served by the university. "We feel that the use of the broadcast media might well be a more efficient and effective way to reach the people of Alaska than some of the traditional ways. Already we have had agreements with a couple of state agencies to begin producing materials for them," Dr. Northrip said.^{127 128 129}

Various two-credit courses were offered on KUAC television in the fall of 1975. The courses were called *Ascent of Man* and *Classic Theater: Humanities in Drama*. *Ascent of Man* was an anthropology course, and *Classic Theater* was a theater course that analyzed and critiqued 13 different plays. The classes were also made available to KAKM in Anchorage and KYUK in Bethel. As part of the courses, students were offered a three-day in-person class where the instructor would give instruction that reinforced the content of the broadcasts. The instructor flew to Anchorage and Bethel to instruct students that were not in Fairbanks.¹³⁰

KUAC television offered three courses the next semester for students at the Tanana Valley Community College (now UAF Community and Technical College). The station offered a one hundred-level history course and two hundred-level "living skills" courses. The courses ran at a variety of times and were not forced into late night or weekend time slots. The history course

ran Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., one of the living skills courses ran Tuesdays from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., and the other living skills course ran on Sundays from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.¹³¹

A class was held in conjunction with the airing of the program, *The Adams Chronicles* on KUAC television in 1976. Enrolled students earned two history credits for watching and attending a series of lectures on the program. *The Adams Chronicles* and a history course based on the program worked, because it allowed the university to offer material that may have not otherwise been a part of its offerings. Though the program focused on the drama of the Adams Family, and not all of the show was historically accurate, the program did allow the university to instruct students on the academic knowledge of the family at the time. The show was used as a type of secondary reference.¹³²

The UA offered a three-credit television course. Whereas some classes were conducted using television programs as a resource, this class was about the television station itself. *Television I* used in-person instruction in a lecture-based format. Lab instruction was conducted at the station. The classes instructor was KUAC's chief engineer Henry Hove. According to a UA course catalog: "This course is an introduction to television broadcast operations with empahsis [sic] on [FCC] regulations, transmitter operation and monitoring, film projector operation, video and audio tape recorder operation, video monitoring, studio lighting. camera operation, microphone placement, audio mixing, tape and film editing, the duties of station personnel, and requires participation in station operations."¹³³

Sociology 393 was offered as a telecourse by KUAC television and the university in 1979. The course was in conjunction with a 10-part series called *Connections* that explored society's relationship with technology. The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner also offered a 15-part

print series of the same name in conjunction with the television program. The newspaper called it “Courses by Newspaper.”¹³⁴

KUAC Grows After Connecting to the Rest of the World

KUAC television was no longer cut off from the rest of the country technologically starting on September 1, 1978. A feed from the Westar 1 satellite allowed KUAC television access to PBS content 24 hours a day. The satellite feed was provided as part of the Public Broadcasting Satellite Project, which sought to connect public television stations in the country. KUAC television also gained access to live content from the network, such as breaking news announcements and news conferences. The station had overcome the telecommunication difficulties of sending and receiving content from the Lower 48, and the Interior was finally connected with the rest of the world.¹³⁵

KUAC as a resource for the university’s educational goals increased quickly from the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The organization saw significant expansion. The university and the state invested resources to bring KUAC content to residents of the Interior and beyond. Part of the reason for the expansion was due to technological advancement and increased competition for viewers. Alaska’s interest in commercial carriage of television content using satellite technology increased after public television stations were connected to PBS via satellite. Reasonably sized and affordable satellite dishes did not become readily available in the state until the middle of the 1980s, but Alaska’s public broadcasters had seen the “writing on the wall” early and positioned themselves to compete in a more competitive broadcasting environment.

Cable television came to Fairbanks in late 1979 (a year after KUAC’s connection to PBS). When Frontier Colorcable initially started operating in Fairbanks, it provided only 14

channels to subscribers. However, the system had the capability to use 35 channels and the network slowly added channels in the years to come. KUAC, KTVF, and KFAR were the system's initial local television offerings. Cable was a big deal for Fairbanks, because viewers now had relatively cheap and easy access to a wide array of national programming. KUAC television was available to more of the Interior because of the network, but KUAC also had more competition for viewership. The university (and the state) knew that competition for viewership was going to continue to develop and positioned KUAC to adjust to the changing media landscape.¹³⁶

KUAC installed a television translator in June 1975 near Tok. The translator picked up KUAC television's transmission over channel nine from Fairbanks and then amplified the signal for broadcast over channel seven to Tok residents. KUAC's translator was the second in the Tok area. KTVF had installed a translator in 1973. Both translators were installed in the same area, so Tok residents could point their antennas in the same direction and received both channels. While the translator broadcast KUAC content, it was operated by Tok Community TV and funded by the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission.¹³⁷

Translators in Healy and Nenana came online in fall of the same year. Henry Hove, KUAC's chief engineer, said the translator installation for Healy was delayed, because it took several tries for the team to reach the site. The site sat atop an underdeveloped mountaintop. Translators for Circle, Arctic Circle Hot Springs (now Circle Hot Springs), and Central came online in 1983. The 1983 expansion came after the state allocated the university thousands of dollars to upgrade KUAC television's translator network. The exact amount the state provided the university for upgrades isn't clear. One source said the university was approved for \$20 thousand. Another source says the university was approved for \$68 thousand. The state also

funded the university \$25 thousand for “equipment purchases” and \$40 thousand for components for the transmitter. No matter the amounts KUAC received from the state in 1983, it’s clear that the state was willing to invest in the aspirations of the university to grow KUAC as an educational resource.^{138 139 140 141}

Alaska’s legislators floated the idea of moving control of KUAC television and KUAC radio to the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission (APBC) in 1980. KUAC would have still been licensed to the university, but state appropriations to the organization would have come from the commission and not the University. Essentially, there were two state agencies vying for who would fund the stations. The university fought the move, saying that the educational mission of both the university and KUAC would be severely hampered if the APBC assumed control. The university believed the stations would operate more as community-centric public broadcasters like the rest of the APBC supported stations. The university stated in its budget proposal for fiscal year 1981 that it [the university itself] “requires the range of capabilities presently and potentially offered by the campus radio-television facility.”¹⁴²

APBC executive director Michael Porcaro said that little would have changed if the commission had assumed control of the organization. They noted that the programming offered on KUAC television and KAKM were virtually identical. They also said that the educational mission of KUAC was not being followed, because the majority of the programming on both radio and television were what was considered “public” programming and not “educational” or “instructional” programming. Porcaro also said that from 1970 to 1980, the university’s board of regents had only discussed KUAC a handful of times. KUAC would have been more visible in university affairs if the educational mission of the station was imperative to the success of the university. Despite Porcaro’s comments, the APBC did not take a formal stance on the proposal.

Porcaro noted that “local licensees are more responsive to local people.” They also said that “If KUAC is to be a ‘university’ [emphasis theirs] station, then it really shouldn’t be under the auspices of the Public Broadcasting Commission.” “For KUAC, the future appears to be a deeper involvement in educational telecommunications – an application of radio and television to all levels of formal education,” said Don Upham, KUAC’s general manager.¹⁴³

In a response written to the legislature, the university wrote that it intended to continue strengthening KUAC as “an educational delivery resource, while maintaining a commitment to the public broadcasting mission.” The university also said it intended to continue using KUAC to advance its educational objectives, even as public broadcasting in the state continued to redefine its own objectives from an educational stance to a public one.¹⁴⁴

Focusing on the Numbers

As noted from Dr. Charles Northrip’s comments in 1973 about the need for national programming to entice viewers to watch public broadcasters’ local content, it’s apparent that KUAC television had been paying attention to its viewership numbers since the station went on air. Attention to viewership slowly increased as the station matured. KUAC television estimated that its most popular program in 1976 was Sesame Street with an average of two thousand viewers for each episode of the program. The station estimated Masterpiece Theater was the second most watched show on the station. A viewership count for Masterpiece Theater was not found for this project, and how KUAC determined the viewership for its estimates is unknown. It’s also unknown if KUAC conducted a survey of its viewership in 1976, if PBS or the CPB published viewership counts, or if there was a formula that was used by the station that calculated viewership based on market size (or some other variable).¹⁴⁵

Though KUAC was not conducting membership drives yet, it's possible that KUAC conducted informal surveys of viewership during station events. Viewership counts gathered during fundraising events would have been unreliable, however, because the information would have come from whomever was attending the events. It's doubtful KUAC had more than two thousand attendees for events. The station could have also used mail surveys, but once again, viewership numbers would have only been estimates from analyzing returned materials. The viewership numbers could have come from a ratings survey of the Fairbanks market, but it's unlikely that KUAC would have commissioned the survey for itself. Ratings surveys were expensive, and it wouldn't have made much sense for a noncommercial broadcaster that wasn't reliant on selling commercials to conduct a survey. What is possible is that one of the commercial stations in Fairbanks conducted a ratings survey and provided KUAC with the results.

Two years later, KTVF and KUAC commissioned a ratings book from Arbitron. The book measured what television stations Fairbanks viewers were watching, what programs they were watching, when viewers were tuned in to each station, and the demographics of the people watching the stations. The book's commissioning showed a shift that occurred at PBS and at other public broadcasting stations in the late 1970s and early 1980s – public broadcasters were becoming concerned with how audiences were consuming public broadcasting content. Audience surveys from public broadcasting stations around the U.S. showed that viewers did not care much about the distinction between commercial broadcasters and public broadcasters. Viewers included public broadcasting stations when looking for something to watch. Viewers also flipped to public broadcasting stations during prime-time hours when commercial programming didn't appeal to them. In 1978, PBS released new programming in the fall instead of throughout the

year in an attempt to gain viewers and accommodate people who might be flipping stations looking for something to watch. For the first time, public broadcasting television had a fall season of shows that was purposefully competing with the “Big 3” networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) for viewers.¹⁴⁶

Myron Tisdal, KUAC television’s program manager said, “Now that public TV is being included in more and more surveys, we find the same person who watches commercial TV will watch public TV. We have just as many blue-collar, high school graduate level watchers. This is the first year PBS has what you could call a fall season. In the past, PBS had started shows throughout the year.” KUAC television did not share what its most viewed programs were when it received the results of the book in 1978. However, Tisdal said, “[The book] confirmed many of our suspicions. I know what the most widely watched programs are and what to put against certain shows to attract people at certain times.”¹⁴⁷

For KUAC, the 1978 ratings book meant that the station increased its consideration of when and where its programming was placed on its schedule. The book also meant that the programming decisions KUAC used were based on what was getting viewed and what wasn’t. The station was mixing and matching its schedule against the offerings of commercial broadcasters in Fairbanks to increase viewership. The station’s earlier belief of offering programming that didn’t need to attract large audiences had shifted.

The A.C. Nielsen Company released television ratings for the Fairbanks market in late 1983. The book showed that KTVF had 43% share of the weeknight television audience, KTTU’s audience share was 31%, and KUAC’s audience share was 10%. The book reaffirmed that KUAC’s audience increased when high-quality programming was paired against weaker commercial schedules or programs that were not performing well. According to the book, KUAC

television's audience share substantially increased when it aired PBS's *Vietnam: A Television History*. The historical documentary series was one of PBS's highest rated shows that year and performed strongly across the nation. That strength translated to KUAC television's ratings.

KUAC management said they were not surprised by the 1983 book's viewership numbers. Kathryn Jensen, KUAC television's station manager said, "I don't think we have material that appeals to everyone. We specialize. We offer things like aviation weather, which I'm sure only a few people are interested in. We target a lot of very narrow audiences rather than trying to appeal to a mass audience."¹⁴⁸

Jensen's statement that KUAC targeted narrow audiences rather than mass audiences seemed contradictory to the actions the station was taking to increase its viewership. The reality is that Jensen was reflecting on the differences between the station's national programming and local programming. Jensen's comment was related to Dr. Northrip's comments over a decade earlier about the use of national programming to boost the ratings for local programming. KUAC's ratings increase from *Vietnam: A Television History* highlighted that point. KUAC television and PBS were recognizing what programming was working or not working for their audience. Both were interested in developing high-quality programming to attract viewers. Jensen's statement reflected the type of local programming KUAC was offering at that particular moment and not necessarily what it wanted to offer. PBS was increasing its high-quality programming, and that meant KUAC had at least some high-quality programming to broadcast. However, KUAC was still developing and airing specialized local content that appealed to the Interior's underserved audiences. The station also created content (like classical music) that was underserved in the market. Most of the time, local productions were done on a shoestring budget and weren't meant to attract high viewership numbers.

The A.C. Nielsen Company released another television ratings book for the Fairbanks market in 1985. KUAC television's ratings had dramatically changed from the book two years earlier. According to the book, KUAC was the number one public television station in America, per capita of audience, for prime time and daytime public television viewership. KUAC television had 10% of the weeknight market share in 1983, but viewership had increased to 39% of the weeknight market share in 1985. Nielsen found that 61% of people in KUAC's broadcast area watched the station at some point during the week.¹⁴⁹

KUAC television's ratings shift was believed to be due to the popularity of The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. The program was by far Fairbanks's most-watched news program (local or national) with an average of about seven thousand people watching each broadcast – about five thousand people more per broadcast than KUAC's second most popular program, Sesame Street. The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour had been produced and distributed by PBS for well over a decade, but audiences started connecting with the program in the 1980s. The popularity of The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour in Fairbanks surprised KUAC's management, because the program aired at 10 p.m. However, the program was purposefully placed in the timeslot to offer news programming at a time where little news was available in Fairbanks.¹⁵⁰

A major advancement in intra-Alaska sharing of public broadcasting content came in the spring of 1975 as KUAC radio along with KYUK, KOTZ, and KTOO started sharing content. The sharing agreement was called the Alaska Public Radio Network. The network started as a way to allow Alaska's public radio broadcasters to have access to the goings on of the state legislature. The network carried legislative addresses, votes, and committee meetings. The network was funded by the AEBC and was a permanent circuit between the four stations.

Elaine Mitchell, a Juneau resident, was hired by the AEBC as the network's coordinator and only reporter. Prior to the creation of the network, Mitchell would phone into stations individually to report on the legislature. When APRN came online, Mitchell created reports and delivered them via the circuit to the member stations. The reports included a daily legislative wrap up and sound bites that member stations could cut into their own stories. KUAC aired the daily wrap ups every weekday on radio at 6 p.m. and on television at 10 p.m. Dave Geesin, who was KUAC radio's program director, said that the network was also intended to carry non-legislative content. KTOO was the only station at the time with the ability to send content over the network, so additional content was inconsistent. Legislative content was easier to share given KTOO's accessibility to the legislature.¹⁵¹

The network was an important development in the advancement of public media in Alaska, because it allowed stations to collaborate on content and send that content to stations around the state. The network increased news diversity in the state. A news story created by KTOO about international trade may have appealed to newscasters at KOTZ. Or a story about salmon fishing from KYUK may have had relevance to fishers listening to KTOO. The Alaska Public Radio Network allowed Alaska's public radio stations to diversify their news offerings. APRN eventually developed into a nonprofit media organization based out of Anchorage. Its function of acting as a collaborative network remained mostly the same.

Fundraising is Important for the Organization

KUAC held its first coordinated fundraiser (pledge drive) in March 1979. "Festival '79" had 17 hundred people pledge their support to the organization. The fundraiser lasted for 16 days and included pitches over both radio and television. The pledged amount came to about \$48 thousand. The CPB funded \$1 for every \$2.25 KUAC raised on its own. The match came to just

over \$21 thousand. The money that was raised during the fundraiser was split evenly between the television and radio stations. Over one hundred people volunteered to answer phones and help with the fundraising effort. Some people also donated goods to the organization, such as gold, and mink pelts. Don Upham, KUAC's general manager, thanked volunteers, staff, contributors, and the organization's advisory board. Upham believed that bringing in many people to the organization increased understanding about organizational practices and formed a sense of community to the stations. The practice of bringing the community together to participate in fundraising efforts remained a common trend for the organization.

The advent of coordinate fundraisers did not occur suddenly for KUAC. KUAC's first fundraiser coincided with a national fundraiser PBS was holding at the same time that was also named Festival '79. PBS started conducting coordinated fundraisers in 1975. PBS used the "festival" and "year" designation for the branding of its coordinated fundraisers, which KUAC also used. During Festival 75, PBS provided programming that was created intentionally for fundraising efforts and intended to keep audiences tuned in between solicitations for funding. Using fundraising-specific programming still happens during fundraisers. KUAC conducted its first coordinated fundraising event in 1979 because the station had connected to PBS via satellite less than a year earlier. 1979 was the first year the station had immediate access to PBS's fundraising materials when it wanted them (instead of waiting for the materials to be mailed to the station or flown to Fairbanks).^{152 153}

Festival '80 was held exactly a year later and also coincided with fundraising efforts at public broadcasting stations across the United States. The fundraiser lasted 14 days instead of 16 days like the year before. KUAC's management believed that the organization could increase the amount of money it earned during the fundraiser and set its goal at \$60 thousand. The goal was

met on the last day. Like Festival '79 a little over 17 hundred people donated during Festival '80. The average donation came to about \$35. Festival '79 averaged about \$25 per donation. Don Upham, KUAC's general manager said that "The contributions will sure help us when it comes to buying programming. Like everything else, program costs have gone up this year."¹⁵⁴

KUAC's goal for Festival '81 increased to \$65 thousand. The fundraiser was once again part of a national fundraising effort. The fundraiser was reduced to 10 days. According to the KUAC's management, "almost all of the funds raised will be used to support the stations [sic] programs." KUAC said that donations for Festival '80 completely paid for KUAC radio's programming and 20% of KUAC television's programming for fiscal year 1981. PBS's NOVA cost \$13 thousand and The MacNeil/Lehrer Report cost \$17.5 thousand.¹⁵⁵

Despite the reduction in the number of days, the organization brought in about \$93 thousand during Festival '81 -- about 43% higher than the goal. The exact amount of donations during Festival '80 is unknown, but the station reported the number of donations for that year at just over 17 hundred. KUAC said that about 22 hundred people (including business support) gave to the organization for Festival '81. That is an increase of about 491 people or 28%. In just three years, KUAC's total donation amounts for its coordinate fundraisers increased by about 96%. "We were amazed. Even in our dreams, we didn't think that the goal would be shattered like this. Not only are we pleased by the money, but the wonderful show of support from so many different people is just fantastic," said Kathryn Jensen, station manager of KUAC radio.¹⁵⁶

Festival '81's contributions accounted for about 4% of the total Fairbanks audience. Contributions that year were almost double what KSKA and KAKM in Anchorage (about 2%) brought in the same year. Markets like New York saw one-third of 1% of its potential audience give to public broadcasting in 1981.

KUAC used the tagline “Going Public” for Festival ‘82. The tagline was meant to give the appearance that public broadcasting was becoming more popular, and that potential donors could support the community (something special) by giving to the organization. Public broadcasters seemed to have found a sweet spot for the start date and length of fundraisers. Festival ‘82 started in early spring and lasted 10 days. Despite the success of Festival ‘81, KUAC set a modest goal of \$70 thousand for Festival ‘82. The goal was modest, because it was only \$5 thousand more than the expected goal from the year before. However, the organization also set a goal of receiving 28 hundred individual donations. The individual donation goal was surprising, because even though about 22 hundred donations were received the year before, that amount of donations was a surprise to the organization. To achieve 28 hundred individual donations, KUAC would have had to drastically surpass donation amounts from the year before which were already unexpected.¹⁵⁷

KUAC promoted both national and local programming to entice people to give to the station. Shows like NOVA, National Geographic, and Masterpiece Theater were described as top-quality national public television programs. KUAC also said it planned to show more programs related to the Interior such as community spotlights of Interior communities and programs on Alaska’s lifestyle – like bush pilots, trapping, and mining.

Kathryn Jensen, who was the organization’s acting general manager in 1982 said, “We’ve made a lot of schedule changes. We hope the outstanding programs we’ll offer on both television and radio will not only attract new audiences, but also remind our old friends of the breadth of our service. Afterall, it’s those old friends who pay for the service.” Jensen’s quote highlights the continuing dichotomy concerning KUAC’s (and public broadcasting overall) programming. There was a desire to attract new and larger audiences, but there was also a recognition that the

programming the station provided was already providing to established underserved audiences. The established audiences were the ones who were supporting the stations. Unfortunately, information was not available about how fruitful Festival '82 and Festival '83 were for KUAC. However, there was information for Festival '84 that showed the organization continued to see growth in fundraising support.¹⁵⁸

KUAC held its Festival '84 fundraiser over 10 days in early spring 1984. The goal for the fundraiser was \$125 thousand. Over 26 hundred people pledged about \$143 thousand in support to the stations. The fundraising totals were about 14% over the goal. Over 250 people volunteered for Festival '84 and a lengthy list of businesses contributed goods and services. One of the reasons for the fundraiser's success was that the University of Alaska Fairbanks's (UAF) chancellor Patrick O'Rourke challenged potential contributors to give at a specific date and time. Donations of \$50 or more that came in during an allotted time were matched by O'Rourke. By the end of the challenge, O'Rourke had given over \$15 hundred, which was the largest single contribution ever given to the organization up until that point. Challenges like the one that O'Rourke used are still a staple of KUAC fundraisers. Another contributor baked a cake and brought it into the station for staff and volunteers to consume. The cake was decorated with \$50 bills.¹⁵⁹

Another reason for the fundraiser's success was because of a trend that inadvertently started with Festival '84. That year saw the start of KUAC's annual poster. Artist Jon Van Zyle designed a poster for the festival and donated copies of the artwork to the organization. Van Zyle also personally signed posters. The posters were used to entice people to pledge their support to the organization. KUAC also used the posters throughout the year as giveaway prizes

or as gifts for its outreach efforts. Utilizing artwork from local artists became one of the organization's most important outreach and fundraising methods following Festival '84.¹⁶⁰

Festival '85 occurred in early spring 1985 and lasted 10 days. The fundraiser had a goal to raise \$150 thousand (which was met). KUAC once again offered local artwork following the success of its 1984 fundraising efforts. The organization featured Barbara Lavalley's *Dancing Woman*. *Dancing Woman* shows an Alaska Native woman dancing in vibrant and flowery clothing. People that made donations over a certain amount were given a copy of the artwork. People could also purchase a copy of the artwork, and the proceeds would benefit the stations. KUAC also held an artist signing party as part of the artwork sale where supporters could get their artwork signed by Lavalley.¹⁶¹

Festival '85 also saw KUAC work with a local business to facilitate the artwork party. The party was held by a building supply store and was broadcast live on the station. The cooperation between the station and a local business for the artwork party showed an important aspect of KUAC's fundraising efforts in the 1980s and the decades to come. The stations used the community to facilitate its fundraising efforts, and the community used the stations as a method to show connection. Earlier in the chapter, the relationship between KUAC and a local retailer showed the symbiotic relationship the organization had with the community. Both utilized the resources of each other to survive. The store's involvement in the artwork sale and signing party highlighted the continued symbiotic relationship KUAC had with the business community. Goods and services were provided in support of the station, and airtime and brand promotion were provided in support of the store.

KUAC came to (and continues to) rely on that symbiotic relationship. According to Fran Izzo Roth, who was the organization's fundraising coordinator, hundreds of people volunteered

on their own or as part of an organization to help organize and run the fundraiser in 1985. For example, Chena Kiwanis and Midnight Sun Lions Club were mentioned by name as two of the organizations that helped KUAC with the fundraiser. Individuals and organizations that volunteered during the fundraiser received recognition for their efforts. They were recognized over the air and in print for their service to the station. KUAC benefitted from community participation in its fundraisers by utilizing the community's resources that it needed, and the community benefits from KUAC by keeping the station alive and in the recognition of their efforts to do so.¹⁶²

KUAC's usage of artwork as a fundraising method changed by the mid-1990s. In the 1980s, the artwork was used to solicit donations in conjunction with the stations' fundraising drives. By the mid-1990s, artwork was sold to station supporters, and the artist was made available to sign copies for people. The artwork was being used as its own fundraising event. Though artwork was still used as an incentive to get people to donate during coordinated fundraisers, the artwork was not focused on to the same extent that it was used in the 1980s. There was less demand for the artwork during coordinated fundraisers because the artwork was already being sold at its own events.

The organization continued to partner with local businesses to support the stations' fundraising efforts. In 1995, KUAC was still partnering with the same company to help facilitate the artwork as a fundraising method. The organization took out a full-page advertisement in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner to promote Edible Berries by photographer Ken Kollodge. The advertisement showed the photograph that was being used for the artwork. The advertisement read, "Show your support of KUAC this Saturday with a visit to S.B.S. to receive a poster and have it personally autographed by Ken Kollodge." The stations' continued partnership with the

company again showed that both had something to gain from the continued partnership. KUAC continued to utilize local artists throughout the end of the 1990s and into the end of the examination period for this project.^{163 164 165 166}

KUAC published a solicitation for underwriting advertisement in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner on November 16, 1983. The advertisement showed a local business owner giving a testimonial on why they chose to underwrite on KUAC. The advertisement read, “My customers ask me whether I underwrite VIETNAM: A TELEVISION HISTORY [emphasis theirs] because it’s good for the community, or because it’s good for business. I tell them yes. [sic]” The bottom of the advertisement shows the details of the station along with the wording, “Serving Interior Alaska. For underwriting information call [a phone number].”¹⁶⁷

The advertisement shows the connection between the station and the Fairbanks business community. The advertisement’s appeal to the business community is that by underwriting a popular program, the name association that goes with the underwriting will help audience associate programs they love with the business. Though underwriting is supposed to serve a different function than advertising, using positive appeals that associate businesses with programming appears to serve very similar functions to advertising.

KUAC frequently published notices in the FDNM thanking its underwriters. One had the left and right sides of the notice contain branding for national shows (and one Alaska-based) show that KUAC radio and KUAC television carried – Alaska News Nightly, NOVA, and All Things Considered. In the middle of the advertisement, and in between the show branding are the names of various underwriters for programs. One notice read: “In addition to our many sponsors, these underwriters make possible, in large part, The Quality Shows on KUAC FM and KUAC

TV. We'd like to thank them for the investment in public broadcasting – We're in Good Company! [Capitalized letters are the same as in the advertisement.]^{168 169 170}

The notices once again highlight the developing symbiotic relationship KUAC had with the business community. Businesses supported the station, and the popular shows that were aired were associated with the business community. The notices show that because the businesses support the station monetarily, KUAC's supporters should also support those businesses.

Funding Cuts: The Start of an Alaska Public Broadcasting Tradition

Alaska governor Bill Sheffield (D.) vetoed the majority of a capital appropriations bill in 1984. The bill included funding for a hydroelectric project and an electric intertie between Fairbanks and Anchorage. The veto also reduced KUAC's equipment funding from the state from \$244 thousand to \$50 thousand for fiscal year 1985. The governor's veto impacted KUAC's ability to serve its audience and forced the organization to either push maintenance and repairs to a later date or scrap them all together. The \$194 thousand KUAC lost as part of Governor Sheffield's veto was an early indication of how public media funding would turn out for the organization in the decades to come.^{171 172 173}

Alaska's economy was in recession in late 1986 due to falling oil prices. The price of oil started the year at just over \$23 dollars per barrel, but by July, had dropped to \$9.25 per barrel. The state estimated its yearly budget based on the expected price of oil, and \$9 barrels were not expected that year. The state was expected to face a \$900 million deficit. Governor Bill Sheffield looked to cut \$550 million from the state's budget to help address some of the shortfall. There was also a possibility that another \$350 million would have been cut if the price of oil did not improve.

UA president Donald O'Dowd asked the university's board of regents to declare a financial emergency that would allow the university to cut about \$9.9 million from its budget. The financial emergency declaration allowed for layoffs and cutbacks of services at a rapid pace. A committee comprised of UA officials, staff, and faculty was set up to recommend cuts. About \$5 million in employee cuts, and a \$10 per credit hour increase in tuition were proposed by the committee. The committee also suggested that the university completely defund KUAC, leaving the stations' fate up in the air. The justification for defunding the stations was that the savings could be used for academic departments that were targeted by the cuts.

John Orbeck, a UA physical plant electrician who served on the committee said, "If we support KUAC we're going to give them \$900,000. One of our departments may not be here as a result of that \$900,000, or several of us may not be here as a result of that \$900,000. So far we have voted to save KUAC."

In response to the committee's recommendations, KUAC's management said that if the organization's funding was completely cut, the television station would only last about a month after the cuts went into effect. The radio station was expected to last only a few months longer than the television station.

The University of Alaska employed about 1 thousand people in 1986. 90 jobs and several programs were set to be cut by the university, including the Oral History Program and the Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WAMI) program. Every employee at the UA's Fairbanks campus took a 6% cut to their pay and benefits. The pay cut saved the university about \$2.5 million. University of Alaska president Donald O'Dowd recommended that non-union employees pay be cut even further, and that the standard work week be reduced from 40 hours to 37.5 hours for most non-faculty employees. They also recommended that nine-month teaching

contracts for faculty be reduced by 12 days and temporary faculty pay be reduced by 10%.^{174 175}

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UAF Chancellor Patrick O'Rourke proposed cutting KUAC television's budget by \$219 thousand. O'Rourke's proposal would have set the station's funding for fiscal year 1987 at just under \$2 million. KUAC television received just over \$2.2 million for fiscal year 1986. According to Chancellor O'Rourke, KUAC television's budget was not warranted based on the number of local programs the station produced every year. The state's other public television stations produced more local content than KUAC television. KUAC television planned to record about 22 hours of local content for fiscal year 1986, and by comparison, KYUK planned to produce about 240 hours of local content. "What's the last local production on KUAC television that you remember? Do you recall the last one?" O'Rourke said. "I seriously questioned KUAC's local production efforts. I asked, 'If we diminish our efforts in this area, would the community notice this loss?' Probably not."¹⁷⁸

KUAC television shifted its focus to the production of higher-quality local content in the mid-1980s. The station argued that it didn't have to be reliant on high-quality national programming to bring in audiences for local programs. Producing high-quality content locally would bring in audiences. Kathryn Jensen, KUAC's general manager said, "Two and a half years ago we made a major change of direction. We started putting our efforts into high-quality, Alaska-issue documentary programming for a national audience..."^{179 180}

However, the production of high-quality content at KUAC came at the expense of other local productions. The quality of content affected the amount of content created by the station. Lower-quality content could be produced more frequently (and cheaply) than higher quality content. KUAC television said that a budget reduction made no sense, because that would have

affected the quantity (what the university wanted) along with the quality (what the station wanted) of its productions. O'Rourke countered that very few people would miss local programming because audiences were more interested in the station's national offerings. KUAC television had the largest per-capita prime-time television audience in the country as well as a fundraising base that had earned well over its goal in fiscal year 1985. The university believed KUAC's large audience numbers and donations were the result of the quality of the national programs, the organization's officials believed that community connection and participation with the stations in conjunction with the programming was what was driving the growth.

The disagreement between the organization and the university highlights ideological differences that had developed in the almost 15 years after the television station's sign on. KUAC's position was a direct reversal of Dr. Northrip's belief that national programming was needed to boost the audiences of local productions. The station believed it could offer content that was just as good if not better than national producers. The university's position stayed closer to Dr. Northrip's position, but with one critical distinction. The university had mostly shed its intention to use local productions to advance its educational goals. For the university, national programming was enough.

KUAC television's production capabilities would have been heavily impacted by the cuts. The station's manager, the assistant program manager, and two of the station's three producers were set to lose their jobs. KUAC television's manager was specifically targeted by Chancellor O'Rourke. They said that the television manager, who was paid just over \$33 thousand a year, could be cut without any noticeable loss to the station's production load. KUAC's general manager, Kathryn Jensen proposed making cuts to the radio station and some of the engineering staff to enable KUAC television to keep producing programs. The proposal

also kept the manager's position at the television station. Chancellor O'Rourke responded to Jensen's proposal by saying, "My original proposal called for some trimming of management within KUAC. The alternative proposal does not call for that, and I would still ask that to be done."^{181 182 183 184}

KUAC radio was also criticized for its lack of local news production. The station was the only APRN affiliate to not offer local news in 1986. As a response to the criticism, the station floated the idea of starting a 30-minute news magazine. KUAC radio did not have the financial resources at the time to support a reporter (or reporting team). The station proposed making the news magazine a student production in cooperation with the Department of Journalism. The program was meant to be a fully functioning news program using student labor. The program would have primarily focused on stories about the Interior as well as other news from Alaska, the university, and the Associated Press. The station expected UAF's student newspaper to contribute stories to the program.

The program did not get past the planning stages. Using student labor presented challenges for the station that could not be overcome. KUAC radio and the university had expectations that the program would run on a regular basis, but even a sparsely run program (once-a-week or every other week) needed production consistency that a student-run program could not provide. Students could not be forced to commit to college activities and had no obligation to work during holidays or summer months. The station was not interested in content that ran for only a portion of the year.

Chancellor O'Rourke also proposed merging KUAC (both stations) with the Department of Journalism. O'Rourke believed that a merger would increase cooperation between the organization and the department. The merger was intended to be a way to include the stations as

part of the university's educational offerings. However, the university realized that the department did not have the resources to facilitate the operation of two broadcasting stations. KUAC as an operation of the journalism department would have also meant that the stations' interests would have been switched to the interests of the department and not necessarily the interests of the university. The stations would have had less obligation in advancing the educational objectives of the university as well as less obligation in broadcasting educational content (classes, class materials, etc.). KUAC was moved to the College of Liberal Arts instead, and the organization reported to the dean of the college (instead of the head of the journalism department). Chancellor O'Rourke said that with the proposed merger, "I thought a bridge could begin to build between KUAC and Journalism/Broadcasting [as a department]."^{185 186}

After the stations' moved to the College of Liberal Arts, O'Rourke said that instead of trying to pair the stations with the journalism department, the university would make it a point to hire employees at KUAC that could perform their tasks at the station but also fill the role of instructor. "Rather than hiring adjunct professors to teach, we will make teaching a part of a person's regular workload at the station," O'Rourke said. It is unknown whether O'Rourke's plans for hiring dual instructors and station employees happened at KUAC. No curriculum changes or notifications of hiring practices that fit with O'Rourke's plans were found for this project. O'Rourke's plans highlight an important milestone in KUAC's existence. In the mid-1970s, the university had staunchly defended the organization as part of its educational offerings. However, KUAC's role as part of the university was not as clear in the mid-1980s.¹⁸⁷

A year later, KUAC's funding was reduced by both the state and the university. Alaska Governor Steve Cowper's (D.) budget proposal for fiscal year 1988 removed all funding to the APBC (and by extension the whole Alaska public broadcasting system) and the Rural Alaska

Television Network (RATNET). The cuts to the APBC would not have affected KUAC, because the organization received its appropriation directly from the state. However, the governor also proposed removing KUAC's state appropriation. UAF was also asked to reduce its expenses by \$4 million and looked to cut KUAC's appropriation. KUAC was faced with the prospect of losing funding from both the state and the university. The governor cited declining oil revenues as the reason for not wanting the system funded. Governor Cowper's justification of declining oil revenues and the need for the state to "tighten its fiscal belt" was the narrative used again by lawmakers less than a decade later to justify reductions to Alaska's public broadcasters.¹⁸⁸

Representative Mike Davis (D. Fairbanks) asked that the state's appropriation for KUAC be restored, but as a concession, asked that the appropriation be cut by 15%. The organization had received about \$900 thousand from the state for fiscal year 1987. The 15% cut would have dropped KUAC's appropriation to \$765 thousand. Representative Davis said that KUAC should continue to be funded by the state, even amidst cuts to the rest of the stations in the system, because the state had funded KUAC prior to the oil boom. KUAC preceded oil wealth, the creation of the AEBC (APBC) and the creation of the state's (and the nation's) public broadcasting system. Though Representative Davis specifically fought for KUAC's state funding, they also argued that the rest of the system was too valuable to the state as a telecommunications resource to just let it go.¹⁸⁹

Representative Davis said there would be consequences of media access for the state if public broadcasters were forced to shut down. Davis said that resources that the state and federal government had contributed to the system would go to waste:

The elimination of APBC and RATNET would result in the attendant loss of an in-place communications network that provides vital information to rural and urban Alaskans alike," said Davis. "It is important to note that only public radio and television provide

the capability for and generating broadcasting Alaska-based information to residents of the state, as well as to persons outside of Alaska. Another consequence of eliminating funding for public radio and television is not only the anticipated closing of the stations, but also the loss of equipment and FCC licenses. FCC licenses are difficult to obtain, and they may each take several thousand dollars and up to 18 to 24 months to regain. The state would also likely have to relinquish equipment to the federal government that was purchased in part with federal funds.¹⁹⁰

Representative Davis said that 99 locations in Alaska did not have access to commercial radio in 1987. Without the Alaska public broadcasting system, one hundred communities would no longer have had access to any television content without RATNET. 63 communities would have lost both radio and television service, and seven of 19 emergency alert system stations in the state had the possibility of shutting down without state funding.¹⁹¹

Representative Mark Boyer (Fairbanks) said that they had been contacted by many people who stated that they considered the survival of KUAC to be one of the most important issues for the state. Some constituents even noted that KUAC's survival meant more to them than the survival of other state programs. Boyer introduced HB236 that year. The legislation would have created a statewide lottery. Boyer said that one of the benefits of the proposed lottery would have been a stable funding source for public broadcasting and funding the Alaska Station Council of the Arts (ASCA). Similar to comments made by Representative Davis, Representative Boyer noted that both programs were funded before oil became the main source of revenue for the state.^{192 193}

When budgetary negotiations ended, Alaska's legislature cut KUAC's state appropriation by 8.5% (approximately \$77 thousand), and the UAF had cut KUAC's appropriation by about \$600 thousand. The university left about \$300 thousand in funding for KUAC's educational functions (instruction) but noted that the remaining appropriation would more than likely be removed if the university was asked to find more cuts in the future. In an odd twist of creative

accounting, cuts to KUAC were not as severe as they could have been. To compensate for the university's reduction, Representative Davis and other representatives of Alaska's House Financing Committee added \$546 thousand to the APBC's budget to specifically be given to KUAC to make up for most of the university's cuts. The lost portion of KUAC's appropriation from the university was shifted to the APBC. The governor did not veto the change. The state's budgetary woes proved to be a boon for KUAC's fundraising activities that year as well. Festival '87 raised approximately \$250 thousand for the organization, which was the highest amount the organization had raised up until that point. By the end of the legislative session, KUAC saw its state and university support for fiscal year 1988 reduced by about \$130 thousand.^{194 195 196}

Alaska's other public broadcasters were also feeling the effects of cuts from the state. The APBC was funded at \$6.5 million for fiscal year 1989 (1988). In contrast, the commission had been funded for about \$9.2 million for fiscal year 1986. The commission (and by extension the whole Alaska public broadcasting system) saw a reduction of its funding of about 30% in three years.¹⁹⁷

Lloyd Morris, the commission's chairperson, said that the state's reduction in funding over the previous three fiscal years resulted in decreased funding from the CPB. The corporation considered state funds given to public broadcasting stations to be non-federal funding. When more funding was given to stations from the state, those stations received extra money with their base community service grants. The inverse was also true. As the state cut funding to public broadcasters, so did the CPB. Reduced federal funding coupled with less funding from the state affected stations' ability to buy or repair equipment. Reduced funding also affected stations' labor levels and programming output and quality. "It's kind of a double whammy," said Morris.

“Everybody has shrunk back staff, they’ve shrunk back programming. They’re doing whatever they can to provide service.”¹⁹⁸

KUAC’s general manager Bruce Smith made a presentation to the APBC on how the organization fared amidst cuts from the state, the university, and the CPB. The extra money legislators gave to the APBC, and the organization’s tremendous fundraising efforts that year, mitigated some of the immediate damage from the cuts. KUAC was not forced to lay off staff, but it was forced to shuffle employees. Engineering-related positions were either not rehired when vacant or were combined with other positions. KUAC television’s manager also became the engineering director. Combining jobs is a trend KUAC and other public broadcasters in the state would continue as they faced economic woes in the years to come.¹⁹⁹

Programming was hit harder than labor, however. Elementary and secondary education television programs were completely cut from the stations. Some national and local programming were also cut to save money. KUAC television stopped broadcasting on weekdays in the morning and on Saturdays during the day. The station resumed broadcasting the same number of hours it had been broadcasting in 1986 starting in September 1989. “Resumption of our normal Saturday hours has been one of our top priorities since the budget cuts. Through budget reshuffling we have been able to find the money to restart our Saturday service,” Smith said.^{200 201}

When KUAC television’s Saturday’s daytime service resumed, the programming schedule consisted of “how-to-do-it” and “general interest” material that cost less than national programs or pre-produced musical programs. Both stations also added current events programming from Europe and local sports programs such as high school football games. Ironically, KUAC radio was broadcasting some of the same type of content that it had been

broadcasting in its earliest days. Instead of programming being unavailable due to technological unavailability, programming was unavailable due to economic instability. The reduction to KUAC's appropriation from both the state and the university showed how drastically support for public broadcasting had shifted in Alaska in just under two decades. What was once thought of as a necessity of education and information delivery when the state's fortunes were growing, turned into a fiscal burden with a muddy perceived purpose when fortunes were shaky.²⁰²

Funding Cuts Continue in the 1990s

The beginning of the 1990s did not improve the fortunes of Alaska's public broadcasters. Governor Walter (Wally) Hickel (AKIP.) proposed cutting funding to the Alaska public broadcasting system in 1991 (fiscal year 1992).²⁰³ Alaska had four public television stations and 24 public radio stations in the early 1990s. The governor, working from a recommendation from the Department of Administration, proposed cutting the APBC's \$7.3 million budget by about \$2.2 million (30%). Alaska's legislature eventually approved \$7.5 million for public broadcasting that year, but governor Hickel vetoed 13.8% (just over \$1 million) of the funding. As a result, the APBC slashed about 14 % of the appropriations from every station in the system when it disseminated funding to stations.

Hickel had initially planned to make cuts only to the Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks television stations, but later decided that the APBC would be in a better position to facilitate the cuts. There was an assumption that the commission would apply the cuts equally throughout the system. Jim Fox, who was the Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Administration said the governor did not appear to want cuts to a specific station. Fox said the governor just wanted the cuts to happen. "I don't think they [the governor] had a particular station targeted, or anything

of that nature. It's part of an overall commitment to reduce the operating costs of state government," they said.^{204 205}

The APBC, believing that the political climate in the state and the nation at the time would continue to cut money from public broadcasting, started to promote the necessity for stations to find alternate sources of funding. Stations that were created in locations that did not have the market to support a broadcasting station were also encouraged to find alternative sources of funding – somehow. “Some of the smaller stations could be put right on the edge. That’s not even considering federal money,” said APBC commissioner B.G. Olson.²⁰⁶

The impact of the 14% decrease for KUAC was not found. However, Bruce Smith, KUAC’s general manager, said that the stations’ operations and programming would again be affected if cuts were applied equally across the system. Smith was concerned that jobs would be lost and programming on KUAC would be discontinued. Smith said national programs like Captain Kangaroo, Dr. Who, and late-night comedy shows would be cut. "A lot of the fat was cut in the last round," they said. "There's really not going to be any way to deal with cuts of this size without cutting program services. It's just not possible."²⁰⁷

According to Smith, KUAC would have still received its base community service grant from the CPB no matter how much public broadcasting was cut by the state. However, as was seen a few years prior, the money received from the CPB and other grant sources would be less due to the corporation’s matching of funds from non-federal sources. Deputy Commissioner Fox reiterated that when public broadcasting was up against other state services that could be cut, such as nursing care or financial record keeping, public broadcasting was “lower in the priorities.”^{208 209}

In August 1994, Alaska's four public television stations, KUAC, KAKM, KTOO and KYUK, announced at an APBC meeting that they were in talks to consolidate the television stations into one statewide network called The Alaska Public Broadcasting System.

Consolidation was planned to cut costs. Cutting costs was a primary concern for the stations as the state legislature continued to say its main priority was to cut programs from the state budget that they deemed unnecessary. Legislators said that the state should no longer be fiscally responsible for the system.

Mark Badger, KUAC's general manager, said the television stations' consolidation plans were an effort to keep ahead of the planned cuts by the legislature – allowing stations to remain fiscally solvent. "The significance of this move is that four public broadcasting television stations are banding together for ways to economize as the state downsizes. In all of corporate America we see downsizing. It's no longer viewed as an anomaly but rather as a way to get leaner and meaner," Badger said.²¹⁰

Doug Samimi-Moore, the APBC's executive director said Alaska's funding for public broadcasting was 40% lower than it was in 1986. "Certainly, stations have had to make some concessions," Samimi-Moore said. "It's hard to anticipate what will happen in the years ahead, but it was unwise to continue as they had." Consolidation of the four stations was expected to save about 5% per year in expenses. The amount was not large, but it was enough to convince managers that the saved money would allow the consolidated stations to purchase high-quality content to attract more viewers and by extension, more contributors. "We don't want public broadcasting to go away. We may not be able to find a way of saving a lot of money, but we can improve the services we offer," said Mark Badger.²¹¹

Badger also said that the state would have been reluctant to make cuts if the system appeared strong and the product quality increased. They also said the consolidated stations would look to increase local programming, extend UA's educational opportunities, and continue to increase public broadcasting's reach in the state. "We're looking to how the university and public broadcasting can work together to bring education to the far reaches of the state," Badger said. "We're looking into developing some sort of satellite interconnect (with the other stations) so that we can link all of our technologies together."²¹²

Badger's reference to UA's educational offerings showed that the university still expected its interests to be a main criterion in the creation of the new consolidated station, even though the university's intentions and investment in KUAC had become muddled over the previous few years. It is doubtful the other three stations shared the same educational interests, because they were not operated by a university.

KUAC Operates AlaskaOne, the Interior Express, and ARCS

The APBC announced in May 1995 that KUAC would be the main station in a centralized "superstation" that would feed the rest of the state with public television content. The superstation was called AlaskaOne. KUAC, KTOO and KYUK comprised the stations in the new superstation. KAKM in Anchorage decided to continue on its own. The Alaska Public Broadcasting System was originally floated as the name of the station, but AlaskaOne was ultimately chosen as it more accurately reflected the intentions of the station. AlaskaOne replaced the Public Television Network of Alaska which was a cooperative sharing agreement between the four television stations. The decision to make KUAC the main station came after a lot of debate between the stations. KAKM was initially slated to be the main station, but KUAC's affiliation with the university swayed the decision to make it the main station.^{213 214}

The creation of AlaskaOne came as the legislature cut the APBC's funding by 30% in 1995. KTOO in Juneau saw its funding from the state drop by 63%. KYUK in Bethel was cut by 74%, and KAKM was cut by 53%. KUAC radio lost 40% of its state funding; however, KUAC television only lost about 2% of its budget, because of the consolidation of television stations into AlaskaOne. The state's 1995 cuts and KAKM's involvement in the creation of AlaskaOne will be discussed further in chapter 7.²¹⁵

Jerry Brigham, KUAC's general manager, said in a very candid statement that the creation of AlaskaOne was tough for everyone involved, but Alaska's public television stations had little choice. "I have fought the idea of a public broadcasting "superstation" my entire career, and here I am, faced with being the one that has to produce it. But there is no choice. The Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission made this decision to try to maintain the quality of public broadcasting in the state. Considering the state and federal cuts we face, it's the best we can do."²¹⁶

AlaskaOne officially went on the air at 6:15 AM on October 18, 1995. The network's signal originated from KUAC's studios at the UAF campus and was carried by KTOO and KYUK. The first AlaskaOne broadcast started with an exercise show, followed by a national business news program, and then kids programming. The broadcast logos of KUAC, KTOO, and KYUK shifted on the day of the first broadcast to the AlaskaOne logo. KUAC television changed to a 24-hour schedule after the creation of AlaskaOne to allow for more time to broadcast educational offerings from the UA.²¹⁷

Brigham said that the creation of AlaskaOne ensured that public broadcasting would continue around the state, but that consolidation would negatively affect the production of local programs for not only KUAC, but especially for KYUK and KTOO. The stations' ability to

afford the production of local programs was gutted with the cuts. PBS programming remained relatively untouched on AlaskaOne, but there were behind-the-scenes efforts to change how much AlaskaOne paid for content. PBS programming had been purchased by each of the four television stations for about \$1.2 million each before consolidation. Talks were in the works for AlaskaOne and KAKM to purchase programming for \$750 thousand. “It’s approved by PBS. They have no problems with it at all. But we’re still hassling with dues. I’m not quite sure what kind of deal we’re going to get, but it’s got to be better than what we would be getting otherwise,” said Brigham.²¹⁸

In anticipation of budget cuts in 1995, KUAC radio along with public radio stations in Ft. Yukon, Valdez, McGrath, Galena, and Talkeetna proposed a “mini-network” to the APBC. The “Interior Express” had stations share programming and news via an “always on” satellite feed. KUAC radio served as the “root” station and fed the others with full time content that they could always have access to. The plan would have saved costs on programming and labor. The Interior Express was modelled slightly after other cooperatives that were being planned around the state, such as “Coast to Coast” in Southeast Alaska, which eventually became “CoastAlaska.” “The idea is to avoid a centralized form of public broadcasting where everything is done out of Anchorage. That’s the nasty. That’s what we want to avoid,” said Mark Badger. The APBC provided the six stations with roughly \$684 thousand in funding for fiscal year 1995. The Interior Express was expected to drop that amount to about \$573 thousand – saving the state about 16% as legislators were eyeing cuts again for fiscal year 1996. “What we’re trying to do is stay ahead of where we know the next shoe is going to drop. We’re not trying to retreat,” Badger said.²¹⁹

Local news production was affected by the plan. KUAC radio’s newsroom had only one full-time reporter, and many of the Interior Express stations did not have news teams. The

situation did not improve after the cuts went into effect. Interior Express stations laid off reporters and other staff, and KUAC was also forced to reduce its news team. The Interior Express reduced expenses for public broadcasting stations and saved the state money, but the agreement increased demand for local news production throughout the Interior. KUAC and other public broadcasters were in no position to meet that demand.

In anticipation of the creation of the Interior Express, KUAC radio received a \$178 thousand grant for a new transmitter tower and antenna in 1995. The transmitter site was moved from its location on Farmer's Loop Road to a location on Ester Dome – a small mountain to the west of Fairbanks. The Ester Dome location was about eight hundred feet higher. The higher elevation allowed the station's signal to extend further into the Interior. KUAC's signal power increased from 10 thousand watts to 38 thousand watts. KUAC also shifted its frequency from 104.7 FM, which it had held since its creation, to 89.9 FM.^{220 221 222}

Alaska Representative Vic Kohring (R. Wasilla) proposed cutting the APBC's budget by another \$800 thousand for fiscal year 1997. Kohring was the chair of the house's subcommittee on finance. As a response to the proposed cuts, public broadcasters around the state aired spots that asked listeners to voice their opinion on the cuts as well as their support for public broadcasting in Alaska. Citing access to equal airtime for political issues, Representative Kohring asked for airtime to voice his reasoning for the cuts. Kohring said, "The implication is that the Legislature is bad, that it is against public broadcasting, and that the Legislature should be lobbied. We're not against public broadcasting. We've got our backs against the wall with this fiscal crisis. That's not being broadcast."²²³

KUAC refused Kohring's request for airtime. General Manager Jerry Brigham said that giving Kohring airtime would create a situation where politicians in Alaska who agreed or

disagreed with any of the points made during political programming would ask for airtime to give their opinions. Brigham also said that Kohring had already filed paperwork saying they intended to run for office again, and that the station would then actually be required to offer equal airtime to any candidate that asked. “To do this [give airtime] every time a politician asks sets a dangerous precedent. If we do something controversial on nightly news, any politician could ask for time,” said Brigham. “For them to be using their media to advocate their position while denying the opposition a chance is wrong [. . .] regardless of whether the opposition is a legislator or John Q. Public,” said Kohring. The subcommittee changed the cuts to \$600 thousand. Alaska’s legislature eventually cut the APBC’s funding by \$200 thousand for fiscal year 1997.²²⁴

KUAC took over operation of the Alaska Rural Communication System (ARCS) in February 1999. RATNET became ARCS after KYUK assumed control of the network amidst restructuring of Alaska’s public broadcasting system following the 1995 cuts. KYUK had a sharp decline in revenue in the years after assuming control of the system, and the organization’s budgetary troubles prompted the state to take bids on hosting the system. KUAC submitted a bid. KYUK employed multiple people to program the network, and KUAC proposed programming ARCS using computers, which meant that one person could run the network (and probably do other tasks). Either we took it, or it went away,” said Jerry Brigham. Brigham noted that KUAC didn’t really have the monetary resources to operate ARCS but hoped that the savings on labor would help pay the operational costs. Two hundred locations in Alaska received ARCS in 1999. More on RATNET, the creation of ARCS, and KYUK’s involvement with the network will be discussed in chapter 5.^{225 226 227}

Conclusion and Summary

This chapter examined the development of KUAC radio and television from the early 1960s to the end of the 1990s. KUAC was Fairbanks's first station to broadcast on the FM spectrum, and the station helped develop usage of the spectrum in the Interior. KUAC also helped shape the development of educational public broadcasting in the state. Dr. Charles Northrip served as the first director of the Alaska Educational Broadcast Commission and served in the position again after the commission developed into the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission. Dr. Northrip was influential in promoting the university's educational interests as director of the commission and was instrumental in bringing educational television to the Interior. The University of Alaska intended to use KUAC (both radio and television) as an educational hub that provided educational material around the state. The university also wanted the organization to spread its educational objectives.

When the political climate and the fortunes of Alaska (and the nation) started to shift in the 1980s, KUAC's fortunes shifted with it. The station experienced budgetary cutbacks from the state and the university. The cutbacks forced KUAC to adjust its schedule and its staffing. The university also started to question KUAC's place in its educational efforts. Despite the budgetary cutbacks and questions of purpose, KUAC was still expected to be one of the leaders of public broadcasting in the state. That expectation continued throughout the 1990s as KUAC television, KTOO television, and KYUK television became AlaskaOne. KUAC took the reins as the originating station for AlaskaOne out of necessity, as KAKM in Anchorage decided to not join AlaskaOne. KUAC also took control of the ARCS system after the state determined the system was in danger of shutting down.

KUAC's story was of an organization that started as a sort of communications "golden child" for the University of Alaska (and the state) and eventually shifted to become a burden with decreasing support and purpose.

Ahead in chapter 4, the financial trajectory of KUAC for fiscal years 2014 to 2021 will be explored. The chapter examines KUAC's delicate financial landscape and reveals how the organization strategically prepared for and navigated the repercussions of the state's cuts to funding in 2019. The state's cuts exacerbated the organization's financial vulnerability and intensified the challenging nature of sustaining a public broadcasting station in Alaska's interior. How KUAC operated as a public broadcaster during times of financial insecurity is also highlighted as finances during the COVID-19 pandemic are also explored.

CHAPTER 4

KUAC: Financial Analysis

Chapter 3 showed that KUAC was developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a tool for the University of Alaska to expand its educational offerings and outreach. The organization had political and monetary support from the state and the university as the state developed its natural resources. KUAC was a trendsetter in what would become a robust public media system. The state and the university started to reassess their fiscal priorities amidst declines in oil revenue in the 1980s. KUAC was a service that experienced cuts. The state's and university's commitment to public broadcasting was never quite the same. Cuts continued through the 1990s as the state's oil revenue continued to decline.¹ As the state and university's fortunes waned, so too did KUAC's. KUAC was often forced to make cuts to programming, staff, and services as the state and the university cut funding to the organization (and the rest of the public broadcasting system).

This chapter examines the finances of the KUAC organization from fiscal years 2014 to fiscal year 2021.^{2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11} The financial trends of the organization before, during, and after the state defunded public broadcasting in 2019 will be explored. Examination of the organization's financial trends in the years leading up to and immediately after the cuts reveals the precariousness of the organization's finances and how the organization both prepared for and reacted to the cuts. Operating a public broadcasting station was already a uncertain endeavor for KUAC prior to the state's (and university's) cuts, and the cuts exacerbated that uncertainty.

However, this chapter also includes financial data from fiscal years 2020 and 2021, which were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. An unfortunate but beneficial byproduct of

analyzing financial data from the pandemic is that the data further highlights the difficulty of operating as a public broadcaster during times of financial insecurity.

Overall Revenue Trends

KUAC's overall revenue decreased by about 21% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. In 2014, the organization brought in about \$4.49 million in revenue. By 2021, revenue had dropped to about \$3.54 million. The decrease represented a loss of about \$950 thousand for the organization. As will be shown, KUAC's decrease in revenue was caused by decreasing underwriting support, decreasing support from the university, and the elimination of funding from the State of Alaska. However, the organization mitigated some of the losses with an increase in sustaining membership revenue. Without the increase, losses would have been much worse. Losing \$950 thousand in such a short period of time would have been difficult for any media organization, let alone a public broadcaster whose existence has been marred by decreased support and increased precarity.

The increase was not steady over the eight years under review as the organization's revenues fluctuated depending on the year. KUAC had variation with its revenue each year, but with the exception of fiscal year 2020, variation was not extreme from year to year. The trend showed revenue increasing slightly one year and decreasing slightly the next, repeating the pattern for the duration of the period under review. The organization's revenue increased by less than 1% (0.58%) in fiscal year 2014. Revenue then decreased by about 7% for fiscal year 2015 before increasing by about 3% in 2017. Revenue decreased again by approximately 8% in 2018 and increased by about 2% in 2019. Fiscal year 2019 was the largest decrease. Revenue fell by about 11% that year. Revenue fell again by about 1% for fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's revenue decreased by approximately 3% per year from 2014 to 2021. A low average decrease generally indicates relative stability for an organization's funding, but for KUAC, the steady decrease over eight years added up to a substantial amount. Fiscal year 2020 represented the only outlier year for the period under review. Revenue decreased by approximately 11% (\$444,278) that year. Outlier years can often dramatically affect the trajectory of a trend. Removing outlier years from averages can reveal details that would otherwise be obscured. This analysis, when appropriate, will remove outlier years from averages in an attempt to gain a clearer picture of an organization's fiscal trends. For example, if fiscal year 2020 was removed from KUAC's yearly revenue average, revenue would have decreased by about 2% for the remaining seven years in the average. Removing the outlier year showed that the organization's revenue would have still been dropping from year to year, but the outlier exacerbated the yearly decrease.

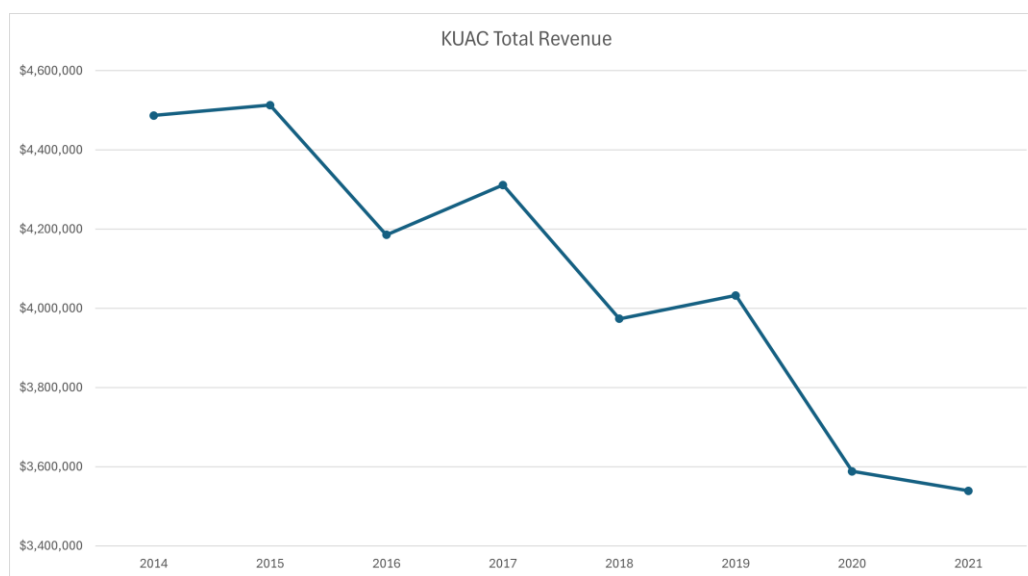


Figure 4.1. KUAC's total revenue from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

Membership Revenue Trends

KUAC's membership revenue increased by about 98% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Membership revenue increased sharply in fiscal year 2015, seeing an increase of about 36% that fiscal year. Revenue then stabilized somewhat over the next four fiscal years, never increasing or decreasing by more than 8%. However, membership revenue spiked once again in fiscal year 2020, increasing by about 31% that year. Membership revenue increased again by about 5% in fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's membership revenue increased by an average of about 11% per year from 2014 to 2021. 11% is a large per-year increase. Though the organization saw two years of small decreases (2016 and 2019, respectively), the overarching trend for membership revenue was one of sustained increase. However, 2015 and 2020 were sharp outlier years (36% increase and 31% increase, respectively), and both years drastically affected the average. If fiscal year 2015 was removed from the average, KUAC's average yearly membership revenue would have increased by approximately 7% for the remaining seven years under review. If fiscal year 2020 was removed (and fiscal year 2015 was kept) from the average, KUAC's yearly membership revenue would have increased by about 8% for the remaining years under review. If both fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2020 were removed from the average, KUAC's yearly membership revenue would have increased by about 2% for the remaining years under review.

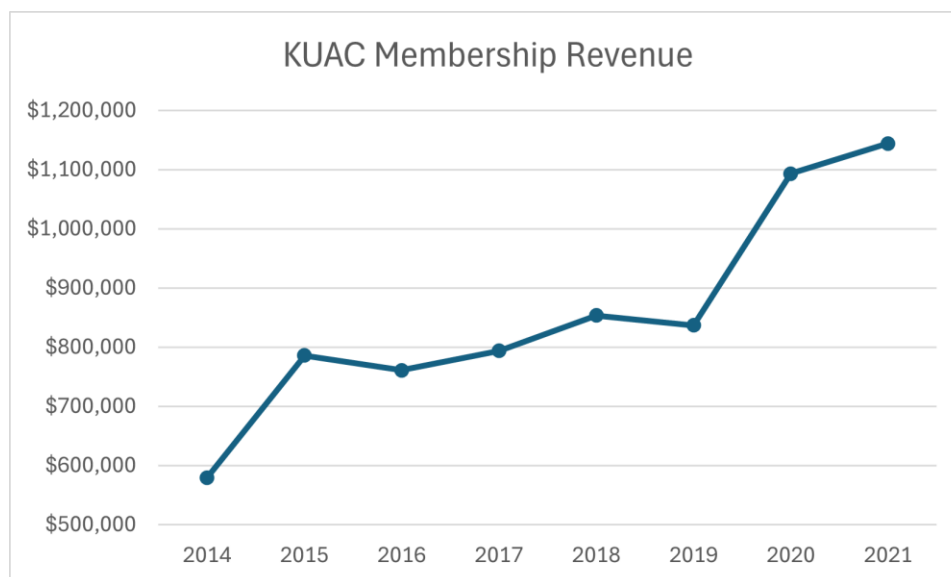


Figure 4.2. KUAC’s membership revenue from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

Outlier years heavily impacted the per year average increase for KUAC’s membership revenue. However, without the outliers, the trend appeared to show that the organization would have continued to experience growth in membership revenue during the period under review, just on a smaller scale. The effect of outlier years on public broadcasting funding is important. Outlier years (whether decreases or increases) drastically affect the financial trends of public broadcasting organizations, making it difficult to determine the fiscal health of an organization. As we’ll see throughout this analysis of KUAC and other organizations, Alaska’s public broadcasters are no exception.

The sharp increase in private donations for KUAC in 2020 was the result of people responding to the news of the organization’s financial situation following the state’s cuts. People also gave more due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to KUAC’s General Manager, the organization utilized different funding methods to increase support:

Statewide cuts in 2019, followed closely by the start of the global pandemic, motivated donors significantly. Many internal decisions and actions allowed us to be more responsive and responsible to our listeners, viewers, and staff. We decided to utilize the KUAC Friends Group fully to raise money because of the small amount of funding coming from the university now and explain why it was important to make gifts directly to [the friends group] to leverage more support we couldn't previously tap as 'just a department at the university.'¹²

The KUAC Friends Group (KFG) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates for the benefit of KUAC. KUAC shifted fundraising responsibility from itself as a department of the university to the group. Potential donors donated directly to the group instead of directly to KUAC. The change was important to the organization, because by fundraising through a non-profit organization instead of the university, KUAC can utilize goods, services, and grants that are available to recognized non-profits while avoiding some of the bureaucratic pitfalls of funding through the university (a state agency).¹³ Through the KFG, donors donate to the station using a portion of their permanent fund dividends.¹⁴ Donors were also able to utilize various services provided by for-profit companies that are unavailable to non-recognized non-profits, such as Amazon's former Smile program.

The increase in contributions to KUAC from FY 2014 to FY 2021 is an apparent bright spot for the organization and for proponents of public media organizations relying on market contributions to offset decreased institutional support. However, the reality for KUAC is that the market for private contributions can be fickle from year-to-year. The data show that two years of high donations can skew the results of how successful market contributions were for the organization's fiscal health. Inconsistency can be problematic when trying to sustain operations or plan for the future of an organization.

Underwriting Revenue Trends

KUAC's underwriting revenue decreased by about 40% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Underwriting revenue varied wildly from year-to-year, but the overall trend decreased steadily for the period under review. Underwriting revenue decreased by about 36% from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2017. Revenue decreased by about 7% in fiscal year 2015, 10% in fiscal year 2016, and 23% in fiscal year 2017. Revenue increased by about 8% in fiscal year 2018. That year was the only fiscal year during the review period where underwriting revenue increased. Underwriting revenue stayed relatively flat in 2019, increasing by less than 1% (0.52%) and then dropped again for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 (6% decrease and 9% decrease, respectively). Fiscal year 2021 was the lowest amount of underwriting revenue to the organization for the review period – about \$236 thousand. By contrast, fiscal year 2014 had the highest amount of underwriting revenue – about \$396 thousand.

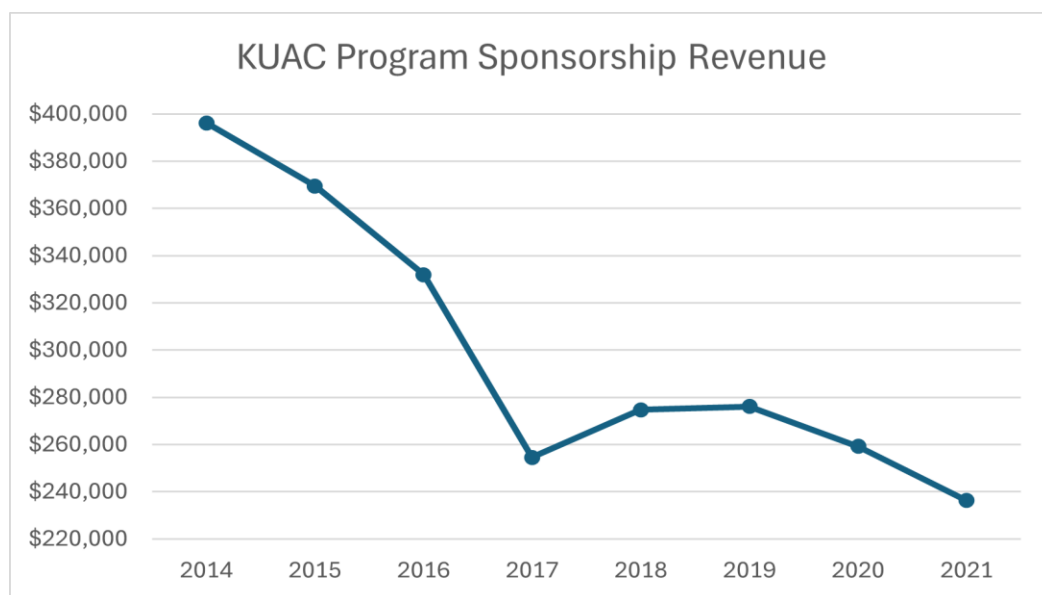


Figure 4.3. KUAC's program sponsorship (underwriting) revenue from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's underwriting revenue decreased by an average of about 7% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Fiscal years 2016 (10% decrease) and 2017 (23% decrease) were

outlier years. If fiscal year 2016 was removed from the average, KUAC's average yearly underwriting revenue would have decreased by about 6% for the remaining seven years under review. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average, KUAC's average yearly underwriting revenue would have decreased by about 4% for the remaining seven years under review. If both fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017 were removed from the average, KUAC would have seen its underwriting revenue decrease by about 3% per year for the remaining six years under review. The two outlier years had a dramatic effect on the organization's underwriting revenue trend. However, had the outlier years not occurred, KUAC would have continued to see its underwriting revenue decrease.

KUAC's decline in underwriting revenue showed that businesses in the Fairbanks area were willing to spend less on public media advertising. The university was also a major underwriter on the station. Cuts to the university would have certainly affected underwriting revenue. The decline may have also occurred if advertising took a hit in the Fairbanks commercial media market as well. If public media advertising was in decline, it stands to reason commercial advertising was as well. The gradual decline of underwriting revenue for KUAC highlights the unreliability of using underwriting revenue as an offset for institutional cuts.

KUAC's General Manager describes the organization's underwriting trend:

Underwriting saw a decline because of the reduction in funding at the university (our university underwriting dried up), the economy in Alaska was already suffering and the fishing industry was tanking all at the same time. This resulted in many businesses pulling back their media buys from both commercial and non-commercial stations. Then the pandemic hit. Businesses had to shut their doors, change their method of delivering services, and [advertising] budgets were cut. Lots of uncertainty. We are just now starting to see it pick up, but it is slow to come back. Many businesses failed, or proprietors took the "opportunity" to retire and closed their businesses or sold to larger entities with no ties to Fairbanks.¹⁵

Corporation for Public Broadcasting Revenue Trends

KUAC's Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funding from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021 increased by approximately 6%. KUAC had variation with its CPB funding for the period under review, but the variation (with the exception of fiscal year 2017) stayed relatively flat. CPB funding stayed mostly flat (0.02% increase) from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2015. CPB funding dropped by about 2% in fiscal year 2016 and then increased by about 12% for fiscal year 2017. Revenue decreased by about 6% in fiscal year 2018, stayed mostly flat (0.70%) in fiscal year 2019, and decreased by about 3% in fiscal year 2020. CPB funding increased by about 5% for fiscal year 2021. There was variation from year to year, but the variation was small.

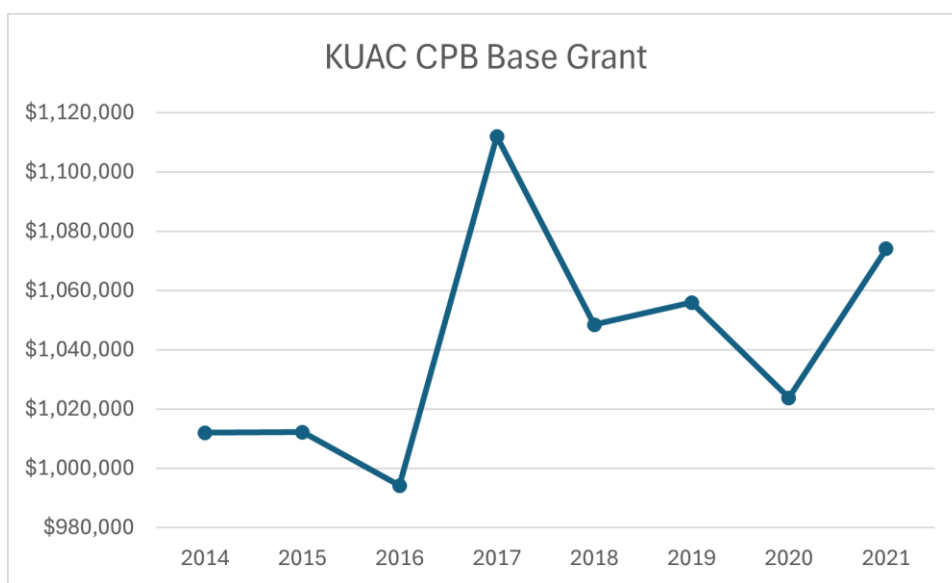


Figure 4.4. KUAC's CPB base grant from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's CPB funding increased by an average of about 1% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Fiscal year 2017 (12% increase) was the only outlier year. A 12% change is on the smaller end of outlier year percentages, but 12% is much higher than the other fiscal years. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average, KUAC's average yearly CPB funding would have increased by less than 1% (0.81) for the remaining seven years under

review. Fiscal year 2017 as an outlier year affected KUAC's average CPB funding, but the outlier was small enough to not drastically affect the average.

State of Alaska Revenue Trends

KUAC's revenue from the State of Alaska decreased by 100% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The percentage reflected the state zeroing out funding for Alaska's public broadcasters in 2019. Funding had already been decreasing in the years before the state stopped funding the system. State funding decreased by less than 1% (0.48%) from fiscal years 2014 to 2015. However, state funding decreased by about 20% in fiscal year 2016 and about 17% in fiscal year 2017. Funding was mostly flat (0.59 decrease) for fiscal year 2018 and decreased by about 2% in fiscal year 2019. Fiscal year 2020 was the first year that KUAC recorded no funding from the state. KUAC received approximately \$243 thousand from the state in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2019, the last year the state provided funding to the organization, KUAC received approximately \$156 thousand. KUAC lost about 36% of its state funding in the 6 years before funding was completely removed.

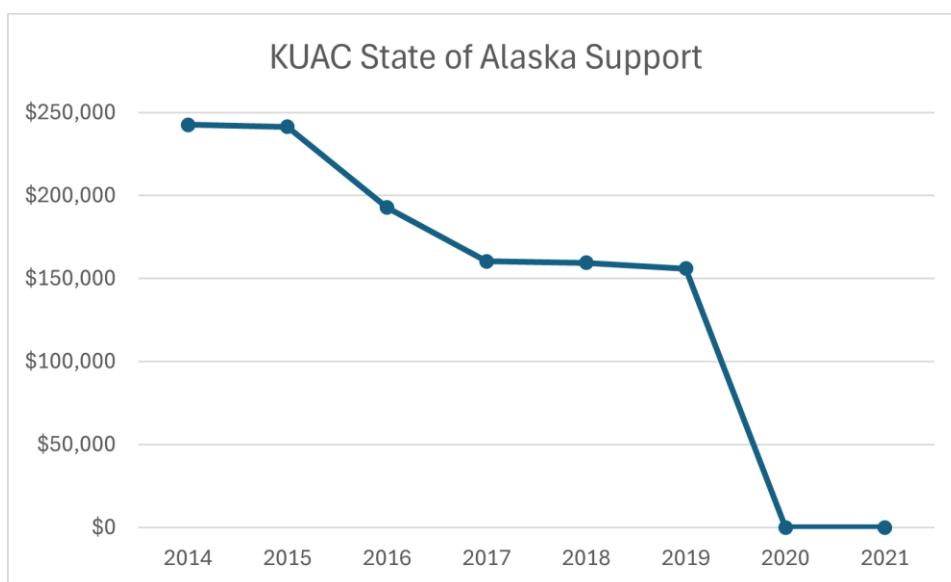


Figure 4.5. KUAC's financial support from the State of Alaska from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

Funding from the state decreased by an average of about 8% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019. Leading up to the removal of funding for Alaska's public broadcasters, KUAC experienced two outlier years where state funding decreased by large percentages, 2016 (20% decrease) and 2017 (17% decrease). This analysis would usually calculate averages by removing outlier years. Doing so reveals fiscal trends often obscured by outlier years. However, for KUAC's state funding trend from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2019, determining a fiscal trend without the outlier years would be a fruitless effort. The trend was already known. Funding from the state was zeroed out. Two main points should be remembered for this section. First, that the organization lost its funding from the state. Second, that funding was decreasing in the years leading up to the defunding of the system.

University of Alaska Revenue Trends

KUAC's revenue from the University of Alaska decreased by approximately 82% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. KUAC received about \$1.3 million from the university in fiscal year 2014. By fiscal year 2021, the university's funding to the station had dropped to about \$227 thousand. The decrease in university funding to the organization was consistent from year to year. Funding decreased by about 11% from fiscal years 2014 to 2015 and then decreased again by about 10% a year later. KUAC's funding from the university increased slightly for fiscal year 2017. The approximate 7% increase was the last increase the university provided the organization during the review period. KUAC's university funding decreased by about 28% for fiscal year 2018 and decreased again by about 3% in fiscal year 2019. The university reduced KUAC's funding by approximately 70% in fiscal year 2020 and kept the organization's funding at a flat level for fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's funding from the university decreased by an average of about 16% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Large per-year average percentages usually indicated outlier years affected the average somehow. There were certainly outlier years for KUAC's university funding; however, investigating the average per-year change without the outlier years would not reveal useful information. It's easy to see that decreased funding was the overall trend for KUAC's funding from the university. The decrease would have been true whether the outlier years were removed from the average or not. It's clear that the university drastically decreased its support for KUAC from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021. As the State of Alaska's fortunes changed, so did the university's (and KUAC's).

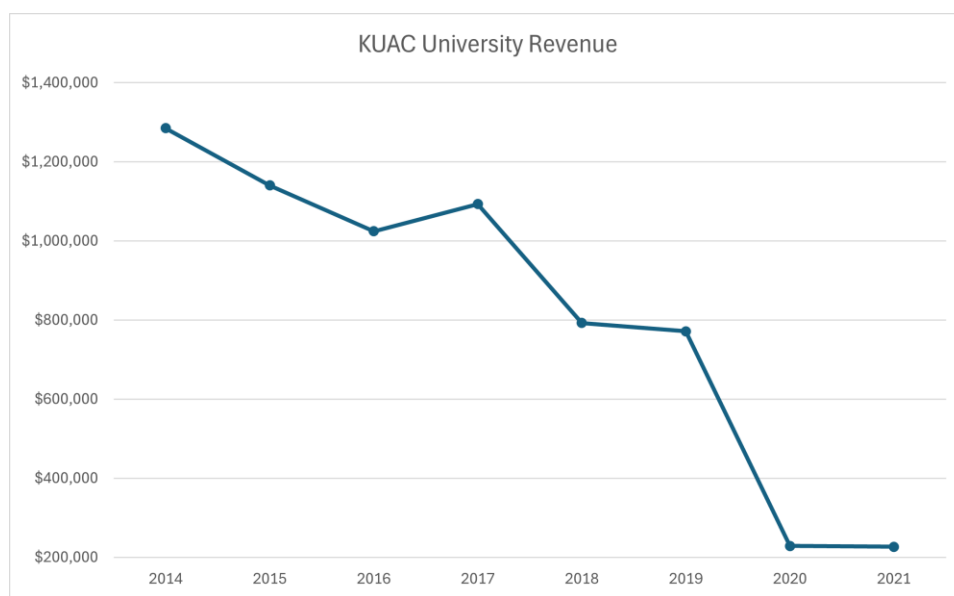


Figure 4.6. KUAC's revenue from the University of Alaska from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

It should be recognized that the university's 70% decrease in funding for fiscal year 2020 coincided with the state's defunding of the university as well as Alaska's public broadcasters. The university was facing its own budget crunch, and KUAC's funding was targeted as an unneeded expense. The university had to come up with its own solutions to mitigate the shortfall in a short period of time. Planned budgets were negated. The university was forced to balance its

budget and make up for the sudden loss in revenue by cutting funding to programs it deemed non-essential or not falling in line with its educational goals.^{16 17} KUAC was one of those programs. That determination was a complete departure from the university's beliefs when it started the organization to further its own educational goals. As a result of cuts from the state and the university, KUAC took a double hit to its government-sourced revenue.

Facilities and Admin Support Trends

KUAC's facilities and administrative support from the university increased by about 13% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The difference between facilities and administrative support and direct revenue support from the university was that facilities and administrative support were provided to the organization via its usage of facilities on the university's campus and usage of university employee labor to complete tasks. For example, the university provides KUAC with power from its power plant. There was no direct revenue provided to the station with its use of facilities and administrative support, but there was still inherent value in using the resources.

Support increased during the period under review, however, there was variation in support from year to year. The overall increase was impacted by a major outlier year for fiscal year 2020. Support decreased by about 5% from fiscal years 2014 to 2015. Support decreased again by about 6% in fiscal year 2016. Fiscal year 2017 increased by about 9%, fell again by about 8% for fiscal year 2018, and increased again by about 1% for fiscal year 2019. A major outlier year occurred in fiscal year 2020 as support increased by about 24% that year. Support stayed relatively flat for fiscal year 2021.

Facilities and administrative support increased by an average of about 2% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. However, as noted above, fiscal year 2020 was a major

outlier year (24% increase). If fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average, KUAC's average yearly facilities and administrative support from the university would have decreased by about 1% (1.3%) for the remaining seven years under review. The per-year average was directly affected by the outlier increase in fiscal year 2020. The only reason the trend initially showed increased support was because of the outlier percentage. Removing the outlier revealed that KUAC experienced an overall decreasing trend for facilities and administrative support.

Overall Expense Trends

KUAC's overall expense load decreased by about 18% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Overall expenses were variable for the period under review, but the variability did not increase or decrease by more than 7% during any fiscal year. Expenses decreased by about 10% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2016. Expenses then experienced a pattern where they would rise one fiscal year and then decrease another. The pattern continued through the rest of the review period. The organization's expenses increased by about 8% in fiscal year 2017 and decreased again by about 7% in fiscal year 2018. Expenses increased by approximately 3% in fiscal year 2019 and then decreased by about 4% a year later. KUAC's expenses decreased by about 6% in fiscal year 2021.

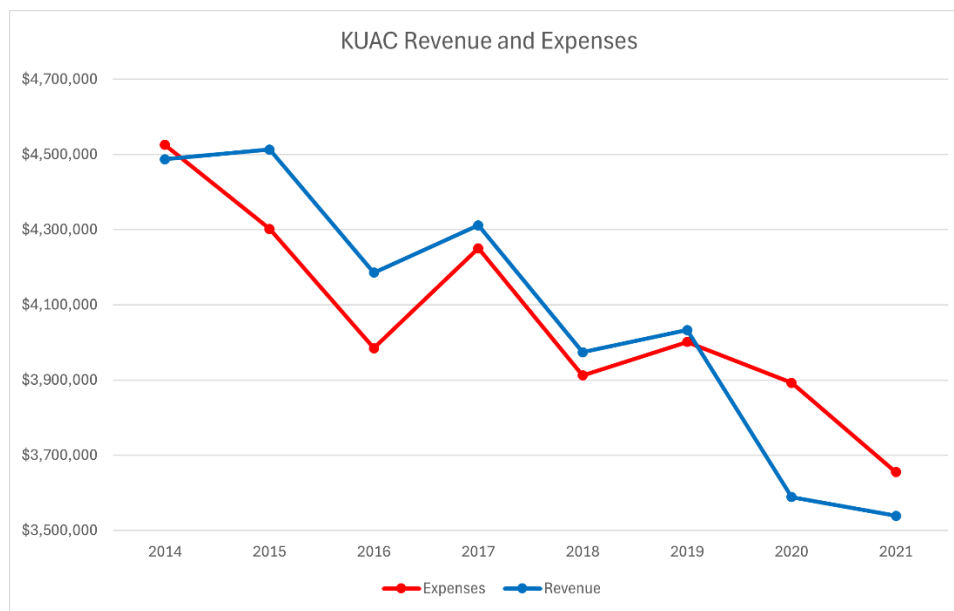


Figure 4.7. KUAC’s revenue and expenses from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

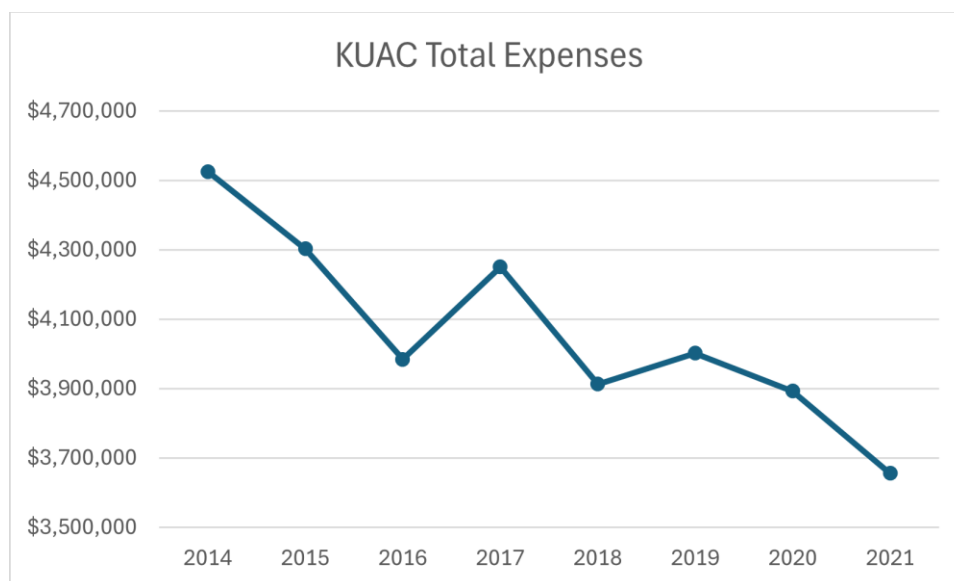


Figure 4.8. KUAC’s total expenses from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC’s total expenses decreased by an average of about 3% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The organization experienced no outlier years during the review period. The per-year decrease in expenses was fairly consistent over the eight years under review. The

average per-year change in expenses was fairly accurate as a result. As noted above, when the organization experienced a fiscal year where expenses increased, expenses generally decreased by a similar percentage the next year. There were some exceptions, such as fiscal years 2020 and 2021. KUAC paid roughly \$4.5 million in expenses for fiscal year 2014. By fiscal year 2021, it paid approximately \$3.7 million.

Program Services Expense Trends

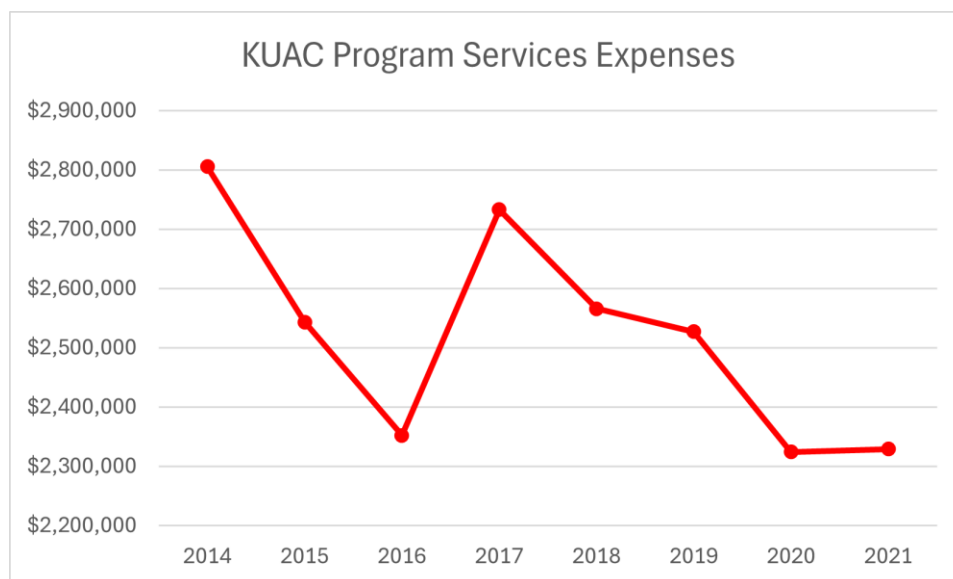


Figure 4.9. KUAC’s program services expenses from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

Program services expenses accounted for approximately 66% of KUAC’s average total expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Program services expenses decreased by about 16% during the review period. The decreasing trend was consistent, however, decreases varied depending on the fiscal year. KUAC’s program services costs decreased by about 9% in fiscal year 2015 and decreased again by about 7% in fiscal year 2016. Expenses increased by a substantial amount (about 16%) in 2017 before dropping by a total of 15% for fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020. Expenses stayed mostly flat in fiscal year 2021, rising by less than 1% (0.20%).

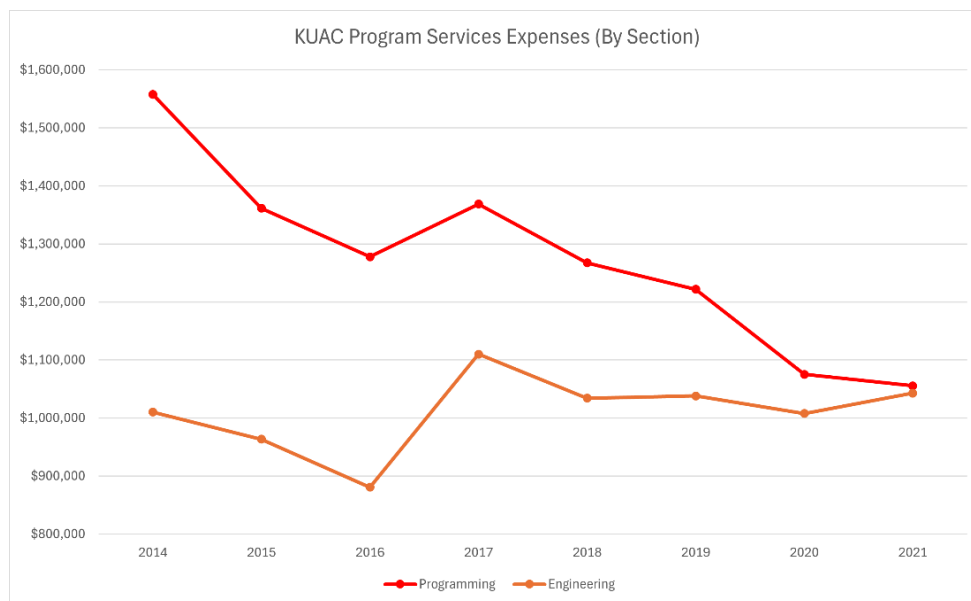


Figure 4.10. KUAC’s program services expenses by section from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC’s program services expenses decreased by an average of 2% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average decrease was low despite the consistent per-year decreases. The low average was helped by the outlier year in fiscal year 2017 (16% increase). The outlier was not large compared to other outlier years seen in this project, but it was large enough to counteract the decreases of several fiscal years. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average, the organization’s program services expenses would have decreased by an average of about 5% per year for the remaining years under review. Removing the 16% outlier increase from the average showed that the organization’s program services expenses would have continued to decrease every year, just by a larger percentage.

Programming & Production Expense Trends

KUAC’s programming and production expenses accounted for approximately 33% of the of the organization’s average total expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021.

Programming and production expenses also accounted for 51% of the organization’s total

program services expenses during the same period. Programming and production expenses decreased by about 32% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The organization paid \$1.56 million in expenses in fiscal year 2014. By 2021, it paid just about \$1.05 million. Costs decreased by about 13% in fiscal year 2015 and decreased again by approximately 6% a year later. Expenses increased by about 7% in fiscal year 2017. That year represented the last year KUAC's programming and production expenses increased during the review period. Expenses decreased by 7% in fiscal year 2018 and continued to decrease by about 4% in 2019, 12% in fiscal year 2020, and 2% in fiscal year 2021. Expenses fell by about 23% from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2021.

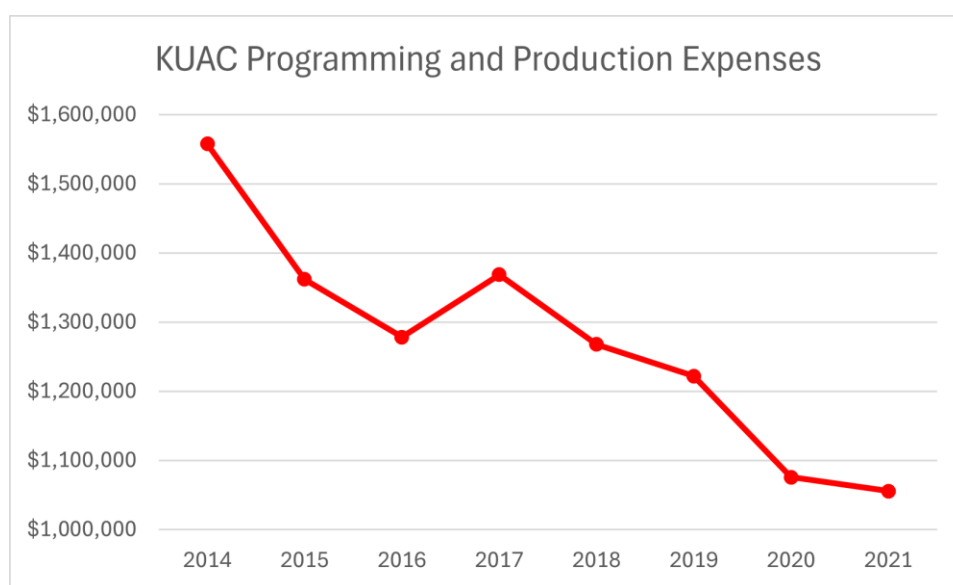


Figure 4.11. KUAC's programming and production expenses from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's programming and production expenses decreased by an average of 5% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average decrease was exacerbated due to two outlier years, fiscal year 2015 (12% decrease) and fiscal year 2020 (12% decrease). The outliers were not large, but they were large enough (especially combined) to affect the severity of the category's decrease. KUAC's programming and production expenses would have decreased by

an average of about 4% per year if fiscal year 2015 was removed from the average.

Programming and production expenses would have decreased by an average of about 2% per year if fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average (along with fiscal year 2015). As the outlier years were removed from the average, the severity of the category's yearly decrease changed. Programming and production expenses would have continued to decrease without the outlier years but to a lesser degree.

Engineering Expense Trends

KUAC's engineering expenses increased by about 3% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Engineering expenses accounted for approximately 26% of the of the organization's average total expense load, and 40% of the organization's total program services expenses for the same period. Expenses dropped by about 13% from fiscal year 2014 through 2016 before rebounding by approximately 26% in fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2018 dropped by about 7%, followed by an increase of less than 1% (0.39%) for fiscal year 2019 and another decrease of about 3% in fiscal year 2020. Engineering expenses increased by about 4% for fiscal year 2021. Engineering expenses experienced sharp variability from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2017, however, they stayed relatively stable for fiscal years 2018 through 2021.

KUAC's engineering expenses increased by an average of about 1% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. However, as was noted above, the category experienced variability before stabilizing before the end of the review period. The average was affected by an outlier year increase of about 26% for fiscal year 2017. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average, KUAC's engineering expenses would have decreased by an average of about 3% per year for the remaining years under review. After the outlier year was removed from the average, the category's trend shifted from yearly increase to yearly decrease. The shift in KUAC's

engineering expenses trend shows how drastically outlier years can affect average trends and makes interpretation of public broadcasting finances tricky.

Supporting Services Expense Trends

Supporting services expenses accounted for an average of approximately 34% of KUAC's total expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Supporting services expenses decreased by about 20% during the years under review. The decrease trend was consistent for the period under review with just a few fiscal years where expenses increased. Expenses increased by about 6% in fiscal year 2015 and decreased by about 3% for fiscal year 2016, 6% for fiscal year 2017, and about 10% in fiscal year 2018. Expenses increased by about 11% in 2019 and increased again by just 1% in fiscal year 2020. Fiscal year 2021 saw a decrease of about 18%.

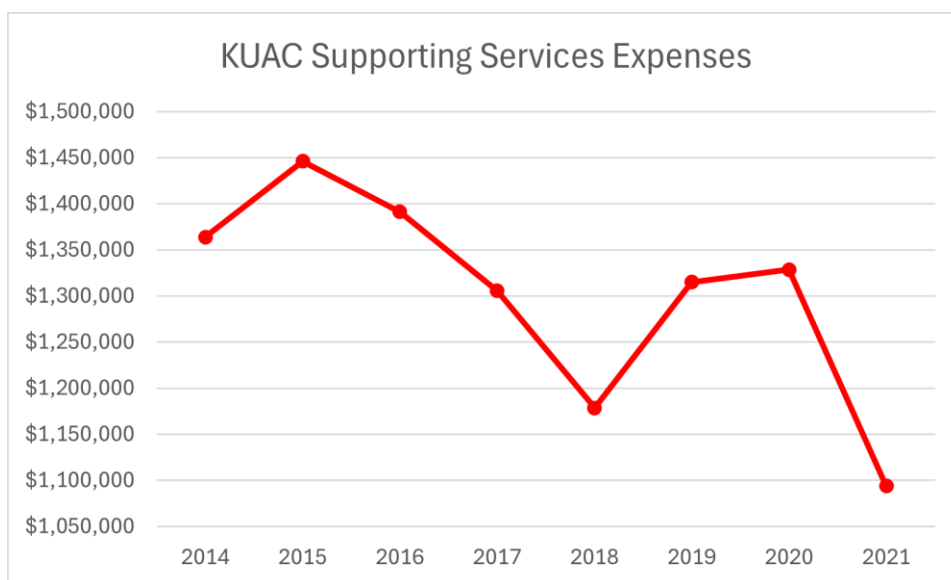


Figure 4.12. KUAC's supporting services expenses from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's supporting services expenses decreased by an average of 3% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average was impacted by two outlier years, fiscal year 2019 (12% increase) and fiscal year 2021 (18% decrease). The organization's supporting services

expenses would have decreased by an average of about 5% per year if fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2021 was removed, but fiscal year 2019 was kept in the average, the organization's supporting services expenses would have decreased by less than 1% (0.17%) per year for the remaining years under review. The organization's supporting services expenses would have decreased by about 3% per year if both fiscal years were removed from the average,

Clearly the outlier years impacted the per year average of the category. When the outlier increase for fiscal year 2019 was removed, the decreasing trend intensified. When the outlier decrease for fiscal year 2021 was removed (but 2019 kept), the outlier increase from 2019 lessened the overall decrease of trend. When both outliers were removed, the remaining fiscal years in the average (3% per year average decrease) represented a much more accurate trend. There is an issue that can arise when too many outlier years are removed from an average. If the sample size of fiscal years is not sufficient, a trend can be difficult to determine. However, the sample size for KUAC's supporting services expenses (5 fiscal years) appeared to be large enough. A larger sample size would have revealed more details.

Management Expense Trends

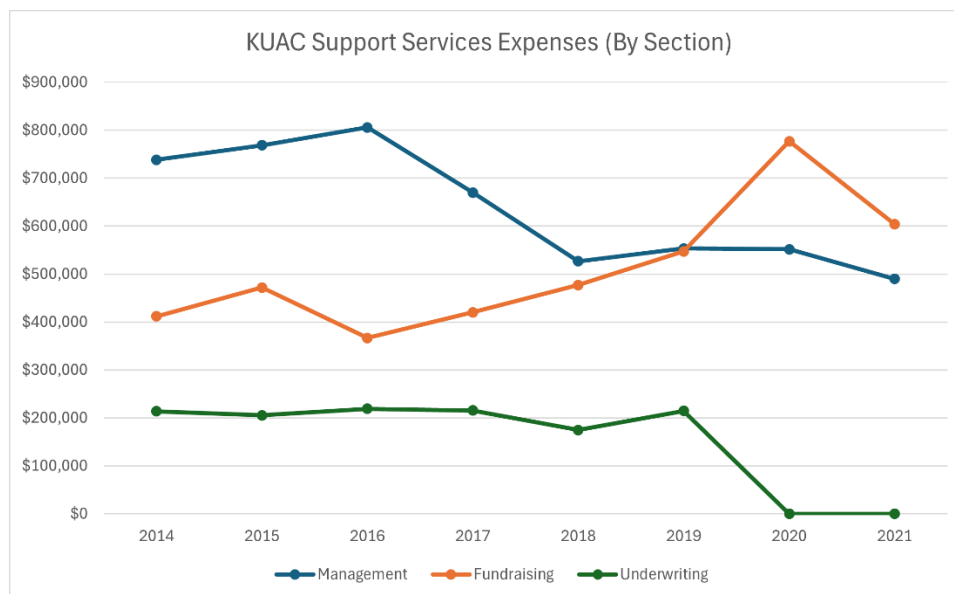


Figure 4.13. KUAC’s support services expenses by section from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC’s management expenses decreased by about 34% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Management expenses accounted for approximately 17% of the of the organization’s average total expense load and accounted for 49% of the organization’s total support services expenses during the same period. KUAC paid just about \$738 thousand on management expenses in fiscal year 2014. By the end of fiscal year 2021, the organization paid just about \$490 thousand. Management expenses increased by about 4% in fiscal year 2015 and by 5% in fiscal year 2016. However, they sharply decreased by about 17% in fiscal year 2017 and by 21% in fiscal year 2018. Fiscal year 2019 saw management expenses increase by about 5% and then stay mostly flat (0.27 decrease) a year later. Management expenses dropped by about 11% by the end of fiscal year 2021.

KUAC’s management expenses decreased by an average of about 5% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Management expenses experienced three outlier years during the period under review. The outliers were fiscal years 2017 (17% decrease), 2018 (21% decrease),

and 2021 (11% decrease). Typically, outlier years would be removed to determine how they affected the per-year average. However, removing the outliers for KUAC's management expenses would not be useful for this analysis because of how often outlier decreases occurred and the percentages the outliers accounted for. The trend for the category's expenses would have decreased no matter what fiscal year was removed.

Fundraising Expense Trends

KUAC's fundraising expenses were somewhat complicated to analyze. From fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019, KUAC had two distinct fiscal categories for its fundraising expenses and its underwriting expenses. The organization shifted the way it represented both expenses starting in fiscal year 2020. Underwriting expenses as a fiscal category was combined with fundraising expenses. The combination removed underwriting expenses as a category in KUAC's fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 financial reports. To alleviate confusion analyzing the organization's fundraising expenses, this analysis combined fundraising and underwriting expenses from the beginning of the review period to fiscal year 2020 when KUAC started doing it on its own.

KUAC's fundraising expenses decreased by about 4% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Fundraising expenses accounted for approximately 17% of the of the organization's average total expense load during the same period. Fundraising expenses also accounted for 51% of the organization's total support services expenses. Fundraising expenses increased by about 8% in fiscal year 2015. Expenses decreased by about 14% in fiscal year 2016 and increased by about 9% in fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2018 saw expenses increase by another 3%, fiscal year 2019 increased again by about 17%, and fiscal year 2020 increased by about 2%. Fundraising expenses dropped sharply in fiscal year 2021, decreasing by about 22%.

KUAC's fundraising expenses increased by an average of less than 1% (0.34) per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average per-year increase indicates that KUAC's fundraising expenses remained relatively flat during the review period. However, the expense trend was affected by three outlier years, fiscal year 2016 (14% decrease), fiscal year 2018 (17% increase), and fiscal year 2021 (22% decrease). The organization's fundraising expenses would have increased by an average of about 3% per year if fiscal year 2016 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2018 was removed from the average (and the other two outliers remained), the organization's fundraising expenses would have decreased by an average of about 2% per year for the remaining years under review. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, the organization's fundraising expenses would have increased by an average of about 4% per year for the remaining years under review.

The removal of outliers from per-year averages again showed the effect outliers have on the trends of fiscal categories. When the outlier decreases were removed from the average, the percentage of the per-year decrease lessened. When the outlier increase was removed, the percentage of the per-year decrease rose.

Total Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's total labor expenses decreased by about 12% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Labor expenses accounted for approximately 44% of the of the organization's average total expense load during the same period. KUAC recorded approximately \$1.77 million in total labor expenses for fiscal year 2014. The organization recorded total labor expenses of \$1.56 million for fiscal year 2021. Total labor expenses decreased by about 6% in fiscal year 2015 and decreased again by about 7% in fiscal year 2016. Expenses spiked in fiscal year 2017, seeing an increase of approximately 16%. Labor expenses then decreased for the rest of the review period.

Fiscal year 2018 decreased by about 4%, fiscal year 2019 decreased by less than 1% (0.09%), fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 7%, and fiscal year 2021 decreased by about 3%. Combined, KUAC's total labor expenses for the latter four fiscal years decreased by approximately 14%.

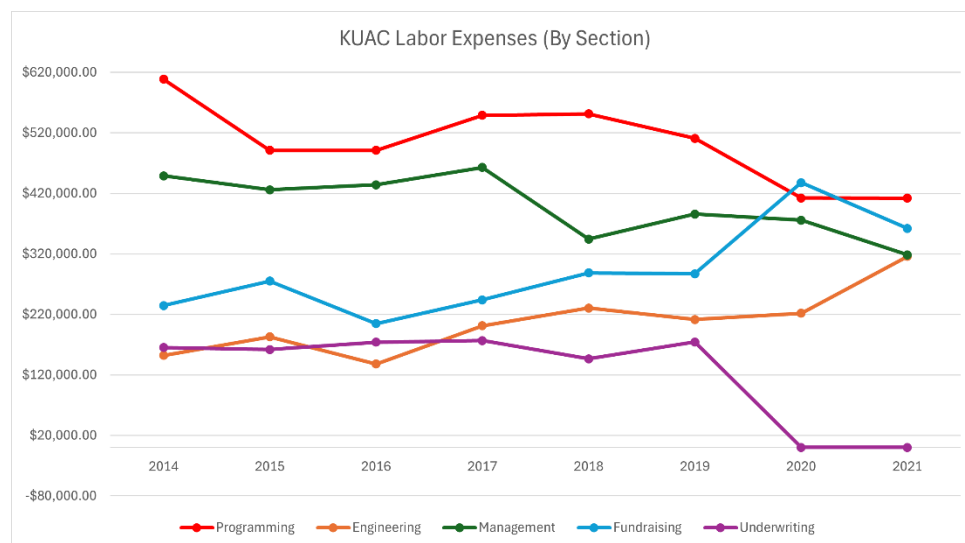


Figure 4.14. KUAC's labor expenses by section from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021.

KUAC's total labor expenses decreased by an average of about 2% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. With the exception of fiscal year 2017, KUAC's labor expenses decreased for every year under review. Fiscal year 2017 was also the only outlier during the review period. Labor costs increased by approximately 16% that year. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average, the organization's labor expenses would have decreased by an average of about 4% per year for the remaining years under review. The outlier year only affected the average by about 2% per year and its increase softened the organization's decreasing labor expenses trend. Had the outlier year not occurred, KUAC would have continued to see a trend of decreasing labor expenses but to a greater extent.

Program Services Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's labor expenses for program services (programming and engineering) decreased by about 5% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Program services labor accounted for approximately 51% of the of the organization's average total labor expense load during the same period. KUAC recorded approximately \$926 thousand in program services expenses for fiscal year 2014 and \$883 thousand for fiscal year 2021, but the highest amount of labor expenses came in fiscal year 2018 when the organization spent approximately \$963 thousand. Program services expenses decreased by about 12% in fiscal year 2015 and decreased again by about 9% in fiscal year 2016. An outlier year occurred in fiscal year 2017 when expenses increased by about 25%. Expenses increased again by about 4% a year later. Fiscal year 2019 had a decrease of approximately 7% and fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 10%. KUAC's program services labor expenses increased again by about 10% in fiscal year 2021. Program services labor was highly variable each year. The category did not see much stability.

KUAC's program services labor expenses decreased by an average of less than 1% (0.09%) from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The low-average per-year decrease percentage was surprising. Program services labor expenses were highly variable from year to year. There were also four outlier years during the review period. The low per-year average decrease looked to be mostly an accident. Each outlier year was counteracted with another outlier year (or two). If an outlier year moved the trend toward yearly decreases, another outlier year moved the trend toward yearly increases. Outlier years are generally removed from averages in this analysis to try and ascertain accurate trends for fiscal categories. However, removing outliers from KUAC's program services labor expenses would not be beneficial, because it's already been made clear that no one outlier year drastically affected the average – they were counteracted by another year.

Also, the category has four outlier years. Removing them would reduce the sample size to an unusable amount.

KUAC's program services labor expenses appeared to remain stable and had little per-year variation. The reality was that there was high variation in labor expenses from year to year. The variation did not trend toward one way or another.

Programming and Production Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's labor expenses for programming and production accounted for approximately 30% of the of the organization's total labor expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Programming and production labor expenses also accounted for 58% of the organization's total program services labor expenses during the same period. Programming and production labor expenses decreased by about 32% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. KUAC paid approximately \$608 thousand in programming and production labor expenses in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2021, the organization paid approximately \$412 thousand. Programming and production labor expenses decreased by about 19% in fiscal year 2015. Expenses remained mostly flat for fiscal 2016 (0.02% decrease) and then increased by about 12% in fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2018 was again relatively flat, only increasing by less than 1% (0.41%). The organization's programming and production labor expenses then decreased for the rest of the review period. Fiscal year 2019 decreased by about 7%, fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 19%, and fiscal year 2021 stay mostly flat again, decreasing by less than 1% (0.08%).

Programming and production labor expenses decreased by an average of 5% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average decrease was affected by three outlier years, fiscal year 2015 (19% decrease), fiscal year 2017 (12% increase), and fiscal year 2020 (19% decrease). Though the outlier increase for fiscal year 2017 affected the average, its

influence was mitigated and overshadowed by the decreases for fiscal years 2015 and 2020. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average (and the other two outliers remained), the organization's programming and production labor expenses would have decreased by an average of about 8% per year for the remaining years under review. Fiscal year 2017 just lessened the severity of the two other outlier years on the average per-year trend. If one of the other outlier years were removed from the average, and fiscal year 2017 was kept, the trend would have continued to decrease, but the percentage of decrease would have been less.

Engineering Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's labor expenses for engineering accounted for approximately 12% of the of the organization's total labor expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Engineering labor expenses also accounted for 24% of the organization's total program services labor expenses during the same period. Engineering labor expenses increased by about 108% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Approximately \$152 thousand in engineering labor expenses was spent in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2021, the organization paid approximately \$316 thousand. Engineering labor expenses increased by about 20% in fiscal year 2015 and then fell sharply by about 25% in fiscal year 2016. Expenses increased sharply by about 48% in fiscal year 2017 and then increased again by about 15% in fiscal year 2018. Fiscal year 2019 had labor expenses decrease by about 8% before increasing by about 5% the next year. The organization's engineering labor expenses then increased by about 42% in fiscal year 2021.

Engineering labor expenses increased by an average of 13% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average increase was affected by five outlier years. Fiscal year 2015 (20% increase), fiscal year 2016 (25% decrease), fiscal year 2017 (46% increase), fiscal year 2018 (15% increase), and fiscal year 2021 (42% increase) were all outlier years. Removing

outliers from the average to reveal a trend would not be useful for the analysis, because the majority of the years under review were outliers. The majority of the outliers were also increases in labor expenses. Removing one or two outliers would not reveal additional information, but the average would still be affected by other outlier years. Removing all of the outliers would make the sample size too small.

Engineering labor expenses were highly variable, except the variability trended toward yearly increases instead of going back and forth between increases and decreases. The category was highly unstable during the period under review as well. Frequent outlier increases meant that the organization was consistently seeing its engineering expenses increase. Engineering labor expenses were not stable. A possible reason for the instability and increase in expenses is that the organization could have gone through a period where engineering employees left the organization and others were subsequently hired. Another explanation could be that KUAC underwent a period of equipment change where more engineers and engineering services were needed, and more labor was acquired to meet the need.

Supporting Services Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's supporting services labor expenses accounted for approximately 49% of the organization's total labor expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Supporting services labor expenses decreased by about 20% during the same period. Approximately \$848 thousand in expenses was spent in fiscal year 2014. \$680 thousand was spent in fiscal year 2021. The trend for supporting services labor expenses saw the category increasing during one fiscal year, and then dropping during another. The pattern was repeated until the end of the review period.

Supporting services labor expenses increased by about 2% in fiscal year 2015 and then fell by about 6% in fiscal year 2016. Expenses increased by about 9% in fiscal year 2017 and then decreased again by about 12% in fiscal year 2018. Supporting services labor expenses then increased by about 9% in fiscal year 2019. Fiscal years 2020 and 2021 saw decreases in labor expenses during both years. Fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 4% and fiscal year 2021 decreased by about 17%.

Supporting services labor expenses decreased by an average of 3% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The category experienced two outlier years, fiscal year 2018 (12% increase) and fiscal year 2021 (16% decrease). The organization's labor expenses would have decreased by an average of about 1% per year if fiscal year 2018 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average along with fiscal year 2018, the organization's labor expenses would have increased by an average of about 2% per year for the remaining years under review. The outlier years had a clear effect on the average per-year percentage change for the organization's supporting services labor expenses. When one outlier decrease was removed, the per-year percentage decrease lessened. When both outlier years were removed, the trend shifted to a per-year increase in labor expenses. The outliers pushed the average down.

Management Labor Expense Trends

KUAC's management labor expenses accounted for approximately 24% of the of the organization's total labor expense load from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Management labor expenses also accounted for 49% of the organization's total supporting services labor expenses during the same period. Management labor expenses decreased by about 29% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. KUAC paid approximately \$449 thousand in management labor expenses in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2021, the organization paid approximately \$318

thousand. Management labor expenses decreased by about 5% in fiscal year 2015. Expenses then increased by about 2% in fiscal 2016 and increased again by about 7% in fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2018 saw a decrease of approximately 26% and fiscal year 2019 increased by about 12%. KUAC's management labor expenses then decreased for the rest of the review period. Fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 3% and fiscal year 2021 decreased again by about 15%.

Management labor expenses decreased by an average of 4% per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The average decrease was affected by three outlier years, fiscal year 2018 (26% decrease), fiscal year 2019 (12% increase), and fiscal year 2021 (15% decrease). As was seen in the programming and production labor expenses section, one outlier increase affected the average, but its influence was mitigated and overshadowed by outlier decreases from other outlier years. If fiscal year 2019's increase was removed from the average (and the other two outliers remained), the organization's programming and production labor expenses would have decreased by an average of about 7% per year for the remaining years under review. The outlier increase lessened the impact of the other two fiscal years, but when it was removed from the average, the category's decreasing trend intensified.

Fundraising Labor Expense Trends

As was noted in the fundraising expenses section, KUAC shifted the way it represented its fundraising and underwriting expenses starting in fiscal year 2020. Underwriting expenses as a fiscal category were combined with the fundraising expenses category. The combination removed underwriting expenses (including labor expenses) as a category for KUAC's fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 financial reports. The result of the combination meant that fundraising expenses for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 included expenses for underwriting. To alleviate confusion and to give an accurate representation of information, fundraising and underwriting

expenses for this section were combined from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019 to accurately fall in line with changes KUAC started in fiscal year 2020.

KUAC's fundraising labor expenses accounted for approximately 25% of the of the organization's total labor expense load, and for about 51% of the organization's total supporting services labor expenses from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. Expenses decreased by about 9% during the same period. KUAC paid approximately \$400 thousand in fundraising labor expenses in fiscal year 2014. By fiscal year 2021, the organization paid approximately \$362 thousand. Fundraising labor expenses increased by about 9% in fiscal year 2015 and then decreased by about 13% for fiscal year 2016. Expenses increased by about 11% in fiscal year 2017, and again in fiscal year 2018 by about 4%. Expenses increased again a year later by about 6%. Fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 5%, and fiscal year 2021 decreased again by about 17%.

Fundraising labor expenses decreased by an average of less than 1% (0.84%) per year from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The category was affected by three outlier years, fiscal year 2016 (13% decrease), fiscal year 2017 (11% increase), and fiscal year 2021 (17% decrease). As was shown in the management labor expenses section, and the programming and production labor expenses section, there was one outlier year where expenses increased and two where expenses decreased. The outlier increase for fiscal year 2017 affected the average, but its influence was mitigated by the decreases for fiscal years 2016 and 2021. If fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average (and the other two outliers remained), KUAC's programming and production labor expenses would have decreased by an average of about 3% per year for the remaining years under review. Like the previous sections, the outlier increase lessened the severity of the two other outlier years on the average per-year trend. If one of the other outlier

years were removed from the average, and fiscal year 2017 was kept, the trend would have continued to decrease, but the percentage of decrease would have been less.

Conclusion and Summary

KUAC's revenue decreased sharply from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The organization's overall revenue decreased by about 21% during the review period. Revenue decreased by an average of approximately 3% per year from 2014 to 2021. KUAC saw decreased underwriting support (40% decrease), decreased support from the University of Alaska (82% decrease), and the elimination of its support from the State of Alaska (100% decrease). The organization's funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting also remained relatively flat. Membership was a bright spot for KUAC, however. Membership revenue increased by about 98% during the review period. The sharp increase in private donations was the result of multiple factors. The organization utilized different funding methods to increase support. It moved control of its fundraising efforts to the KUAC Friends Group from the university. People also gave more in response to the state's cuts. People also gave more due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By the end of the review period, KUAC's revenue had decreased by about \$950 thousand.

The organization's decline in underwriting revenue showed that businesses in the Fairbanks area were willing to spend less on public media advertising and philanthropy amidst the state's budgetary cutbacks (which affected the overall economy) and the decline in oil revenues. The university, as a state entity, also cut back its underwriting buys to the organization.

The organization's revenue from the State of Alaska decreased by 100%. However, funding from the state had decreased by an average of about 8% per year from fiscal year 2014

to fiscal year 2019. KUAC lost about 36% of its state funding in the six years before funding was completely removed. Likewise, KUAC's revenue from the University of Alaska decreased by approximately 82% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. KUAC received about \$1.3 million from the university in fiscal year 2014. By fiscal year 2021, the university's funding to the station had dropped to about \$227 thousand. KUAC's funding from the CPB increased by approximately 6%, however, KUAC funding each year remained relatively flat. KUAC's CPB funding increased by an average of about 1% per year.

KUAC's government-based funding and underwriting support experienced tremendous declines from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. While the organization was able to rely on membership to make up for the losses, membership revenue was not enough to counter the declines. The organization had been pressured by the state, university, and the CPB to rely on its market to support itself. However, as this examination has shown, KUAC existed in a tremendously precarious fiscal environment where revenues shifted dramatically from year to year. The organization's revenues were also heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization can't rely on government-based funding to support itself, but market-based funding is also precarious.

KUAC's expense load also fell from fiscal years 2014 to 2021. The overall expense load decreased by about 18%. Total labor expenses also decreased by about 12%. Program services expenses, which are comprised of expenses related to programming and engineering, decreased considerably (about 16%). Program services labor expenses decreased by about 5%.

Programming and production expenses alone (without engineering) sharply decreased (32% decrease or about 5% per year). Programming and production labor expenses also sharply fell (about 32%). The organization's engineering expenses increased (about 3%). Despite the overall

increase, engineering-related expenses were variable from year to year. Engineering labor expenses increased by about 108% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2021. The high labor expenses for engineering reflected the ups and downs of engineering costs at a public broadcasting station. As noted earlier in the chapter, engineering labor expenses were affected by two fiscal years where labor costs were considerably higher.

The decreases in program services expenses meant that the organization was forced to cut programming and/or engineering-related services to make up for decreases in revenue. Those cuts usually translate to cuts in jobs (labor), local or national programming, and equipment maintenance and upgrades. As KUAC's revenue decreased, so did its ability to provide programming and engineering services to its audience.

Supporting services expenses, which are comprised of expenses related to management and fundraising (behind the scenes support) decreased considerably (about 20%). Supporting services labor expenses also decreased by about 20%. KUAC's management expenses decreased (about 34%). The organization paid just about \$738 thousand on management expenses in fiscal year 2014. By the end of fiscal year 2021, the organization paid just about \$490 thousand. Management labor expenses decreased by about 29%. KUAC's fundraising expenses also declined, seeing a drop of about 4%. Fundraising labor expenses decreased by about 9%.

Similar to program services expenses, supporting services expenses experienced declines during the review period. The decrease in expenses shows that the organization cut expenses for its supporting staff and programs in much the same way it did for programming and engineering. The result of cutting supporting services meant that the organization had less resources available to support the organization, whether through fundraising efforts of behind-the-scenes clerical or managerial efforts. Audiences were directly affected by decreased support for supporting staff,

because support staff were generally the ones who are in direct contact with the community.

Fewer supporting services means a decreased ability to solicit support or accomplish the tasks that are required for a public broadcasting station to operate efficiently.

KUAC's finances are precarious. The organization experienced a considerable decrease in revenue, which in turn forced the organization to cut staff and services. Those cuts were reflected in KUAC's expenses. The organization has accomplished what it has been encouraged to do by the state, the university, and the CPB – rely on its market to survive. It has seen tremendous growth in membership support. However, the organization faces fiscal uncertainty as government support is no longer available, and market support (such as underwriting) remains fickle. It is also unknown how long continued reliance on membership support will last. Parts of KUAC's finances are encouraging, but others show a public broadcasting organization that exists in an extremely precarious environment.

CHAPTER 5

KYUK: A Necessary Market Alternative

KYUK radio and television in Bethel Alaska experienced unusual interference of its Rural Alaska Television Network (RATNET) reception in 1990. The network's signal suffered from poor quality. KYUK television's engineers initially believed that the signals were being affected by a freshly installed satellite dish, but after multiple tests, they determined that the dish was not the problem. While engineers were trying to figure out the reception issue one evening, they heard a loud "ping" noise and then noticed that RATNET's reception had cleared.

The "ping" had come from the organization's microwave oven which had just finished its cooking cycle. The oven was frequently used by a KYUK reporter who had an appetite for potatoes and ketchup during their work shift. The microwave was sitting close enough to the RATNET equipment that its radiation was affecting the network's reception quality every time it was used. The microwave was moved and RATNET's signal quality was restored. The story reflects the unique conditions KYUK operated in as Bethel Alaska's only broadcasting station.¹

This chapter examines the development of KYUK radio and television from the early 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Southwest Alaska was severely devoid of telecommunication and broadcasting resources in the early 1970s. The FCC determined that Bethel could not sustain a commercial radio station, and as a result, the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission (AEBC) determined that Bethel would be the perfect site for the first public radio station created and funded by the state of Alaska. Taxpayer-funded media was a viable alternative to market-based communications and broadcasting resources.

How KYUK furthered Alaska Native representation across the state and the nation while operating in a harsh remote environment will also be explored. KYUK developed methods of

programming and fundraising that appealed to a mostly Yupik audience. The 1980s and 1990s were challenging for the organization as state lawmakers and the federal government started to question the value of public broadcasting. The growth of the organization, the challenges it faced, and the learning processes it faced as the only broadcaster in rural southwest Alaska will also be discussed.

KYUK Advances Alaska Native Culture in Southwest Alaska

KYUK radio was developed at a time when Alaska Natives experienced a cultural shift between living a subsistence lifestyle and a "modern" lifestyle that utilized technology and convenience. Radio served as the initial primary medium for Alaska's southwest region, because radio was accessible for remote areas. Radio was accessible because it was relatively cheap to set up and operate a broadcasting station. The ability to purchase receivers was also relatively easy for rural residents. Although broadcasting stations and receivers in some parts of Alaska were more expensive than what was found in the Lower 48, radio was more accessible than other options such as television (at least initially).

The development of "bush" radio or radio stations designed by and for Alaska Natives, aimed to preserve Alaska Native culture and language degradation. Coleman, Morgan, and Smith (1997) said that academic scholarship was mixed on the effects of electronic media on traditional cultures. They cited Keith (1995) who found that exposure to electronic media was detrimental to traditional cultures due to its ability to influence how cultural information was delivered and processed by those cultures. Scholarship was not clear about whether traditional cultures were active or passive participants in the dissemination and ingestion of cultural content that was not their own. A 1992 study found that cultural assimilation of Native peoples had occurred to do increased access to mass media and an increase of exposure to English-language content.^{2 3 4}

Coleman, Morgan, and Smith wrote that the development of KYUK and similar stations was a countercultural move to retain the cultural agency of Alaska Natives and Native Americans throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The authors cited the manager of KIDE-FM in Hoopa, California who said that radio enabled Natives to transfer cultural values to one another that fit within traditional oral methods of dissemination.⁵

Smith & Brigham found that Native stations often shared the same three goals -- the preservation of language, the offering of educational material, and entertainment programming that appealed to Native interests.

KYUK's mission statement reflected the same goals nearly 30 years later:

We are dedicated to serving the rural Alaska and Alaska Native communities of our region and responding to issues that affect the people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Our mission is to educate and inform as well as provide cultural enrichment, entertainment, and opportunity for public access and language maintenance for cultural survival.^{6 7}

Bethel, Alaska, and the immediate area around the town are tiny when compared to broadcasting markets in the Lower 48. In the early 1970s, Bethel had close to 25 hundred people living within the town's limits. The area around Bethel, which was comprised of dozens of villages, had about 20 thousand residents at the time. Yupik was the most spoken language by area residents. There were (and continue to be) no roads connecting Bethel to the rest of the state. The only media services available to the Bethel area came from an Armed Forces Radio Network repeater. Its signal only made it to the edge of town. Residents could sometimes pick up content from Anchorage and Nome, but the radio signals were often distorted and wrought with interference.^{8 9}

In spring 1970, the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission (AEBC) determined that Bethel would be the site of the first public radio station created by the state of Alaska and

began working on an application for a construction permit. A radio station would not have happened in Bethel unless the state became involved. The FCC determined that Bethel could not sustain a commercial radio station. The FCC also said that a commercial broadcaster would not function well in the area due to the area's mixed commercial and subsistence economy. Subsistence hunting and fishing, with cash supplements, was the primary economic system in the area.

KUAC in Fairbanks, which was operated by the University of Alaska had been operating for many years prior to the creation of the AEBC, but KYUK represented the first intentional attempt from the state to create a broadcasting station in an area that was mostly without broadcasting services. The creation of KYUK was a test for the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission. No remote public broadcasting station had ever been planned or constructed in Alaska, and KYUK served as a test run for how the construction of other remote stations in the state might occur. The AEBC generally sought out markets that had little to no other media services available. The commission was also sensitive to local involvement in proposed stations and sought locations that could guide the operation and development of stations through the use of community advisory boards.^{10 11}

The creation of Bethel Broadcasting, Inc. (BBI) was the community investment in educational public broadcasting the AEBC was looking for. BBI's board of directors included people from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, various Alaska Native interest groups in the area, the University of Alaska, and the City of Bethel. BBI was formed to act in an advisory role and to be the license holder for KYUK. As will be explained ahead in this section, KYUK's early existence was marred in a power struggle between station management and BBI's board of directors over what responsibilities were delegated to whom.^{12 13}

A Model for Public Broadcasting in Rural Alaska

Alaska Senator Ted Stevens announced that the FCC had approved the broadcasting license for KYUK on February 2, 1971. The FCC approved a permit for the station fairly quickly. The AEBC asked the commission to fast-track the application so KYUK could apply for funding from the state before the end of the fiscal year. The permit gave the station permission to broadcast at 10 thousand watts during the daytime at seven hundred kilohertz, however, due to a delay in the construction of KYUK's facilities, the permit was changed so the station could broadcast at five thousand watts at 570 kilohertz. The change reduced power costs for the station and allowed it to broadcast both during the day and night. The FCC said that KYUK radio had a deadline of April 25 to start broadcasting, but recognized that rural Alaska presented unique challenges, and that the date could be extended if needed.

KYUK radio started broadcasting on May 13, 1971. It was the first Native American (and Alaska Native) radio station to be operated in Alaska and the United States. KYUK radio operated in a temporary facility before it moved to its permanent site. The construction of KYUK radio's facilities took longer than expected due to logistical delays and eventually weather delays. BBI wanted to hire someone who could act as both station manager and engineer, but had difficulty finding someone who could adequately fit both roles. Though the manager was hired in the fall, the difficulty in finding a qualified employee delayed construction of the station's studios and tower. Broadcasting equipment took a long time to be shipped to the area as well. Snow and ice had to melt before the station's permanent facilities and tower could be built. The station was broadcasting at very low power and its range was severely hampered because it did not yet have a tower constructed. The station used a horizontal antenna system until its tower was built. KYUK radio's tower and facilities were constructed in 1972.^{14 15 16 17 18 19}

Though the University of Alaska and AEBC were technically state agencies, and both were supporting stations via CPB guidelines, their interests were not exactly aligned when it came to their public broadcasting stations. KYUK had a wider programming focus than KUAC did in the early 1970s, because KYUK was the only broadcaster in Bethel. The station served the information and entertainment needs of the area, and because there were no other broadcasting outlets, all of its content fit the public media mantra of serving underserved audiences and content. KYUK was able to program whatever it wanted without impeding the interests of other broadcasting outlets. In contrast, Fairbanks and Anchorage were served by commercial broadcasters, so the need for KUAC, KAKM, and KSKA to serve as “one-stop-shops” for programming was not needed. KYUK’s broadcasting responsibilities and requirements for content were loose when compared to other public broadcasters. KUAC was created to serve the educational interests of the University of Alaska, whereas KYUK was created by the Bethel community to serve Alaska’s southwest region. KYUK was the first public radio station in Alaska to truly fit the definition of a “publicly” oriented broadcast station. “YUK” means “people” in Yupik. The AEBC and the federal government provided most of the startup and operational costs for KYUK. The university and federal government assumed most of the startup and operational costs for KUAC. The creation of KYUK meant that public broadcasting in Alaska was no longer only influenced by the interests of the University of Alaska (though the university and the AEBC were always an influence).^{20 21}

Dr. Charles Northrip, who was serving as the AEBC’s director in 1971, said that the commission expected KYUK to be a model for other educational radio stations being planned in rural Alaska. "It is the hope of the commission that KYUK will be only the first in a series of AM educational radio stations established to meet the needs of rural Alaska," Dr. Northrip said. Dr.

Northrip's usage of "educational" in their statement showed that while KYUK was expected to serve the needs of Southwest Alaska in a different way than KUAC served the needs of the university and the Interior, education was still the ideological focus of the commission's intentions for the new system at the time. "Education" and "public" were still interchangeable.²²

Inexperience Causes Growing Pains

David Moore, who was hired as KYUK's general manager and engineer, said that there was difficulty getting the community involved in the station before it went on-the-air. The area had never had a broadcasting station that was focused on its interests. The station also wasn't operating in a permanent facility or at the power level its license allowed for. People were not sure what to expect from the station. "There wasn't much interest until we actually got on the air. Now the community has taken it to heart," said Moore. In the first weeks after it went on the air, KYUK radio had almost 60 "thank you" letters a day coming in from the surrounding area.²³

KYUK struggled behind the scenes early on. There were frequent power challenges between the BBI's board and David Moore as to how the station should be operated and programmed. Moore was also forbidden to make capital purchases, such as equipment, because the board believed that it was not within the station manager's (or the chief engineer's) purview to do so. The board wanted to make capital purchases themselves. The board also became annoyed when Moore realized the station was going to come up short in its construction funding. Moore attempted to solicit funds from the Bethel area residents and businesses to make up some of the difference. The board once again believed Moore had overstepped their authority.

KYUK was also in early talks to establish an educational television station by the beginning of fall 1971. Approximately \$627 thousand had been earmarked for the construction of the television station. State Representative George Hohman (D. Bethel) publicly disagreed with

Moore on how the funding should be spent. Hohman was a member of BBI's board of directors as well as the chairman of the Alaska House Finance Committee. It was believed that Hohman's position on the committee was directly responsible for KYUK receiving money for a television station.^{24 25 26}

BBI demoted David Moore in late August 1971. The board of directors removed Moore as station manager but said that they could remain employed as the station's chief engineer. The board wanted to keep Moore, because qualified engineers were difficult to find and attract to Alaska's rural areas. The board offered to increase Moore's salary from just over \$13 thousand for the dual role of manager and engineer to \$18 thousand a year as just the engineer. Moore refused the demotion and left it to the board to fire him.

David Moore was replaced as station manager by George Charles, who was a Bethel resident with little broadcasting experience. The board of directors said that even though Moore had more broadcasting experience than Charles, Charles had cultural knowledge and orientation for the Bethel area. The board believed that cultural recognition was important for how the station would be operated and programmed. Moore said that Representative Hohman coordinated the move for their own personal reasons. Hohman replied that the board as a whole recommended the move, and that Moore was looked at positively until they told their story to the news media. "[Moore's] behavior had been rather bizarre and emotional, and this has resulted in him doing some rather strange things. If he is fired it will not be because of his resignation but there were some questions about the security of the station and equipment and we need to carry out our mission to stay on the air and keep the message going to the people."^{27 28}

Hohman's comment was made after Moore turned off the station's transmitter at an unusual time. Moore claimed that they were the only employee who was licensed to operate the

station's equipment, and when their shift was over, the transmitter was turned off. They claimed it was inappropriate to leave equipment running with no licensed operator. "I discovered the station was not in accordance with the laws," said Moore. KYUK did have one other licensed operator on staff at the time, but that staff member was off duty as well.^{29 30}

David Moore claimed Representative Hohman wanted to use the station for their own benefit, and that the legislator planned to use it for their reelection. Moore also claimed that they weren't consulted when the AEBC awarded KYUK with a \$627 thousand grant to start KYUK television. Representative Hohman and Senator Terry Miller (R. Fairbanks) had worked together to secure funding from the AEBC to bring educational television to Bethel. Moore said that people were hired without their input as station manager. Moore also said that the board hired consultants at a cost of \$250 a day, which they believed was too expensive for a fledgling public television station. Moore also disagreed with the cost of KYUK's planned studios space and believed the costs would leave little money for much else, like labor costs.

David Moore was eventually fired by the board as KYUK's station manager (even though they believed they had resigned) and a series of station managers followed in their wake. George Charles, who was hired by Moore as KYUK's program director was promoted to station manager by the board. Charles resigned after a month on the job. The board also hired Henry Ivanoff as its chief engineer after Moore was fired. Ivanoff stepped in as temporary station manager (and chief engineer) until late spring 1972 when they left to work on a television satellite project. A member of the board filled in as manager until Ivanoff came back to serve as temporary station manager in 1973. Jim Croll then replaced Henry Ivanoff in late 1973. Croll had been a radio and television news producer for the Navajo Nation in New Mexico.^{31 32}

Croll coming to the organization was the result of a coordinated effort between BBI and the AEBC to find qualified applicants for the position. KYUK had already had difficulty in finding a qualified manager before hiring David Moore (slowing down the station's development). Alaska's rural public broadcasters had difficulty attracting qualified employees. Compensation wasn't necessarily the biggest factor in attracting qualified people. KYUK was offering a salary of about \$17 thousand for the general manager position. Adjusted for inflation, the manager's salary would be equal to about \$115 thousand in 2023 dollars. The biggest factor(s) in attracting (or not attracting) talent to KYUK was Bethel itself and the conditions people would experience once living in Bethel.³³

Anchorage and Fairbanks were considered tiny markets when compared to markets in the Lower 48. However, both were veritable metropolises when compared to Alaska's rural markets. Towns like Bethel were often a culture shock for people who were used to the amenities found in larger markets (even if they were still small towns). The reason it was difficult for Alaska's rural stations to find qualified people is the same reason a public broadcasting station was needed in rural areas in the first place – the market didn't support it. Goods and services seen as "normal" in larger towns were often not easily available. Prices were higher as well. Infrastructure was less developed, and weather conditions were extreme. The conditions of living in Alaska were often prohibitive for attracting talent. The same conditions also affected keeping talent, as people who were not from the respective areas didn't stick around for long.³⁴

The AEBC placed advertisements in Alaska's newspapers soliciting applications for KYUK's general manager position in 1973. Though no record of advertisements outside of Alaska were found for this project, KYUK's hiring of Jim Croll from a station in New Mexico

suggests that the position had either been advertised in newspapers or trade materials in the Lower 48, or that Croll may have been head hunted by the AEBC.³⁵

A job announcement placed in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner on October 30, 1973, read: “GENERAL MANAGER needed for KYUK Radio and Television, Bethel, Educational/Public broadcast experience acceptable. Salary is \$16,800 per year. Send resume and references before 3 November to Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission, B G Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.”³⁶

BBI was left out of the announcement. That is somewhat surprising given that the board was responsible for hiring general managers. The AEBC would have had to provide the application materials for the board to review. The AEBC more than likely became involved in the solicitation process, for the same reason KYUK was having difficulty in finding a qualified manager. Bethel was remote. The AEBC was located in Anchorage in 1973 and had the resources to quickly conduct the search. Communications technology was also more accessible in Anchorage, and long-distance communication would have been cheaper for the commission than the BBI. It should be mentioned that the weight of the commission’s name and location in the job announcement may have enticed more applicants for the position than would have applied if Bethel and KYUK were the primary solicitors.

Jim Croll’s leadership was desperately needed when they arrived at KYUK. Station announcers had received little training on how to operate station equipment, and most had not been instructed on how to speak over the radio. KYUK also did not have a set schedule. Operators would end their shifts and leave. Listeners were left guessing when the station would be broadcasting. During the almost two years Croll led the organization, they helped create and expand the Tundra Drums. The Tundra Drums was the only paper in southwest Alaska in the

early 1970s. Croll also developed a news department for the station that broadcast daily local newscasts. They also developed training programs that taught station operations to volunteers and staff. Jim Croll left to become the executive director of the AEBC in 1975. Henry Ivanoff once again took over as manager after Croll's departure.^{37 38}

Alaska's Legislative Budget and Audit Committee gave permission for an independent audit of BBI in spring 1972. The audit concerned the allocation of funds to the organization by the state. Representative George Hohman asked for the audit of BBI after Alaska's Attorney General John Havelock said that the state was planning to audit the organization itself. Hohman was an officer for Bethel Broadcasting while also serving as the chairman of the House Finance Committee. Though information about the audit is sparse because the proceedings occurred in executive session, lawmakers appeared to be concerned that BBI had received preferential treatment in its funding from the state.

The state was careful to say that Representative Hohman was not implicated in any wrongdoing. The state was concerned about how funds were being allocated. The Alaska House's budget proposal for fiscal year 1973 contained \$493 thousand in capital funding specifically for television equipment for BBI. Governor William Egan's budget proposal and the senate's proposal contained \$1 million for construction costs for educational broadcasters. The governor and the senate did not single out BBI for supplemental funding. The capital funding for BBI in the house's funding proposal was in addition to approximately \$627 thousand Representative Hohman and Senator Miller had secured from the AEBC for KYUK television. The House also gave the AEBC \$49.5 thousand in supplemental funding. \$12 thousand was earmarked for a facilities planner for KYUK television, and \$37.5 thousand was expected to go

directly to KYUK. KYUK had expected \$37.5 thousand from a federal grant, but the money had not been received.

The results of the audit were not published, because the proceedings were mostly conducted in executive session. However, it appears that Representative Hohman was not reprimanded and their position on the budget committee was not reassigned. Following the audit, however, things started to quiet down behind the scenes of KYUK.^{39 40 41 42 43}

The AEBC and BBI worked together to bring educational television to Bethel. No television channels were allocated to Bethel, and the AEBC petitioned the FCC for a channel allocation in early fall 1971. BBI filed for a construction permit from the FCC late the same year with the intention of bringing KYUK television on air sometime in 1972. The station's construction permit hinged on the FCC's channel allocation which was granted in March 1972. KYUK television's construction permit was granted four months later. As was the case with KYUK radio, by the time the FCC granted permission for KYUK television to begin broadcasting, there was little time left in the summer (before snow) for KYUK to begin construction on its television tower and facilities. BBI asked the FCC to broadcast at low power until the next summer when construction could begin on its facilities.

Public Television for Remote Alaska

KYUK television signed on under low power at 3:30 p.m. on September 14, 1972. Initially, the station only reached the edge of town. The station's tower and studio were built in August 1973; however, KYUK television continued to operate under reduced power until April 1974 when the FCC granted the station permission to operate under the specifications of the station's broadcasting permit.⁴⁴

Sesame Street and other public media content were shown for the first time on western Alaska television sets. The station's early broadcasts were the first time many people in the area had seen a television broadcast, and people would gather around whatever sets they could find to watch television. It was estimated that Bethel had about 60 (less than 1% of the population) television sets when KYUK television went on the air. The sets had mostly been sold by stores that started carrying the sets once word had gotten around that a television broadcaster would soon be on the air. National PBS programs and educational programs were scheduled to be broadcast with live local news and "canned" statewide news. Bethel mayor John Guinn called KYUK's first broadcast, "...the realization of a dream." Andy Edge, who was serving as KYUK television's station manager said, "It's a great day for Bethel. The coming of television in Bethel marks the beginning of a new era for us."⁴⁵

KYUK radio and television experienced programming quality issues for the first few years of their existence. National programming (for both stations) was either shipped to the stations to be broadcast weeks after its original airdate or delivered to the station via phone connections that were poor quality and unreliable. KYUK also received taped content from KUAC. Pre-recorded programs and newscasts were often delivered from KUAC using the same phone connection methods as national programming. KUAC sent taped programs from PBS to KYUK television as well. KUAC would receive tapes from PBS, copy the tape and broadcast the show, then ship the tape to KYUK. The process was known as "bicycling." As was explained in chapter 3, KUAC had purchased a \$90 thousand videotape recorder that allowed it to copy tapes to send content around the state. Despite the high cost of the recorder, the duplicated tapes would sometimes be of lower quality than the original tape. The lower quality tape recording would affect the broadcast quality of whomever the tape was sent to. KYUK would sometimes receive

low-quality tapes. Low-quality pre-recorded content was an issue for KYUK until satellite feeds for NPR and PBS became available in 1978. The feeds dramatically increased the quality of the stations' content.⁴⁶

Local television programs usually featured staff members in a variety of roles, such as producer, camera operator, or host. Though KYUK's intended audience was Alaska Natives and part of the stations' mission was the preservation of Yupik culture, the stations used a mix of Yupik and English content. Using both Yupik and English content allowed the station to focus on including Alaska Native culture within the modern U.S. culture of the time.⁴⁷

KYUK radio used jingles during station breaks that incorporated Yupik dance rhythms and interchangeably used Yupik and English phrasing. One jingle said, "Angelanaqvaa....KYUK....On the air now." "Angelanaqvaa" is Yupik for "oh, what fun!" The jingle was saying that the listener could expect fun, because the station was broadcasting and whatever the station was broadcasting was "fun."

One of KYUK's bilingual announcers, Levi Lott, was from Tuluksak and had been trained in broadcasting at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and KUAC. Lott could translate between English and Yupik quickly. They would take music requests in both Yupik and English and deliver messages about songs in either language when required. Lott also delivered a 10-minute newscast in both English and Yupik each weekday evening. KYUK's newscasts were (and still are) broadcast in both languages. Statewide news was read from The Anchorage Daily News as a daily airplane brought a copy for the station.

KYUK's general manager, Dave Moore, said they weren't sure the station would be able to find employees (or volunteers) that could fit a dual-language role. The area had never had a broadcasting station that was accessible to the public before, and the already existing difficulty in

finding qualified employees was more difficult when trying to find people who knew the local culture and could speak Yupik and English. Fortunately, KYUK was able to benefit from KUAC's function as a broadcasting laboratory when it employed Lott. "I told the board that an experienced radio announcer who spoke Yupik was an impossibility," Dave Moore said about Lott. "Then along came Levi. He'd gotten his experience in Fairbanks and he's good."^{48 49}

KYUK radio's management said that sports were frequently requested by listeners as something they desired more of from the station. Local sports games were highly requested, and KYUK broadcast many local basketball games. The station would also frequently feature stories from elders. Elders would sit in the studio and recite stories, sing songs, dance, or describe and showcase art in Yupik. The stations also broadcast governmental meetings, such as meetings from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The meetings would often propose topics or questions related to life in rural Alaska such as transportation and energy needs.^{50 51 52 53}

The idea of "broadcasting" was different at KYUK as well. Rural Alaska's lack of telecommunications access for the public meant that KYUK was often used as a point-to-point (one-to-one) service. Broadcasting means that a station sends a message (content) that's intended to be consumed by many people at the same time. KYUK was different because it "broadcast" messages sent from one person to be received by one other person (or a few persons). Announcers would often relay messages from someone looking for their child, or for people looking to sell something. Birthday greetings by and for people in the area's villages were very popular. Point-to-point telecommunications fell within the domain of telecommunications companies, like phone companies, or the military. The FCC mostly looked the other way because it recognized Alaska's unique telecommunications environment. Other rural public broadcasting stations that were created after KYUK also used the point-to-point messaging format.^{54 55 56 57}

KYUK television started to broadcast a combination of commercial and non-commercial content in 1974. Though the station was offering a full schedule of national programming from PBS and a mix of local content, residents said that they desired to see some of the national programming offered by commercial providers. Residents saw advertisements or references to commercial offerings via the other media they consumed, such as newspapers or magazines. No commercial television content was available in southwest Alaska because there were no commercial television broadcasters. KYUK felt that it was within the purview of the station to air commercial content on the station because it was the organization's job to offer underserved programming to its audience. Since there was no commercial content being broadcast to the area at the time – all content was underserved content.

A Bethel group raised money to buy tapes of commercial programs from the Lower 48 with the intention of broadcasting the content on KYUK. The group was not affiliated with KYUK television, but they convinced the station to broadcast the content based on the area's needs and the organization's mission. In 1975, the FCC notified BBI that KYUK television needed to stop airing the commercial programs after a complaint was filed by a commercial broadcaster in Anchorage. The complaint said that BBI did not have permission from the big three national networks (ABC, NBC, CBS) to air the content. The group that had organized the purchase of programs from the Lower 48 had done so from sources in Seattle and Los Angeles. The programs were left with their commercials intact, and KYUK made no effort to remove the commercials. The FCC said that broadcasting commercials on a non-commercial station went against the ideals of non-commercial broadcasting and violated the terms of the station's license.^{58 59}

KYUK continued to include commercial programs on its schedule until the AEBC ordered the organization to cease airing the programs. The AEBC's order for KYUK to stop broadcasting commercial programs was unusual because the commission did not normally involve itself in how stations were programmed. An agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) also visited KYUK to investigate the use of videotape by the station to re-broadcast copyrighted material without permission. No charges were filed against KYUK by the FBI, but the AEBC did once again order KYUK to stop airing the commercial content, because it believed the station was violating copyright laws. KYUK stopped airing the programs until spring 1977 when the FCC said that the station could resume if the organization received permission from the big three national networks to carry their content. KYUK television had signed agreements with all three networks by the end of 1978.

BBI believed it was operating within the intended parameters of public broadcasting when it was offering commercial programming, because no other outlets were available to the area's residents at the time. Even though commercial content was not necessarily underserved in the United States as a whole, commercial content was underserved in southwest Alaska. The BBI believed it was serving underserved audiences with underserved content. The decision by the FCC to allow KYUK to air commercial content with permission of the networks, shows that the commission (and the networks) also recognized the remoteness of the Bethel area and the lack of telecommunications resources in the area.^{60 61}

KYUK's broadcast area received live coverage of a presidential election for the first time in 1976. Residents of Nome also received live election coverage from KNOM for the first time that year. RCA Alaska Communications Inc. (RCA Alascom), the FCC, the APBC, KAKM, and commercial stations KTVA (CBS), and KENI (NBC) worked together to offer coverage to large

portions of the state. Though KYUK did not have a full-time satellite hookup yet, RCA Alascom installed equipment in Bethel and Nome that enabled the stations to receive election coverage from Anchorage. KENI agreed to delete commercials as it relayed coverage to KYUK. The APBC also set up production of 5-minute summaries of election coverage that were aired on Armed Forces Radio Network (AFRN) stations. The agreement was made because the AFRN had wider coverage around the state at the time. APBC's executive director Mike Porcaro said, "It's the first time ever for [an] outside network live broadcast to Bethel. They did have a live state address last year, that was their first live broadcast ever, but this is a big one for them."⁶²

Growth and Growing Pains

KYUK's service area had grown to include roughly 14 translators and repeaters by 1978. APBC's engineer Paul Davis made a report to the commission that said KYUK was serving 24 villages or approximately seven thousand people with public media content by using translators and repeaters. Maintenance of the repeaters and translators was a difficult task. Davis had attempted to assess the condition of each translator or repeater, and the assessment required Davis to travel over 13 hundred miles. Each of the villages was not connected to Bethel (or to the rest of the state) by a road system. Davis said that seven translator sites were surveyed by flying over the site. Those 7 sites were difficult to access by the ground. Seven others did have road access to local villages, which had to be flown into, and were accessed by foot or vehicle.⁶³

An example of the difficulty of operating broadcasting (and telecommunications) systems in remote Alaska was from KYUK's translator site at Barometer Mountain. The site was located roughly 160 miles northeast of Bethel or about three miles from Red Devil, Alaska. The translator had gone down due to a failure of the power line coming into the site. Power was provided to the site by over 7 miles of wire that was laid across the ground from Red Devil.

According to Davis, the power line would often get cut due to shifting of the ground, glaciers shifting, ice and snow melt, and “bears chewing on the lines.”⁶⁴

Davis described a section of the power line that had been destroyed by a shifting glacier. “A glacier, over which the power line had been run, moved downhill last year [1977], and it tore away the line in the process.” The power line was rerouted to avoid the glacier, however, the bears were a bigger problem, because they had started travelling along the path that was cleared to access the translator. “The bears notice the line and chew on it.”⁶⁵

Translator upkeep was also a challenge due to Alaska’s harsh environment. Cold temperature and high winds adversely affected broadcast equipment. Davis said that antennas were not designed for the area’s weather conditions and would “catch the wind and vibrate themselves to death.” Davis also said that heavier antennas would avoid the wind’s vibrations, but they would then be “too heavy and difficult to be erected in the field without incurring more costs than are usually allowable.”⁶⁶

To fix the problem of antennas “shaking themselves to death,” Davis and other engineers started to tie willow branches to antennas. Davis said that willow branches had enough flexibility that they could withstand most of the stresses imposed on the branches by harsh weather. They also said that willow branches worked well, because when they were tied to an antenna, the branches dampened some of the vibrations. Willow branches were also used, because they were “...about as universal as snow on Alaska hilltops,” Davis said.⁶⁷

Senator George Hohman requested \$25 thousand from Alaska’s legislature for fiscal year 1980. Senator Hohman said that KYUK had been receiving approximately two thousand dollars for each one of its translators, but the maintenance funding had been vetoed by the governor in the years leading up to the 1979 legislative session. Hohman also said that some translator

stations on the Kenai Peninsula were spending upwards of \$12 thousand a year on translator maintenance. APBC engineer Paul Davis said that KYUK's engineer had been doing the upkeep on the translators at their own expense and with no reimbursement. "He's [the engineer] been unable to stock spare antennas and other parts, and for some villages, once a translator goes out, it stays off for two or three months."⁶⁸

Alaska's economy started to slump in the 1980s as oil production and prices waned. Alaska's public broadcasting system, despite seeing tremendous growth in the 1970s, started seeing visible attempts by state officials to curb funding to the system by the end of the decade. Governor Jay Hammond had started vetoing capital funding to the Alaska system starting in late 1970s. The funding was intended for equipment upgrades and equipment maintenance. The state's support for public broadcasting decreased by about 30% through the course of the 1980s. Rural stations like KYUK received a majority of their funding from the state and were hit especially hard by the cuts (when compared to their urban cohort, who were also hit hard). The cuts affected the stations' ability to produce local content as well and purchase national content. The cuts also affected stations' ability to maintain their broadcasting equipment.

KYUK conducted its first fundraising event in 1980. As the era ushered in "small government" deregulation pushed by President Ronald Reagan, Alaska's public broadcasters were encouraged to look for alternative methods of funding by the APBC and the CPB. PBS held its first coordinated "festival" in 1975. When KYUK started conducting fundraisers, they were of a similar style conducted around the country. Solicitations were made over the air for monetary contributions to be given by those who support their stations and their stations' programs. Unlike the fundraisers conducted at Alaska's urban public broadcasting stations (for this project, KUAC, KAKM, KSKA), "traditional" fundraisers at KYUK proved to be ineffective. The reason

fundraisers didn't work at KYUK is the same reason why the organization was established in the first place -- the market didn't support them. Bethel's economy remained less reliant on the distribution of money for goods and services and was still reliant on the subsistence economy. Asking for money didn't work.

As a result of slow fundraisers, KYUK instituted a fundraising system that was based off of the culture of the local area and not the culture of the greater Lower 48. The Bethel community was encouraged to come to the station and participate in fundraising events. Fundraisers were a party of sorts and used Yupik-based content to encourage participation. Fundraisers became a community event. The organization encouraged receiving goods and services for station support instead of money. The goods and services were then either auctioned off or sold to people as a way to raise money for the organization.

Coordinated fundraising participation from village residents was less than participation from Bethel residents. The main reasons were that villages were not connected to Bethel by road, and telecommunication availability to the area at the time was lacking. Live participation in fundraising events or the delivery of goods was difficult with no road system connections between Bethel and area villages. Telephone calls to participate in programs or pledge support (which as noted above was not culturally popular) were made over unreliable and expensive phone connections. KYUK's fundraising efforts were always somewhat stymied by the remoteness of its service area, even though the organization adapted to the cultural differences between its audience and national public broadcasting audiences.

KYUK's first fundraiser in 1980 raised about \$20 thousand for the stations. By 1990, fundraising had grown to about \$36 thousand. Though KYUK's fundraising amounts were not large when compared to the fundraising amounts of other stations in the state, the amounts were

impressive given the stations' market size and remoteness. KYUK reached an average of about \$10 per capita for the station's listening area.⁶⁹

KYUK applied for and received a gaming permit from the state in 1983. Gambling in Alaska is heavily regulated. There is no statewide lottery and few of the gambling activities found in the Lower 48 are legal in Alaska. Casino gambling, including Alaska Native casinos, is banned in the state. In-person casino-type games like keno, poker, slots, and craps are considered games of chance in Alaska and banned. Games of skill are not. However, the distinction on what constitutes a game of skill or a game of chance is confusing. Even though in-person games are considered games of chance, online games, such as sports betting and online poker, are considered skill gaming and thus legal. Certain forms of gambling intended for charitable giving are also allowed in Alaska. Bingo is widely used for charitable gaming. So are pull tabs. Pull tabs function in a way similar to scratch off tickets, where instead of scratching off part of the card to reveal combinations of winning or losing symbols, tabs are pulled from the card to reveal the symbols.^{70 71}

Bingo and pull tabs that benefit KYUK were conducted at the Bethel Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall and proceeds benefitted the organization. There was resistance to using gaming as a source of revenue for the station by members of the board and staff, but the plan was enacted anyway. By 1993, KYUK was making approximately \$80 thousand per year from gaming activities. The revenue KYUK gained from gaming helped to counteract some of the losses the organization incurred over the course of the 1980s. KYUK's contemporary gaming revenues will be explored further in chapter 6.⁷²

RATNET Comes to Rural Alaska (KYUK Continues to Grow)

Media diversity in southwest Alaska started to increase in the late 1970s to 1990s. The state contracted with RCA Alascom to install satellite receivers and low-power transmitters in some villages in 1976. The equipment was intended to broadcast Rural Alaska Television Network (RATNET) content to villages. RATNET programmed a mix of commercial content, such as *The Simpsons* and *Good Morning America*, as well as public media content, such as *Sesame Street*. Small cable systems carrying content from the Lower 48 were also installed in many villages. The increased diversity of programming in the area was welcomed by KYUK. The organization felt that increased media diversity was helpful because it freed the stations to focus more of their efforts on providing Yupik-language content. RATNET was especially welcomed because it offered similar commercial programming to what KYUK had been broadcasting from ABC, CBS, and NBC.^{73 74 75}

Though KYUK developed alternative sources of funding, roughly 60% of the organization's operating budget came from the state from the mid-1980s through the middle of the 1990s. Receiving such a large portion of its budget from the state meant that KYUK could take chances on the programming that it believed its audience desired. It could also offer more localized programming. The downside of having such a large chunk of funding from the state meant that the station was put into the precarious position of being extremely reliant on state money. KYUK relied on the economic health of the state for the funding it received. It also relied on people in the rest of the state believing that public broadcasting for rural Alaska was a worthwhile investment. However, what is perceived as good for one area is not always considered by people in other areas.

The organization's budget for fiscal year 1986 (1985) grew to about t \$1.65 million. KYUK employed 26 full-time employees and utilized the labor of about 40 volunteers. KYUK

radio and television broadcast about 130 hours of bilingual newscasts. The newscasts were broadcast about 5 times per week. It also had regular public affairs programming.

By the early 1990s, KYUK television was seen in Bethel and 11 villages, and KYUK radio was heard in 19 villages. The stations' coverage area was estimated to be roughly the square mileage of Ohio. KYUK's programming was about 70% locally produced. Local programming was important for the station because its audience was about 85% Yupik. The challenge for the organization was that Yupik language programming was not being produced anywhere else. KYUK had to produce content if it wanted to adequately program to its audience. Half of KYUK's staff was Yupik as a result. KYUK spent about \$350 thousand on the production of news and public affairs content for its radio and television stations in 1993. The stations aired about 10 hours of news each week. KYUK television would often intermittently go off the air from early July to early September during salmon fishing and berry picking season.⁷⁶

KYUK hosted the Yupik news service in the early 1990s. The service had two full-time newscasters, John Active and Adolph Lewis, who delivered Yupik-language news on both radio and television. It was the only Yupik news service in America. One of the original goals for the creation of KYUK was the preservation of Yupik culture. In the early 1990's, KYUK's service area was recognized as a region where the Yupik language was not disappearing. The language was widely used in everyday life, and Yupik was the primary language of a large percentage of people. Some people thought KYUK had helped in the preservation of Yupik culture.

John Active said that people found connection with KYUK, because they were seeing and hearing content that related to their lives. "There are so many people in this region who can understand what we're saying. I feel it makes them proud to hear their language being spoken over the airwaves and on television. I am helping to keep the language alive."^{77 78}

Active and Lewis delivered stories on various aspects of Yupik life. Active told tales of Yupik life and culture based off of stories from his grandmother. Lewis was more contemporary and would focus on Alaska Native corporation business dealings and politics. One story discussed how Yupik people celebrate holidays like Halloween and Independence Day. Another story discussed Alaska Native participation in the Russian Orthodox Church. Stories would also describe how fish camps functioned roughly the same way in the 1990s as they did in the 1890s. The main difference was that in the 1990s, people were using engines on their boats. However, fish were still dried using the same methods. Village elders were also interviewed as part of a segment named Waves of Wisdom.⁷⁹

The news service helped to expose the rest of the world to Yupik culture. NPR sometimes featured KYUK content on Morning Edition and All Things Considered. A story containing a song sung by John Active about subsistence berry picking was picked up by NPR in 1991. The story was originally aired by the Alaska Public Radio Network and was eventually aired by All Things Considered. According to John McDonald, KYUK's general manager in 1991, Active's song was the first piece of content NPR had carried from KYUK. McDonald said that "Outside" reporters from the national public broadcasting networks would sometimes visit to report on the area, but Alaska Native voices were filtered be through the lens of the reporters. "It's about time America hears about Native life from the Native perspective," McDonald said.⁸⁰

Gary Fife, who was a board member of the Native American Journalists Association and producer of National Native News, said that the Yupik news service acted as "a critical link between Yupik and dominant non-native cultures." Fife said that the service acted as a type of traditional town crier. "It's an example of our native oral tradition come full circle." The television set that was used by Active and Lewis for the majority of their newscasts in the early

1990s was based on a “qas’giq”, which was a place where Yupik stories and traditions were passed on (usually by the men of the village). The wooden set was adorned with items such as drums and feathers. Qas’giqs were important to villages because they were often used to share information. “Nowadays, people are living apart, in separate homes. The station here is the qas’giq,” Active said.^{81 82 83}

KYUK radio broadcast the first sporting event featuring play-by-play in both English and Yupik at the same time in 1991. The station carried games from the Lower Kuskokwim School District’s boys and girls basketball tournament. KYUK radio’s station manager Chuck Bradley said that the decision to offer play-by-play in both Yupik and English happened, because the station wanted everyone to be able to listen to the games. Adolph Lewis announced the Yupik play-by-play, and Chuck Bradley announced the English play-by-play. “A lot of the elders from these villages don’t speak a lot of English. They have grandchildren that play, and they would like to hear what they’re doing and understand what’s going on,” Bradley said.⁸⁴

KYUK won the Wassaja Award for “outstanding native broadcasting” from the Native American Journalists Association in 1991. The association also awarded KYUK with all of its top honors in 1994. An award was given to Tales of the Tundra which documented Yupik residents as they told supernatural stories. John Active won for a report that discussed how Yupik names for months were connected to traditional activities such as hunting. Delta Digest, which was a public affairs program, also won for excellence in cultural material.⁸⁵

The remoteness of southwest Alaska coupled with the lack of telecommunications infrastructure and the area’s harsh natural environment continued to foster a challenging environment for KYUK in the 1980s and the 1990s. One instance occurred when high winds accompanied Bethel’s first snowfall in October 1983. Power outages, uprooted trees, and

building damage across the area were caused by wind. The damage cut power to KYUK. The station did not have a backup generator, and the power loss resulted in the station shutting for a few hours. Damage from wind was not rare for Alaska's public broadcasting stations. However, when the station was the only broadcaster for a large area, going off air during severe weather was an emergency in and of itself.

Bethel police issued warnings for people to not travel during the storm, but the messages generally went unheard, because the station was not broadcasting. The result was people traveling through the storm that might not have done so if the police's warning had been broadcast. KYUK was not at fault, because the power outage was an uncontrollable "act of God", but the inability to broadcast emergency information showed how important the station had become to the area – especially during emergencies.

Another emergency happened in late spring 1989 as the area's rivers were experiencing "break up". Break up is when snow and ice start thawing due to temperature increase. Marshall, Pilot Station, Russian Mission, and Mountain Village experienced flooding from ice jams along the Yukon River during break up. Ice jams are essentially dams of ice that block running water from flowing over the natural course of a body of water. Flooding is often the result of ice jams. Approximately 70 people fled their homes in Russian Mission, and 14 families were displaced from Pilot Station. KYUK broadcast emergency information to the area during the flooding. The information contained reports on the status of the jams and the levels of flooding in each location affected by the floods. KYUK also broadcast live calls and information announcements from affected locations. A particularly scary story came from the city manager of Marshall, who said over the air that they had seen two moose carried away by river ice.^{86 87}

The two events described above are just a few of the emergency situations that have occurred in southwest Alaska since KYUK started broadcasting. However, the events perfectly describe the responsibilities KYUK had as one of the only broadcasters in the area. KYUK was in the unique position of bearing responsibility for broadcasting information in times of emergency. The examples above show how important the station was (and continues to be) to the area for broadcasting emergency information to the area's residents and the precarious environment KYUK had to operate in to serve its audience.

Troubles for RATNET and Television Service in Rural Alaska

RATNET continued to add villages to the system throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By 1993, RATNET was the only source of television for about one hundred villages. The State of Alaska floated the idea of temporarily shutting down RATNET in 1993 as a way to save on the costs of operating the system. RATNET's budget for fiscal year 1993 was about \$1.3 million. The network had a budget deficit of about \$50 thousand by the middle of the fiscal year – prompting the state to think of ways to save money. The board that oversaw the network agreed to a temporary two-week shutdown of the system. RATNET's board chairman Russell Nelson said, "We're in horrible shape. We're thinking if we shut it off in June, at least a lot of people will be out at fish camp."^{88 89}

Alaska's legislators had been debating whether the state should subsidize television service to rural Alaska, and whether people would be better served by commercial outlets. However, the costs associated with serving rural areas (about 247 towns and villages) with even basic television service did not entice commercial entities. BBI submitted a proposal to assume control of the network. BBI believed the proposal made sense because they primarily served a rural Alaska Native audience. RATNET also mostly served rural Alaska Native audiences.

KYUK wanted to continue offering a mix of commercial and public programming but also wanted to increase programming with a “rural slant” on the network. The organization also wanted to offer more “bush” documentaries and localized news on RATNET while continuing to program its television and radio stations. RATNET’s local news programming consisted of news from Anchorage that wasn’t always relevant to rural audiences.⁹⁰

"Our thought has been, 'Why not use [RATNET] to provide a real service? We live in the Bush. We know what people like and need. We're not going to put on golf,'" KYUK’s general manager John McDonald said. McDonald’s comment was a dig on the programming the network was provided by commercial stations. McDonald was saying rural audiences didn’t relate to programming about a sport very few in rural Alaskans played. KYUK’s proposed operation of RATNET was opposed by some commercial stations in Anchorage, who had long provided content to the network at no cost. The stations had been providing the content with the stipulation that the network air its commercials. There was concern that BBI would not be able to support the network monetarily due to its existence as a non-profit public broadcaster. If the organization was not able to support the network, there was a possibility that the state would save no money and that both KYUK and RATNET would cease to exist.⁹¹

Political opinion about BBI assuming control of the network was mixed. Some legislators believed that the state had no place in providing entertainment programming. Others believed that if the market was incapable of providing news and information to Alaska’s rural communities, the state was responsible for doing so. The argument reflected the same arguments that legislators used when debating the merits of funding public broadcasting in the state. Nancy Usera, the commissioner of the Department of Administration said, “If the state can’t afford to operate and maintain these systems, the question had to be asked how important it is to people

who receive the services to pay for a bigger part of those services.” They also said, “When we have these budget constraints year-after-year, one of the first things people are going to look to is whether it's really the best use of public funds to provide commercial broadcasting services to rural Alaska.”⁹²

RATNET’s budget had been cut by legislators over the previous decade. For fiscal year 1986, the state paid approximately \$2.25 million for costs associated with the Alascom satellite that provided RATNET content to villages. For fiscal year 1993, the state paid approximately \$900 thousand for RATNET’s satellite costs. \$900 thousand was about 75% of RATNET’s yearly budget that year. The exact amount for RATNET’s budget for 1993 was not found, but if \$900 thousand was 75% of the network’s budget, RATNET’s budget for fiscal year 1993 would have been about \$1.2 million. That is almost half what the state was paying for just satellite costs in fiscal year 1986.

In July 1993, the state imposed a fee on villages for service work done on state-owned RATNET satellite dishes. Due to the remoteness of some villages and the difficulty in finding and hiring qualified engineers, villages would often go months without RATNET service. \$175 thousand was appropriated by the legislature in early 1993 (fiscal year 1993) to help fix the equipment of about 24 villages.

By the early 1990s, the diversity of television service had increased in Alaska’s rural areas. Heather Hudson quoted a survey by the Institute of Social and Economic Research that estimated that 84% of Alaska’s rural households had videocassette recorders. The survey said that the percentage of videocassette recorders in rural areas was roughly the same as Alaska’s urban areas. Cable service was also increasingly available to a large number of villages at the time, however, RATNET was generally the only network that offered Alaska-based news and

information. KAKM produced a statewide weather forecast that was seen on RATNET. The program was important to rural communities because it offered detailed sea and air forecasts. RATNET's board had not met in person since 1990. Programming decisions were made via teleconference.⁹³

RATNET's board chairman Russell Nelson described the difficult environment RATNET was operating in in the early 1990s.

I've got friends with satellite dishes and they're always watching RATNET. You can get all of these channels, but RATNET's the only place you can find anything about Alaska," Nelson said. "Do you know how hard it is to select programs over the teleconference? RATNET has taken hits every year in the budget since Sheffield [1982 to 1986] was governor [Steve Cowper was governor from 1986 to 1990]. The machines are breaking down, we're trying to take as many programs as possible live and record as little as possible because the equipment is getting old. We've been budget-cutted down to where RATNET's in a wheelchair."⁹⁴

Budget Cuts Hit KYUK and RATNET

Alaska's public broadcasters were preparing to have their budgets cut in 1995 (fiscal year 1996). The Republican Party took control of the Alaska legislature after midterm elections in November 1994. Republicans had not had control of both the state's house and senate since the 1960s. The national political trend of the time was to reduce government spending, and Alaska's Republicans aimed to decrease the state's spending by \$70 million for fiscal year 1996. The state's budget for fiscal year 1995 was \$2.5 billion. Legislators were concerned, because it was expected that Alaska would see a \$500 million combined deficit through the rest of the 1990s. Royalties paid to the state from natural resource extraction (mainly oil and gas) had fallen since the 1980s due to fluctuating prices and a decrease in output. For example, Alaska oil production peaked at about two million barrels of oil per day in 1988. In 2022, the state produced 437 thousand barrels of oil per day.^{95 96 97}

State funding for the arts was hit especially hard in 1995. Alaska's Democratic legislators said that the cuts amounted to nothing more than a copycat of Gingrich's "Contract With America." Democrats noted that the state had a \$15 billion savings fund it could draw from while other income sources stabilized. "What's happening in Alaska is the Republicans are trying to copy what the Republicans are doing nationally, what Newt Gingrich is doing. I think it's a step back into the Dark Ages," Alaska Senator Jim Duncan (D. Juneau) said.⁹⁸

In April 1995, the Alaska House approved about \$3 million in cuts to the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission (APBC). House Republicans said they intended to end state support for Alaska's public television stations, and that public radio stations in communities that had commercial radio stations would see their support cut. Alaska's Senate looked for similar cuts in its budget proposals. By the end of the 1995 (fiscal year 1996) legislative session, Alaska's legislature cut the APBC's funding by 30%. KYUK's funding was cut by 74%.⁹⁹

The APBC announced in May 1995 that KYUK television would be part of a consolidated "superstation" that received national PBS content from KUAC and rebroadcast the content to southwest Alaska. The superstation was called AlaskaOne. The creation of AlaskaOne was intended to save money for Alaska's public television stations by paying the cost of one PBS programming subscription instead of three. KYUK television retained the ability to offer local programming, however, the station's ability to produce local content was severely curtailed. Bethel Broadcasting's debt load increased dramatically from 1995 to 1997 and the organization was forced to lay off half of its staff.^{100 101}

KYUK assumed control of RATNET amidst the cuts to the organization. RATNET became the Alaska Rural Communications Service (ARCS) as part of the transfer. The structure of the network remained much the same as it had been in previous years. The council that

decided the network's programming consisted of one person from the Department of Education, one person from the University of Alaska, one member of the APBC, one person from BBI, two members that were appointed by the governor, and one member from each of the 12 Alaska Native corporations.¹⁰²

KYUK's control of the network didn't last long. Two years after KYUK assumed control of ARCS, the APBC announced that it was looking for ways to transfer the operation of the network from KYUK to another operator. The commission asked the Division of Information Services to try and find alternatives for operating the system. The commission said that it was worried that the fiscal and operational burden of operating the system was becoming too great for KYUK. Patty Kastelic the co-chair of APBC said, "This is not a lack of confidence [in KYUK]. This is a survival issue. We are not interested in burdening any part of the partnership so seriously that it can't continue to function."^{103 104}

ARCS shared satellite space with other state broadcasting services, and the APBC was concerned that other broadcasters on the satellite would have to make up for the satellite's costs if ARCS was discontinued. KUAC assumed control of ARCS in February 1999. The APBC said that the system was moved to ensure the survival of both ARCS and KYUK. KYUK employed multiple people to program the network, and when KUAC submitted its proposal to run the network, it said that it planned to program ARCS using computer automation. KUAC expected one person to run the network (and probably do other tasks).^{105 106 107}

KYUK's staff reduction following the 1995 cuts affected the organization's operation and programming. Along with the cuts to staff, employee positions were combined or not rehired. Since KUAC was handling the operation of AlaskaOne, KYUK radio and television were able to focus its remaining resources on local productions. KYUK's programming in 1997 consisted of

governmental meetings, a medical call-in show, a call-in message show that relayed personal messages, and many other Yupik focused programs. KYUK continued offering Yupik news and public affairs content, though the amount of content was drastically reduced as a result of staff reductions.

Alaska Native programming continued to be broadcast during prime time, which was virtually unheard of for similar programming in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. Some complaints were made about KYUK's news programming because the majority of stories were focused on what was happening in Bethel. The focus on Bethel was primarily due to convenience for the station's reporters. The station couldn't afford to travel to area villages. KYUK's staff was about 50% Alaska Native in 1997. The station increased its reliance on volunteer labor to accomplish its programming goals.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion and Summary

This chapter examined the development of KYUK radio and television from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. KYUK radio was the first public radio station in Alaska to be created by the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission. The station was the first public radio station in Alaska to truly fit the definition of a “publicly” oriented broadcast station. KYUK furthered Alaska Native representation as the FCC determined Bethel and the surrounding areas were not capable of supporting a commercial broadcasting station. KYUK had a wider programming focus than KUAC did in the early 1970s, because KYUK was the only broadcaster in Bethel.

KYUK struggled early on. The facilities of the radio station and the television station were delayed due to the peculiarities of remote Alaska. Equipment was delayed because shipping large equipment to the area was difficult. The area's extreme weather also forced delays in construction. The organization had trouble finding qualified employees. There were frequent

power challenges between station management and its board. The station had to be creative when figuring out how it should be operated and programmed.

KYUK's budget was hit especially hard in 1995 and it lost approximately 74% of its state appropriation amidst lawmaker's cuts to the system that year. KYUK assumed operational control of the ARCS (RATNET) system about the same time. The organization was forced to lay off staff and adjust its local programming load. KYUK television also became a part of AlaskaOne, a consolidation effort between KUAC, KTOO, and KYUK. AlaskaOne was intended to save money by providing PBS content from one central station (KUAC). Two years later, KYUK was facing a budget deficit and released operational control of ARCS (RATNET) to KUAC.

KYUK's contemporary finances will be further explored in the next chapter. Chapter 6 examines the organization's financial trends from fiscal years 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization operates in distinct financial, cultural, and natural environments and has been forced to adapt to existing in such precarious environments. KYUK has been forced to utilize methods of fundraising and operations that fit those environments. The chapter also highlights the financial patterns of KYUK leading up to the state's cut in support to public broadcasting in 2019 and how the organization contended with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its fiscal health.

CHAPTER 6

KYUK: Financial Analysis

KYUK furthered Alaska Native representation across the state and the nation. It was the first true “public” broadcasting organization in Alaska. It operated in a harsh remote environment and faced difficulties, including equipment issues, labor issues, and financial issues as a result. The organization was developed at a time when Alaska Natives experienced a cultural shift between living a subsistence lifestyle and a "modern" lifestyle. The development of radio and television stations designed by and for Alaska Natives, aimed to preserve Alaska Native culture. KYUK developed methods of programming and fundraising that appealed to a mostly Yupik audience.

KYUK was initially supported by the State of Alaska, because the Federal Communications Commission determined Bethel was not capable of supporting a commercial broadcasting station. The 1980s and 1990s were challenging for the organization as state lawmakers and the federal government started to question the value of public broadcasting. KYUK was forced to cut back on programming and labor. The cuts affected the organization’s ability to service its audience.

This chapter examines the financial trends of KYUK from fiscal years 2015 to 2021.^{1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17} It was the intention of this chapter to examine the organization’s fiscal trends leading up to and following the state’s cuts to public broadcasting in 2019. However, KYUK was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. How the organization adjusted to the state’s cuts will be examined, but how the pandemic affected the organization will also be explored. Historically, KYUK has been the definition of a public broadcasting organization operating in precarity, either by its operating environment or by its fiscal environment.

Examining the most recent seven years of its finances will reveal whether the organization continues to exist in a precarious fiscal environment, and how it has adjusted to precarious events.

Overall Revenue Trends

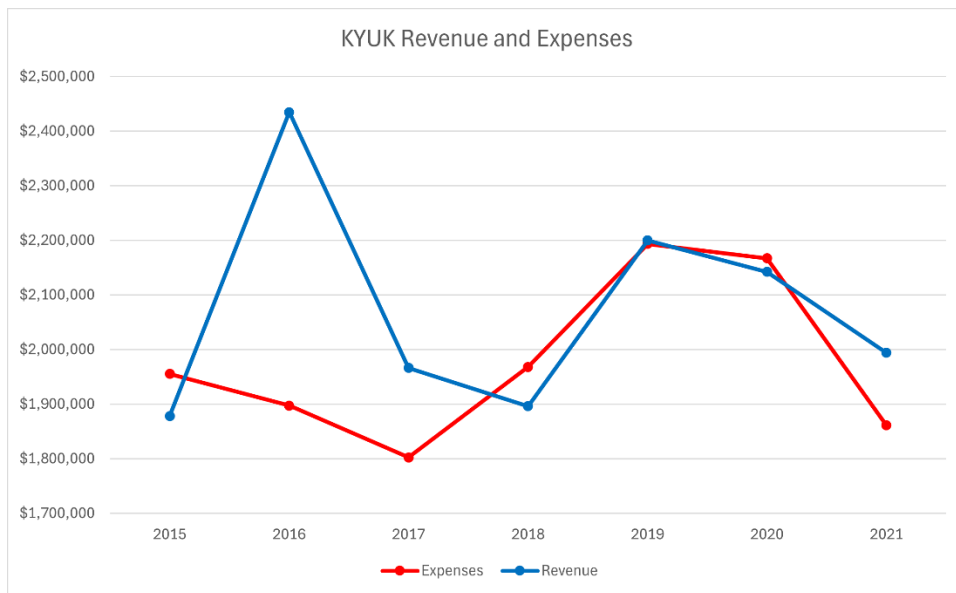


Figure 6.1. KYUK’s revenue and expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

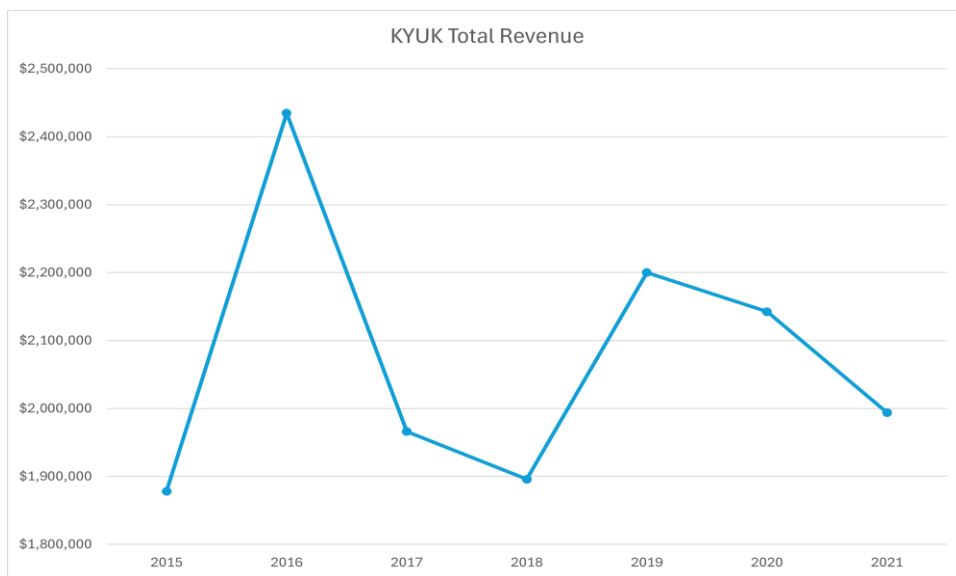


Figure 6.2. KYUK’s revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's overall revenue increased by about 6% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The increase was not steady over the seven years under review as the organization's revenues fluctuated depending on the year. Fluctuations in revenue are not unheard of for public media organizations, but KYUK's year-to-year variation was high depending on the year. The organization's revenue increased by about 30% in fiscal year 2016. Fiscal year 2016 was the highest year for income as the organization brought in about \$2.4 million in revenue. Revenue then decreased by about 22% from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2018. Revenue increased by 16% in fiscal year 2019 only to fall again by 3% in fiscal year 2020. Revenue fell again by 7% in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's revenue increased by an average of 2% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The low average increase is somewhat surprising given the two years where revenue sharply increased. As was noted above, revenue for fiscal year 2016 increased by about 30% and fiscal year 2019 increased by about 16%. Revenue decreased for fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2020, and 2021. The two years of outlier increases were counterbalanced by years of decreases. No increase or decrease dominated the others. That is the reason KYUK's average increase in revenue remained relatively low.

The 7% decrease in revenue for fiscal year 2021 could have been much worse for KYUK. As will be shown below, the organization lost 90% of its gaming revenue that year. Gaming revenues are a major source of funding for the organization. 2021's decrease in gaming revenue was mitigated, however, because KYUK saw increases in grants, underwriting, production income, CPB grants, and funding from the CARES ACT.

Despite the 2% average yearly increase in revenue, and the (temporary?) bolstering of KYUK's revenue in fiscal year 2021, the variation in revenue is somewhat distressing. Public

media organizations function well when their income is stable. Organizations can't rely on future revenue for budget predictions if future revenue has an unstable trend or high variability. In one sense, it appeared that the organization was doing well by seeing its average revenue increase (or decrease) by a small percentage, but as noted, that small percentage was dictated by high variability. We will see more of that variability that can cause instability for public media organizations as this chapter continues.

Membership Revenue Trends

KYUK describes “membership” as revenue generated from public contributions. The organization saw its membership revenue decrease by about 8% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Membership revenue fell sharply in fiscal year 2016, seeing a decrease of about 32% that fiscal year. Membership revenue slowly recovered but did not reach fiscal year 2015 levels again until fiscal year 2020. From fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2019, KYUK saw its membership revenue increase by about 28%. Membership revenue then increased by about 31% in fiscal year 2020. KYUK saw its membership revenue increase by about 68 from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2020. Membership revenues then dropped by about 19% in fiscal year 2021.

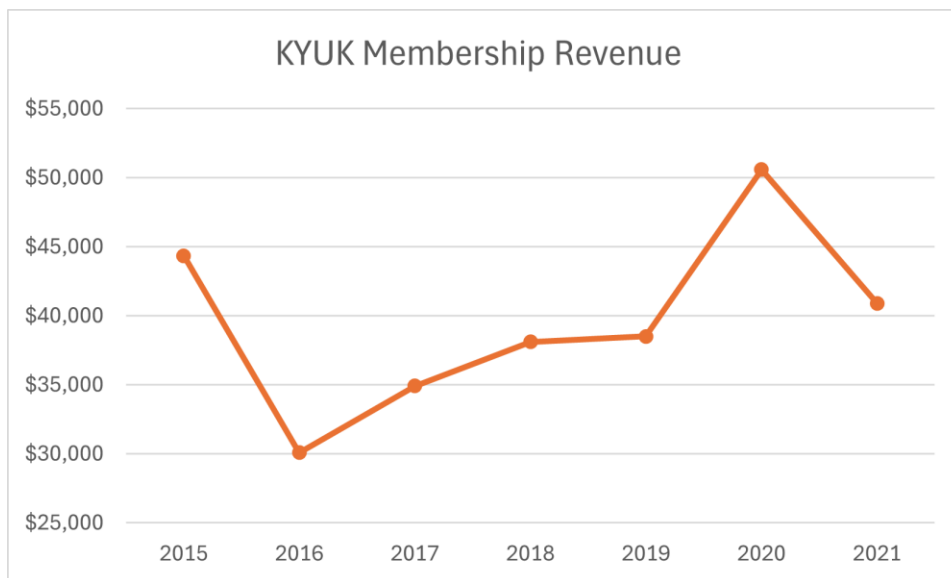


Figure 6.3. KYUK’s membership revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s membership revenue only increased by about 1% per year on average. As was seen with KYUK’s overall revenue trend, outlier years were counterbalanced by slow trends in the opposite direction. For example, KYUK’s membership revenue decreased by about 32% in fiscal year 2016. Losses were balanced out by a slow trend of gradual increase from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2020. The slow increases were then balanced by the decrease seen in fiscal year 2021.

Monetary amounts for KYUK’s membership revenues are small compared to other organizations that have been reviewed as part of this analysis. For example, the average revenue for KYUK’s membership dues from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 came to just about \$40 thousand per year. KUAC’s average for sustaining memberships came to about \$856 thousand, and Alaska Public Media’s average for sustaining memberships came to just about \$2.6 million. The difference in membership and donation revenue correlates to one simple factor – market size. KYUK generally focuses its fundraising efforts elsewhere.

KYUK's general manager, Shane Iverson, said that the decrease in membership revenue for fiscal year 2021 was not that surprising. Iverson noted that membership revenue was not the main focus of the organization's fundraising efforts:

I believe we saw a small loss. [Membership] is a rather small part of our overall revenue, but I believe we saw a loss in revenue and individual donations. Because we're smaller, we don't ask as often and because we're in a small town where there's so many organizations asking for money throughout the year, we just do it once. That makes asking well received. For the majority of fundraising on the television side we don't fundraise individual donors. Alaska Public Media, we're basically piggybacking a lot of their work, so we just let them do their thing. We let them have the small benefits they might get from our audience.¹⁸

KYUK's membership revenue suffered from the same trend that was seen with the organization's overall revenue, instability and outlier years that countered gains or losses. Membership revenue was not consistent from year to year. Consistency is not a luxury that is afforded to most public media organizations, especially organizations in a market the size of Bethel; however, the variability in membership revenue means that that revenue cannot be considered as a given. That revenue was not stable. That is why KYUK does not focus on membership revenue in its fundraising efforts. Instability of revenue causes difficulties in the budgeting process. It is hard to plan for an organization's near or distant future when revenues are unclear. Such difficulties may be easier for organizations in larger markets (such as Alaska Public Media) to overcome or adjust to, because those markets are large enough to allow for variations. For organizations that are in markets similar to or smaller than Bethel, those variations in revenue become much more difficult to adjust to or plan for.

Underwriting Revenue Trends

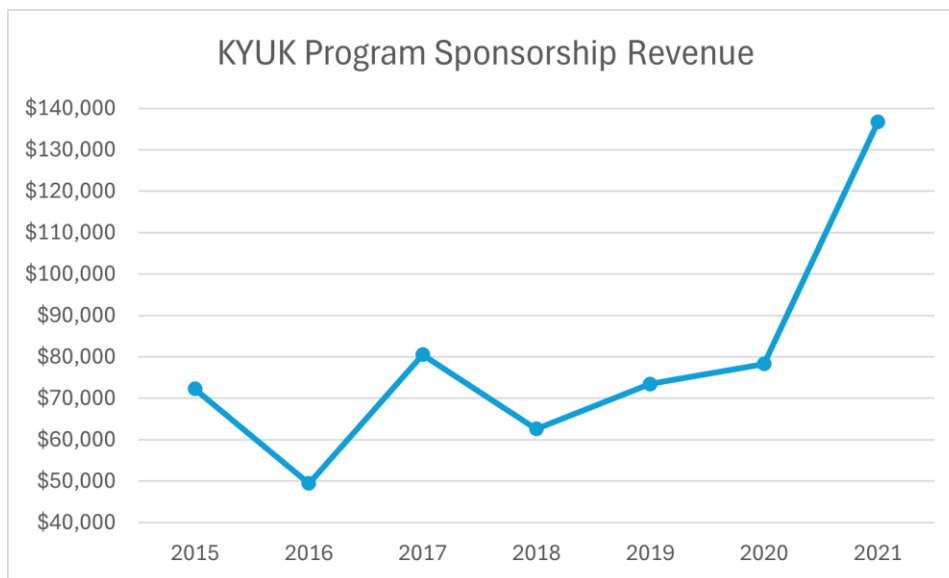


Figure 6.4. KYUK’s program sponsorship (underwriting) revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s underwriting revenue increased by about 89% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Underwriting revenue varied wildly from year-to-year. The organization brought in about \$72 thousand in underwriting revenue for fiscal year 2015. Underwriting revenue decreased by approximately 32% in fiscal year 2016. Fiscal year 2016 represented the lowest amount the organization brought in during the period under review. Underwriting revenue that year came to just about \$50 thousand. Underwriting rebounded in fiscal year 2017 and showed a 63% increase that year. By fiscal year 2018, revenue fell again by 22%. The next three fiscal years saw increases in underwriting revenue for KYUK, particularly fiscal year 2021, which brought in about \$137 thousand -- an increase of about 75%. The organization’s underwriting revenue increased by about 119% from fiscal year 2019 to the end of fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s underwriting revenue increased by an average of about 18% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. 18% is a high per-year percentage, especially in a fiscal category that is as fickle as underwriting. KYUK reported two fiscal years with decreases in underwriting support (fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2108). Both of those years had large variation from the

year before (32% and 22%, respectively). With two large outlier decreases as part of the seven-year average, an 18% average yearly increase means that the average was drastically affected by outlier increases. This was the case for fiscal year 2017, which saw underwriting revenues increase by about 63%, and fiscal year 2021, which saw revenues increase by about 75%.

KYUK's average yearly underwriting revenue would have increased by about 9% if fiscal year 2017 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, KYUK's average yearly underwriting revenue would have increased by about 7% for the remaining six years under review. KYUK would have seen its underwriting revenue decrease by about 8% per year if both fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2021 were removed from the average. The two outlier years had a dramatic effect on the organization's underwriting revenue trend.

Gaming Revenue Trends

A significant source of KYUK's revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021 came from what the State of Alaska calls "gaming." Gambling is mostly illegal in the state of Alaska with the exception of raffles, pull tabs, and Bingo. KYUK is permitted by the state to conduct all three games. Gaming revenues accounted for an average of approximately 14% of the organization's total revenue from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021.

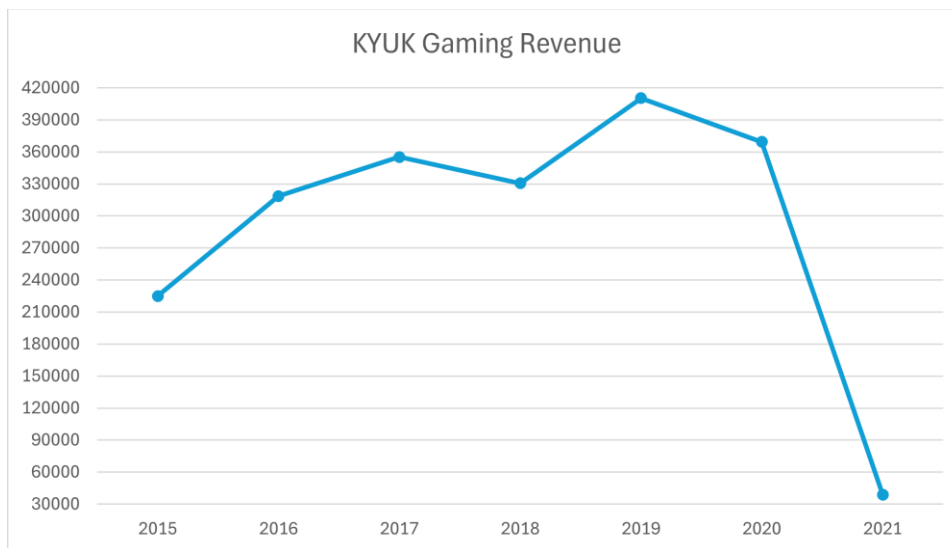


Figure 6.5. KYUK’s gaming revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK saw its gaming revenue decrease by about 83% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Gaming revenue increased by about 42% in fiscal year 2016 and grew approximately 12% in fiscal year 2017. The two fiscal years accounted for a total increase of about 58%. The organization’s gaming revenue decreased in fiscal year 2018 but increased once again in fiscal year 2019. Fiscal year 2019 represented the largest amount of revenue KYUK brought in through gaming for the seven years under review at just about \$410 thousand that year. Revenues dropped by about 10% in fiscal year 2020, and in fiscal year 2021, drastically fell by about 90%. KYUK reported gaming revenue of just about \$39 thousand for fiscal year 2021. As has been seen throughout this analysis, solely saying “The organization saw a decrease in gaming revenue,” is somewhat misleading, because the overall trend in revenues is dictated by outlier years where variation is higher than other years.

KYUK’s gaming revenue suffered as a result of the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic falling within the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years. Lockdowns affected access to KYUK’s gaming resources. Even though the COVID-19 lockdown was affected communities well before

the start of 2020, the lockdown portion of the pandemic really took off in March and April of that year – leaving about 3 to 5 months of lockdown that occurred in fiscal year 2020 (depending on when and how Bethel decided to lockdown). The 90% loss of gaming revenue in fiscal year 2021 was most certainly a result of the pandemic having an effect on the public’s access to the organization’s gaming resources. “We resumed gaming in June or July [2021] at the start of the fiscal year. There’s gaming at the VFW Hall here in town where we rent out to game once a week. We do it all, we just rent the space out from them. We also collaborate with another nonprofit to run a ‘Rippy Booth’ inside of the local supermarket,” Shane Iverson said.¹⁹

It remains to be seen if future fiscal years showed any significant rebound for gaming revenue. Losing \$371 thousand in one fiscal year is a heavy burden for any organization, but especially public media organizations that are already facing insecure funding and expense loads.

Corporation for Public Broadcasting Revenue Trends

KYUK saw a 10% increase in Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funding from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The funding from the CPB that was calculated as part of this analysis was for both non-donor restricted funding and donor restricted funding. The primary difference between the two is that donor restricted funding has some sort of spending criteria attached, such as a timed release of funds. Non-donor restricted funds have no restrictions and can be used as soon as they are received. KYUK’s CPB funding remained relatively flat from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2020. The largest variations came in fiscal year 2018 from an increase of about 6%, and in fiscal year 2021 from an increase of about 10%. CPB funding for fiscal year 2021 was the highest the organization received for the period under review at just about \$1.5 million. The highest amount KYUK had received from the CPB prior to fiscal year 2021 was \$991 thousand in fiscal year 2019.

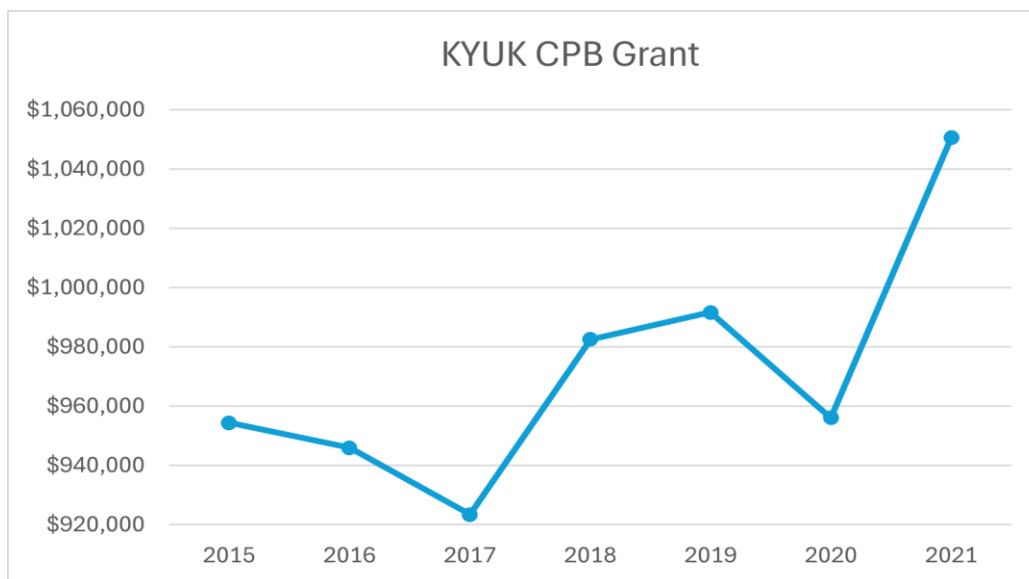


Figure 6.6. KYUK’s CPB base grant revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s CPB funding increased by an average of about 2% (1.73%) per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. While fiscal year 2021 would not normally be considered an outlier year when compared to outliers seen in other categories, the 10% increase that year is the largest for the period under review. A 10% increase was unusual, given the flat funding for previous fiscal years. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, KYUK’s CPB funding would have seen a very slight increase of about less than 1% (0.09%) per year for the remaining six years under review. Without fiscal year 2021, the average year-to-year funding trend from the CPB was almost completely flat.

KYUK publishes the total amount it receives from the CPB in its financial reports, but it does not offer a breakdown on how much was received from individual service grants. For example, it’s difficult to tell how much was received specifically for radio or specifically for television. However, the CPB does offer that information.

According to the CPB, KYUK received \$1,050,563 in funding from the corporation in fiscal year 2021. That is the exact amount reported by KYUK. KYUK radio received \$210,000 in CPB funding, and KYUK television received \$828,103 that year. The CPB also reported that KYUK received what it defines as “other system support” in fiscal year 2021. Other system support is generally used for services that help a public media organization plan for technology shifts or administrative tasks. KYUK received \$12,360 for other system support in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK reported that the CPB provided \$956,021 in funding for fiscal year 2020. The CPB reported the same figure for KYUK’s community service grants and other system support. The CPB provided \$175,376 KYUK radio in fiscal year 2020. The corporation provided \$768,963 for KYUK’s television community service grant the same year. KYUK also received \$11,682 in other system support. KYUK radio received an increase of \$34,724 in funding from the corporation for fiscal year 2021 (compared to fiscal year 2020). KYUK television received an increase of \$59,140 for fiscal year 2021 (compared to fiscal year 2020). The organization also received \$678 more for other system support for fiscal year 2021 (compared to fiscal year 2020). In total, the organization received \$94,542 more in CPB funding for fiscal year 2021 or about 10% more than fiscal year 2020.

The increased funding in fiscal year 2021 was not driven by the federal government passing stabilization funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic. KYUK’s funding from the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is not represented in the figures above, even though the CPB was responsible for disseminating funding from the acts to public media organizations. The section only incorporated funding given to KYUK as part of their radio and

television community service grants and other system support. This is important, because a 10% increase in one fiscal year is generally unheard of for CPB funding.

Public media organizations were understandably nervous during the pandemic. Lockdowns around the country prevented stations from holding in person events and in person pledge drives. The pandemic also affected how people and businesses spent their money. There was a real concern that the public would hold onto their money and forgo spending on charity or underwriting (advertising). The CPB as the figurehead of public media adjusted grant funding to help adjust to the losses some stations might have received – in the case of KYUK, extra CPB funding helped the organization cope with the loss of gaming revenue.

CARES/ARPA Revenue Trends

KYUK's reporting on the CARES Act and ARPA funding it received was difficult to analyze. KYUK did mention CARES Act funding in its fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 reports, but it did not mention any funding it received as part of the ARPA. The intent of this section is not to highlight inconsistencies in the organization's fiscal reporting. KYUK uses standard accounting practices and follows CPB requirements in its financial reporting. This section's purpose is to highlight how odd the extra funding for those two years is represented to the public via fiscal reporting. A secondary purpose is to show how integral additional federal funding was for the organization during the pandemic – a narrative that is sometimes lost with public media organizations.

KYUK received what the CPB called "Fiscal Stabilization Grants" in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021. A fiscal stabilization grant is the classification for the money that was granted to the corporation from the CARES Act and ARPA. The corporation then disseminated funding to public media organizations around the United States. KYUK received \$372,341 in

stabilization grants in fiscal year 2020. KYUK radio received \$112,136 and KYUK television received \$260,205. The organization received \$718,537 in stabilization grants in FY2021. KYUK radio received \$234,149 and KYUK television received \$484,388. All told, the organization received \$1,090,878 in stabilization funding from the CPB.

Stabilization grants were separate from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that were made available as part of the CARES Act. Grants did not have to be paid back, PPP loans did. KYUK received \$143,206 in PPP loans in fiscal year 2020. It is not known whether KYUK's loans were paid back or forgiven (as is what happened with many public media organizations). PPP loans were available until the end of fiscal year 2021 (May 31, 2021), but the organization reported receiving no loans in fiscal year 2021. KYUK also received what it defined as "other organizations" as part of CARES Act funding. In fiscal year 2020, KYUK reported receiving \$107,391 in funding from other organizations. KYUK also reported receiving \$443,893 in funding from other organizations in fiscal year 2021.

Production Revenue Trends

KYUK's production revenue increased by approximately 193% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. As has been seen with other fiscal categories in this project, the increase is the result of a major outlier year affecting the percentage. Production income dropped by about 24% in fiscal year 2016 but then rebounded by approximately 129%. Production income increased again by approximately 37% from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2019 but went back down by about 36% in fiscal year 2020. The organization's production income increased again by about 93% for fiscal year 2021. It's clear that KYUK's production revenue, like other revenue categories, has been highly variable from year to year.

The organization's production revenue increased by an average of about 33% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Such a high percentage of yearly increase means that the percentage was affected by large outlier years. The outlier increases seen for fiscal year 2017 (130%) and fiscal year 2021 (93%) were much larger than the decreases seen in other fiscal years, even though some of those years of decrease would have been considered outliers themselves in other categories (fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2020 for example). Usually, removing outliers from the average will reveal the dominant trend for a fiscal category, but KYUK's production revenue was so affected by outlier years, that the dominant trend would have continued to be affected by whatever outlier years remained in the average.

The reason the organization's production revenue is highly variable from year to year is because the amounts are somewhat small compared to other categories. Relatively small increases and decreases affected the magnitude in which the category shifted. For example, the decrease of 24% for fiscal year 2016 was a decrease from about \$32 thousand to approximately \$24 thousand. KYUK brought in \$56 thousand in production income for fiscal year 2017. The \$31,650 difference between fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017 is enough to account for the 136% increase. Likewise the difference of \$45,621 for fiscal year 2021 accounts for the 93% increase that year.

KYUK's production revenue was highly variable from year to year and once again showed that certain categories cannot be relied upon as a reliable source of income for the organization. Every little bit helps, but KYUK's budget would not be made or broken by production revenue trends from year to year.

Other Grants Revenue Trends

What KYUK defined as “other” grants decreased by 83% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. However, as has been seen with other fiscal categories, the decrease was not consistent. Grant sources other than CPB grants are recorded as other grants. Other grant funding increased by about 167% for fiscal year 2016. However, by the end of fiscal year 2018, KYUK’s other grant funding decreased by about 84%. Funding increased by 68% in fiscal year 2019, and in fiscal year 2020, the organization saw its other grant funding decrease again by 31%. Fiscal year 2021 saw another decrease of about 77%. Other grant funding decreased by about 84% from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s other grants funding increased by an average of approximately 6% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average is odd, because as noted above, other grants experienced considerable decreases for the years under review. Every year would be considered an outlier year in other categories. The largest outlier year was fiscal year 2016 when other grants increased by about 167%. If fiscal year 2016 was removed from the average, KYUK’s other grants would have decreased by about 26% per year for the remaining six years under review. The shift from a 6% per year increase to a 26% per year decrease shows how much fiscal year 2016 affected the trend. The trend shows that KYUK’s other grants are highly variable from year to year and thus insecure as a revenue source for the organization. For example, the sharp increase in fiscal year 2016 saw other grants increase to about \$808 thousand from about \$303 thousand the year before. In fiscal year 2017, other grants dropped by about 70% to approximately \$244 thousand. The shifts in grant funding weren’t for small amounts. Fiscal year 2016 increased by about \$505 thousand, and fiscal year 2017 decreased by about \$564 thousand. Half-a-million-dollar shifts in two fiscal years are not stable for any media organization let alone media organizations already in a precarious situation.

KYUK did not report funding from the State of Alaska in its financial reports. The other organizations for this project had a separate line item in their financial reports that described the funding from the state in the years before the system was defunded. KYUK did report its In-Kind support from the state, such as engineering and administrative support, but the exact monetary amounts received by the state before the system was defunded are unknown. It is possible that funding from the state was incorporated into the other grants category. That would explain the sudden decrease in other grants funding for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021. It's also likely the COVID-19 pandemic impacted what grants the organization received, but the decrease is so drastic, that it's difficult to understand why other grants would fall so drastically at KYUK but not at other organizations.

Overall Expense Trends

KYUK's overall expenses decreased by about 5% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Overall expenses were variable for the period under review. Expenses decreased by about 8% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. The organization saw its expenses increase by about 22% from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2019 and decrease again by about 15% from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2021.

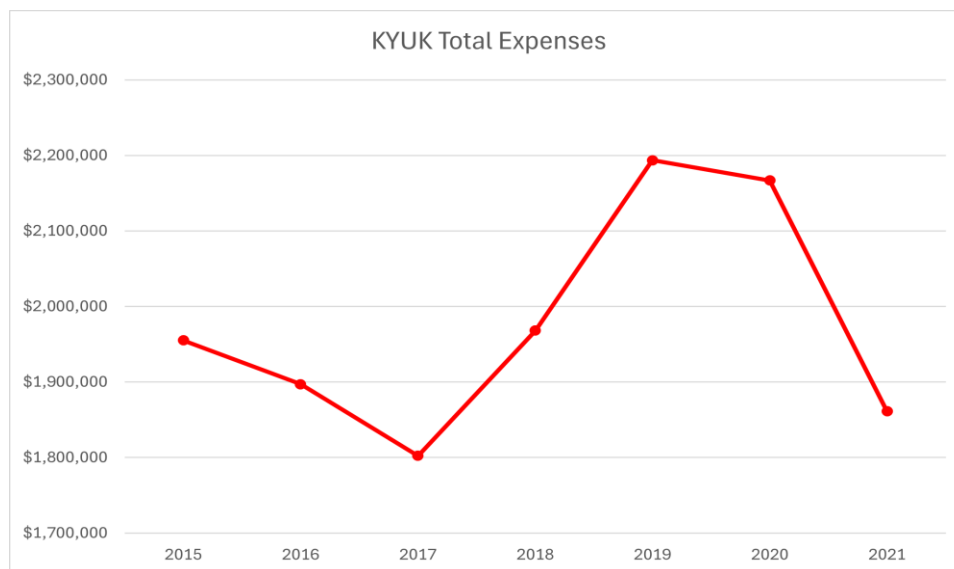


Figure 6.7. KYUK’s total expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s expenses remained relatively stable over the seven years under review. Overall expenses decreased by an average of approximately less than 1% per year (-0.44%) from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Even though the organization’s expense load experienced variability as part of short-term trends (such as the 8% decrease from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017 described above), KYUK’s expense load remained relatively stable. Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 are the only two years that increased or decreased by more than 10%. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization’s expense load would have decreased by about 3% per year on average for the remaining six years under review. If fiscal year 2021 was removed (and fiscal year 2019 was kept) from the average, KYUK’s overall expenses would have increased by about 2% per year on average for the remaining six years under review. The outlier years were close enough in size that both mitigated the effects of each other. Removing fiscal year 2019 from the average pushed the organization’s expenses to a greater percentage of decrease per year. Removing fiscal year 2021 negated the effects of the losses and pushed the organizations toward an overall trend of expense increase.

Programming & Production Expense Trends

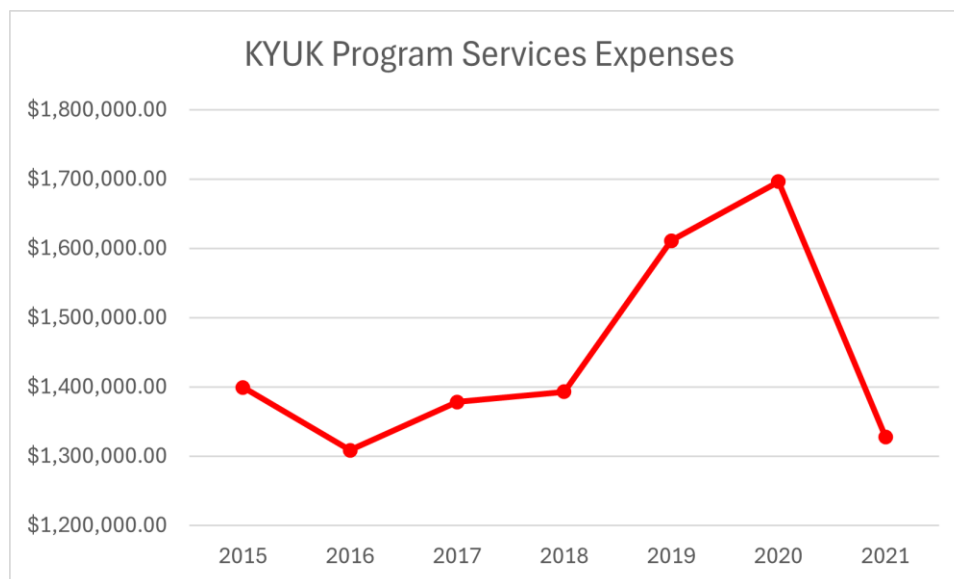


Figure 6.8. KYUK’s program services expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Programming and production expenses accounted for an average of approximately 51% of KYUK’s total expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Programming expenses decreased by about 2% during the seven years under review. Expenses were variable and showed a back-and-forth trend where expenses increased or decreased, sometimes sharply, depending on the year. KYUK’s programming costs decreased by about 9% in fiscal year 2016. Expenses went up again by about 5% in fiscal year 2017 before dropping another 5% in fiscal year 2018. Programming expenses rose sharply by about 36% from fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 combined. Expense then sharply decreased by about 21% in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s programming expenses decreased by an average of less than 1% (-0.67%) per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average decrease is low despite the variability per year. It is precisely variability that kept the average low. Most outlier shifts upward or downward were met with outlier shifts in the opposite direction in subsequent years. For

example, the approximate 25% increase for fiscal year 2019 was met by a similar decrease (21%) for fiscal year 2021.

Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 were outlier years for programming expenses. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization's programming expenses would have decreased by an average of about 4% per year for the remaining six years under review. Removing the 25% increase for fiscal year 2019 caused the decrease of 21% for fiscal year 2021's to push down the organization's yearly programming expenses. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average (and the others kept in), KYUK's programming expenses would have increased by an average of 5% per year for the remaining six years under review. Removing fiscal year 2021 as an outlier decrease shifted average programming expenses to an increasing trend overall.

The average yearly trend showed that KYUK's programming expenses stayed relatively flat from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021, but looking at the variation from a year-to-year perspective showed that programming expenses were highly variable. Overall programming expenses that were variable caused instability for KYUK's fiscal position. Some variability is expected, but variability with outlier shifts makes public media organizations' ability to plan for the future or weather sudden economic shifts a difficult task.

Programming Labor Expense Trends

Programming labor costs were a major expenditure for KYUK. Programming labor accounted for approximately 30% of the of the organization's average total expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Programming labor accounted for an average of 63% of the organization's total labor expenses and for an average of about 59% of KYUK's overall programming expenses.

KYUK's programming labor expenses increased by about 5% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Costs decreased by about 16% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017, but then increased by approximately 25% from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2019. Labor expenses dipped by about 7% in fiscal year 2020 before rising by about 6% in fiscal year 2021. Programming labor expenses increased by an average of about 1% (1.41%) from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. As was seen with the organization's total programming expenses, the average percentage of yearly increase was kept relatively low because outlier years were counteracted by the variability of other fiscal years. For example, programming labor expenses for fiscal year 2019 increased by about 25%. The outlier year was mostly counteracted by the decreases of fiscal year 2016, fiscal year 2017, and fiscal year 2020. The three years combined were close enough in the aggregate to negate fiscal year 2019's increase. The increases for fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2021 were small enough to affect the overall average, but spread over the seven years under review, the effect was small. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization's average programming labor expenses would have decreased by about 3% per year for the remaining six years under review. The 25% increase of fiscal year 2019 had a large impact on the overall programming labor expense average.

Overall programming expenses typically shift based off of the trends with labor expenses and/or programming expenses. Despite programming labor expenses representing about 59% of KYUK's overall programming expenses, increases in programming labor expenses did not always correlate to increases in total programming expenses. Programming labor expenses decreased in fiscal year 2016 (about 11%), and so did the organization's total programming expenses for that year (about 9%). However, programming labor expenses continued to fall in fiscal year 2017 (about 6%), but total programming expenses rose by 5% that same year.

Programming labor expenses increased by about 3% for fiscal year 2018, but the organization's total programming expenses decreased by 5% that same year. Labor is a major part of KYUK's total programming expense load, and it is the dominant category in terms of percentage, but it is not always the determining factor of whether the organization's programming expense will go up or down.

Program & Network Expense Trends

KYUK categorizes expenses related to purchasing programming as "Programming & Network." In essence, programming and network fees are the expense of acquiring programming from remote sources for the purpose of broadcast – like content provided by American Public Media or Public Radio Exchange. To remain consistent with the other organizations reviewed as part of this project, "programming & network" will be referred to as "programming fees" for the remainder of the section. KYUK's programming fees accounted for an average of about 9% of the organization's total programming expenses. That percentage changed over the course of the period under review, because as will be seen, the organization's programming fees dropped sharply in fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2019. Programming fees accounted for approximately 15% of KYUK's total programming expenses in fiscal year 2015. By fiscal year 2021, they accounted for 4%.

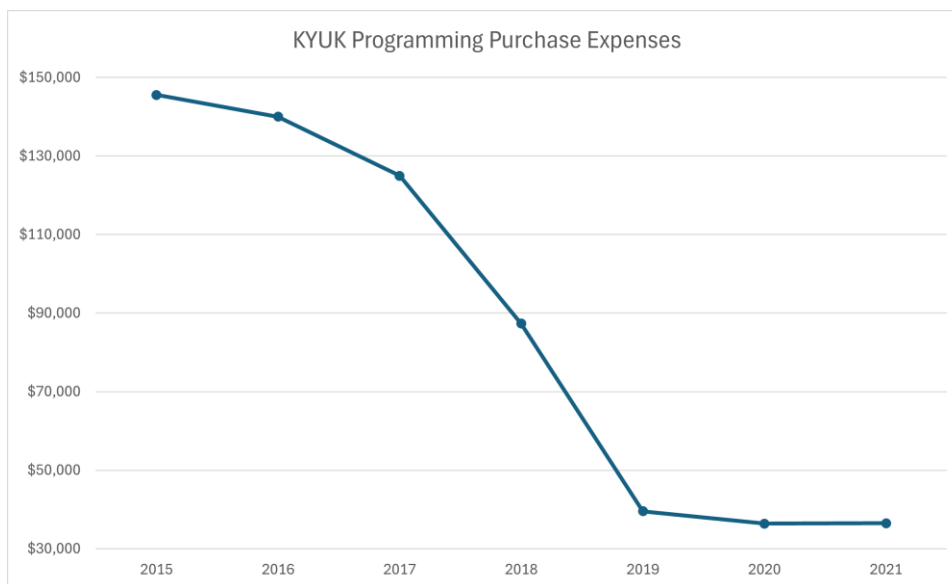


Figure 6.9. KYUK’s program purchase expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s programming fees decreased by approximately 75% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Fees decreased in almost every year under review. Programming fees decreased by approximately 14% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. Fees again dropped by about 30% in fiscal year 2018 and then another 55% in fiscal year 2019. Programming fees decreased by 8% for fiscal year 2020 and increase by less than 1% (0.24%) for fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s programming fees decreased by an average of 18% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Such a large percentage (of either decrease or increase) usually indicates that there were major outlier years affecting the average. That is true in this case as well. Fiscal years 2017, 2018, and 2019 had large percentage decreases each year (11%, 30%, and 55%, respectively). Removing outlier years from the average can reveal trends that aren’t sometimes seen because of the amount of the outliers. For KYUK’s programming fees, the trend would not change drastically, because every year under review (except fiscal year 2021) had a

decrease in fees. Removing outlier years would only reveal a different smaller percentage of decrease.

The cause of KYUK's decrease(s) in programming fees is easy to pinpoint. Programming fees dropped, because KYUK shed programming responsibility for its television station. KYUK no longer programs PBS content directly. KYUK rebroadcasts national television content from Alaska Public Media (AKPM). Programming fees for KYUK decreased suddenly, because AKPM assumed responsibility for purchasing programming. The remainder of the fees that KYUK pays are more than likely from buying local programming not produced by the organization, buying programming that fits the needs of its audience that AKPM doesn't provide, and buying programming for its radio station.

As was noted earlier in the chapter, KYUK saw its overall programming expenses increase by about 25% for fiscal year 2019. The increase was approximately \$225 thousand. Programming labor also increased that year by about 25%, but the increase only came to about \$130 thousand. The difference of \$95 thousand is interesting, because the organization's programming fees actually decreased by about \$48 thousand that year. An increase in programming labor expenses certainly contributed to the increase in overall programming expense for fiscal year 2019, but programming fees did not. What did contribute? Oddly, the increase in overall programming expenses was due to an increase in the cost of programming materials.

Tapes, Media & Production Expense Trends

KYUK calls programming materials "Tapes, Media & Production" in its financial records. Tapes, Media & Production refers to materials that are used to record, distribute, and broadcast content. The materials can be anything from physical tapes, compact discs, DVDs, or

hard drives. For brevity, Tapes, Media & Production materials will be references as “programming material.”

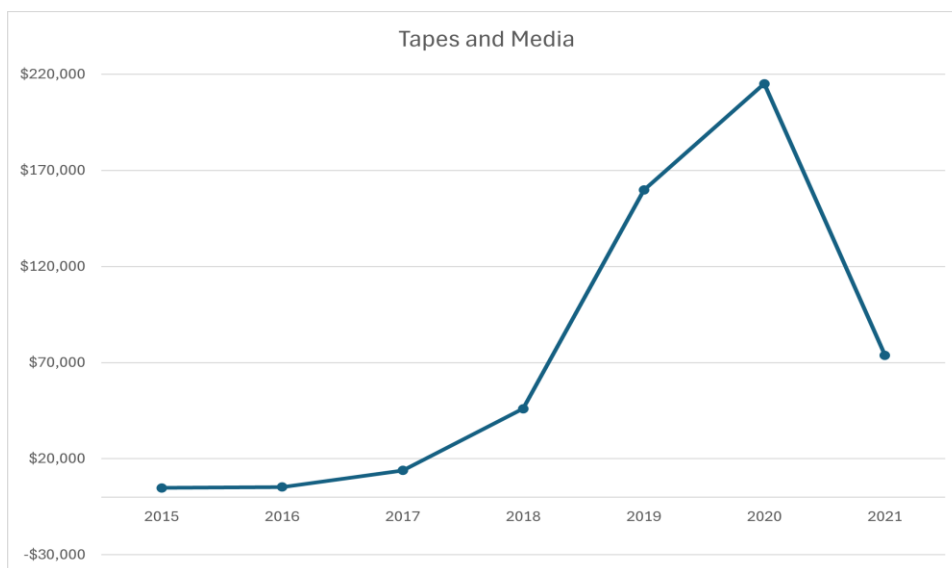


Figure 6.10. KYUK’s tapes and media expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

KYUK’s programming material expenses increased by about 1445% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The high percentage increase does not paint the entire picture, because there were fiscal years (particularly fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020) where the increase in programming material expenses were even greater. Programming material expenses increased by about 10% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016. Expenses increased again in fiscal year 2017 by about 163%, and in fiscal year 2018 by 231%. Fiscal year 2019 increased by approximately 248%, and fiscal year 2020 increased by 34%. Programming material expenses did not see a decrease until fiscal year 2021 when they decreased by about 66%.

The organization’s program material expenses increased by about 191% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017. Despite the large percentage increase seen during those three fiscal years, the monetary amount spent was still relatively low. KYUK spent \$4800 on programming materials in fiscal year 2015, and by fiscal year 2017, expenses increased to about

\$14 thousand. By the end of fiscal year 2018, however, programming material expenses had jumped to about \$46 thousand. KYUK spent approximately \$160 thousand in fiscal year 2019, and about \$215 thousand in fiscal year 2020. The 66% decrease in fiscal year 2021 dropped programming material expenses to about \$74 thousand. Despite the decrease, the organization still paid a substantial amount for materials in FY2021, especially when compared to what was spent in fiscal year 2015.

The increase in KYUK's programming materials expenses is what directly caused the increases in the organization's overall programming expenses for fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020. Programming materials have been recorded in the financial records for most public media organizations that have been analyzed as part of this project, but the category has almost been an afterthought in terms of the amount that has been spent. It is unusual that KYUK spent over \$200 thousand on programming materials in a single fiscal year. The growth in programming material expenditures that started ramping up in fiscal year 2016 is also unusual.

Shane Iverson said that the sharp increase in programming materials was the result of a project that the organization undertook to digitize its video materials. They said that old videotapes were digitized, and the digitization process required materials such as hard drives:

[The increase] is mainly a result of archiving. We archived our videos. There were decades of videos just in the building unprotected and not well cataloged. There were a lot of mysterious tapes where people had recorded material and then recorded that and recorded over that. That huge increase was us spending money archiving, cataloging, and digitizing our videos.²⁰

Technical Expense Trends

Technical expenses are costs that are associated with engineering tasks or keeping broadcasting stations on-the-air. KYUK's technical expenses accounted for approximately 22% of the organization's total expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Expenses

decreased by approximately 12% during the same period. The trend with technical expenses showed a steady increase until fiscal year 2018, and then a slow decrease until the end of the period under review. Technical expenses stayed relatively flat from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016, only seeing a drop of about 2%. Expenses rose by about 6% in fiscal year 2017 and again by about 14% in fiscal year 2018, for about 21% over those two fiscal years. Technical expenses decreased steadily from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2021, dropping by about 26%.

KYUK's technical expenses decreased by an average of about 1% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average yearly variation was small each year. Fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020 had variations that did not increase or decrease by more than 6%. The yearly average was influenced by two outlier years – a 14% increase for fiscal year 2018 and a 24% decrease for fiscal year 2021. Although fiscal year 2017 was not an outlier year (6% increase), it was a ramp up year of sorts for the 21% total increase from fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018. The increases of fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 counteracted the 24% decrease seen for fiscal year 2021. That counteraction is what kept the organization's average yearly technical expenses low, even though there was high variation in some fiscal years.

The counteraction would be further highlighted if fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 were removed from the average. KYUK would have seen its average yearly technical expenses decrease by about 7% per year for the remaining five years under review. If fiscal year 2021 was the only year to be removed from the average, the organization's average yearly technical expenses would have increased by about 3% per year. The trend reversed from an average yearly decrease to an average yearly increase depending on what outlier year was removed.

Technical Labor Expense Trends

Technical labor is the labor associated with engineering tasks. Engineers ensure broadcasters stay on-the-air and make sure equipment is maintained and in working order. KYUK's technical labor expenses accounted for an average of about 11% of the organization's total technical expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Technical labor expenses increased by about 3% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization's technical labor expenses remained relatively flat for the period under review. With the exception of fiscal year 2019, all fiscal years under review were in the same average range of labor expenses at about \$113 thousand per year. There was a sudden drop in labor expenses for fiscal year 2019, which decreased by about 32% that year (to about \$70 thousand). Technical labor expenses rebounded back to their normal levels (74% increase) in fiscal year 2020 and stayed level in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's technical labor expenses increased by about 5% per year on average from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The yearly average is somewhat misleading, because it is heavily impacted by fiscal year 2019's decrease and fiscal year 2020's subsequent rebound back to normal expenditure levels. Technical labor expenses decreased by about 32% in fiscal year 2019, and the rebound in fiscal year 2020 was an increase of about 74%. As noted above, fiscal year 2020's expenditure levels were roughly the same as what was seen during previous fiscal years, but because fiscal year 2019 had such a sharp decrease, fiscal year 2020's increase back to normal levels appeared sharp as well. Both years' variation affected the yearly average. If fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 were removed from the average, KYUK's average yearly technical labor expenses would have decreased by about 3% – moving the average trend more in line with the relatively flat funding seen in the year-to-year breakdown.

It is unknown what caused the shift in labor expenses for fiscal year 2019. It's possible that technical contract labor increased, because the organization moved from full-time semi-permanent engineers to contract engineers. However, KYUK reported spending nothing on contract labor in fiscal year 2019. The decrease in technical labor expenses was not reflected as an increase in contract labor. The more than likely cause of the decrease is that the organization lost an engineer for that fiscal year, and the decrease in labor costs reflected that loss. It's also possible engineering tasks were moved to AKPM as part of KYUK's moved to Alaska Public Television.

Satellites, Transmitters & Repairs Expense Trends

“Satellite Interconnections”, “Transmitter Utilities”, and “Repairs and Maintenance” are categories that are represented separately in KYUK's fiscal reports. Analyzing the categories separately would be a lengthy task. The costs of the three categories are more substantial than most other technical expense categories but the per-year amounts aren't substantial enough (like labor costs) to necessitate separate analyses of each category. The three categories have been combined into one category for this section. There is enough interconnection [no pun] in the purpose of the three categories, that information will not be lost by combining them into one. That category will simply be called, “STR.”

STR expenses increased by about 117% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The percentage is unreliable; however, because each fiscal year had sharp variation. For example, fiscal year 2015's STR expenses came to about \$26 thousand. By fiscal year 2019, they had risen to about \$93 thousand. STR expenses rose by about 93% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017. They then dropped slightly (about 7%) in fiscal year 2018 before increasing by almost

98% in fiscal year 2019. STR expenses then decreased by about 39% from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's STR expenses increased by an average of about 22% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. With the exception of fiscal year 2018, each fiscal year was what would be considered an outlier year for other fiscal categories. Removing outlier years would typically reveal dominant trends in a category, but because almost every year is an outlier year, doing so with STR expenses would not reveal such trends. The sharp variations from year to year came as a result from variations in satellite interconnections and repairs (maintenance). For example, KYUK paid \$301 in satellite interconnection expenses in fiscal year 2015. In fiscal year 2018, the organization paid just about \$28 thousand. In fiscal year 2015, KYUK paid about \$4.2 thousand in repairs. In fiscal year 2019, the organization paid about \$58 thousand. Transmitter utility expenses stayed relatively consistent. The total monetary amounts for STR expenses as separate categories are for low enough amounts that sharp increases result in high percentage changes for the category overall.

Fundraising Expense Trends

Expenses related to fundraising accounted for an average of about 9% of KYUK's total expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization's fundraising expenses decreased by approximately 41% during the same period. As has been seen with KYUK's fiscal categories thus far, fundraising expenses saw tremendous variation for the period under review. Fundraising expenses increased by approximately 31% in fiscal year 2016 before falling by about 62% in fiscal year 2017. Expenses then rebounded by about 125% in fiscal year 2018 before falling again by about 55% from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2020. The

organization's fundraising expenses jumped again in fiscal year 2021, increasing by about 17% that year.

KYUK's fundraising expenses increased by an average of about 9% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The percentage of per year increase is high, and as noted above, fundraising expenses were highly variable. Year-to-year variability with high percentages of increase or decrease in this analysis have generally meant that there are one or two outlier years that have a dominant effect on the overall trend. This was also the case with KYUK's fundraising expenses, but instead of one or two years affecting the trend, every year affected the trend.

Almost every fiscal year under review was an outlier year; however, fiscal year 2018's 125% increase was far and away the largest. If fiscal year 2018 was removed from the average, KYUK's fundraising expenses would have seen an average yearly decrease of about 15% for the remaining six years under review. The trend shifted from high percentage yearly increases to high percentage yearly decreases. This shows the effect of fiscal year 2018 as an outlier year on the overall trend for fundraising expenses.

The reason that the trend swung to a high percentage of yearly decrease after fiscal year 2018 was removed, is because fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2020 were also large outlier years. Fundraising expenses decreased by about 62% for fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2020 decreased by about 52%. In other fiscal categories for this project, we've seen a counteraction effect where one outlier year's increase or decrease counteracts another outlier year's increase or decrease. The decreases in fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2020, when combined (about 113%), counteract the increase seen in fiscal year 2018. If both fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2020 were removed from the average (along with fiscal year 2018 which was already removed),

KYUK's average funding expenses would have seen a yearly increase of about 13% per year for the remaining years under review.

13% is a high yearly change as well. After the largest outlier years (fiscal year 2017, fiscal year 2018, and fiscal year 2020) were removed from the average, only three year-to-year change percentages were left to analyze as part of KYUK's fundraising expenses. Two of those years were also what would be considered outlier years in other fiscal categories (approximately 31% increase for fiscal year 2016 and an approximate 17% increase for fiscal year 2021). Removing the remaining outlier years would be ineffective, because all that would remain is fiscal year 2019's non-outlier year (about 7% decrease).

What happened with KYUK's fundraising expense trends is that the analysis was affected by three factors: outlier years with large percentages of variation, an outlier year count that was the majority of fiscal years under review, and a sample size of fiscal years that was too small to analyze after removing outlier years from the analysis. The main takeaway is that the high variation with KYUK's fundraising expense trend is about as accurate as it can be when all the information is included in the analysis, manipulation of the data to reveal an accurate overall trend was ineffective – the trend was already there.

It has been shown in earlier parts of this analysis that sharp variations from year to year are usually what cause high percentage variation in fiscal categories. The sharp variations in monetary amounts usually come with categories that have traditionally spent very little and then suddenly spend a lot more over the course of a few fiscal years. For example, KYUK spent \$4774 on tapes, media & production in fiscal year 2015. It spent just over \$215 thousand in fiscal year 2020. That is an increase of about 4405%. KYUK's fundraising expenses had a similar trend, where major shifts in monetary amounts affected the variation of percentage

change. What is different about the percentage shift with the organization's fundraising expenses is that the monetary amounts were for large amounts that shifted to smaller but still large amounts. In fiscal year 2017, the organization spent about \$108 thousand. Expenses increased to about \$242 thousand in fiscal year 2018. That is the 125% jump in expenses noted earlier. In the next section, it will be shown that KYUK's labor expenses related to fundraising was one of the causes for the jump.

Fundraising Labor Expense Trends

KYUK's expenses related to the labor for fundraising (fundraising labor) accounted for about 8% of the organization's total labor expenditures from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. That is a small percentage compared to the other public media organizations that were reviewed for this analysis. For example, AKPM's labor expenses related to development came to just about 23% of the organization's overall labor expense load. KYUK's fundraising labor expenses increased by about 40% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. There was high variation for some fiscal years, however. Fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2016 stayed relatively flat, only increasing by about 7% (about \$5000). Fundraising labor expenses took a major hit for fiscal year 2017, dropping by about 98%. KYUK reported spending approximately \$1600 that year on fundraising labor. Fiscal year 2018 increased by about 3400%. The high percentage increase was the result of labor expenses increasing to about \$55 thousand that year. Despite the increase, fundraising labor expenses were still about \$23 thousand less in fiscal year 2018 than they were in fiscal year 2016. The percentage increase was high, but it would have been much higher if labor expenses had rebounded back to fiscal year 2016 levels. The organization's fundraising labor expenses for fiscal year 2019 surpassed the level for fiscal year 2016. Fiscal year 2019

increased by about 72% (to about \$94 thousand). There was a small 10% decrease in fiscal year 2020 and fundraising labor expenditures increased again by about 19% in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's fundraising labor expenditures were highly variable from year to year. As was seen with the organization's overall fundraising expenses, which saw a decrease of about 62% in fiscal year 2017 followed by a 125% rebound increase in fiscal year 2018, there was an outlier year that drastically affected the overall average trend. Fundraising labor for fiscal year 2017 decreased by approximately 98%, and that was followed by an increase of about 3400% a year later.

KYUK's fundraising labor expenses increased by an average of 564% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The same issue with analyzing the organization's average yearly trend for overall fundraising was apparent with labor as well. Fiscal year 2017 was such a large outlier year, that it affected the average of the category and the variation of the years before and after it. Removing fiscal year 2017 from the average drastically shifts the average to a decrease of about 2% per year for the remaining six years in the average. However, fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2018 would have to be removed as well, because they are outlier years that were directly affected by fiscal year 2017. With those three years removed from the average, the average became unreliable, because the sample size of fiscal years became too small to get an accurate average.

The sharp decrease in fundraising labor expenses in fiscal year 2017 and subsequent rebound in fiscal year 2018 are what caused the dip and eventual rebound in overall fundraising expenses at KYUK. Labor expenses were a major cause of variation in the analysis of other organizations' fiscal categories for this project, and the same was true for fundraising at KYUK. How labor expenses increased or decreased influenced the overall fiscal health of the

organization. The variation also showed that outlier years impacted the organization beyond the fiscal year of the outlier. It may take multiple years (or never) for categories to recover. The large variation in fundraising labor expenditures for the years under review, especially fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2018, are another example of how the budgets of public media organization are volatile and insecure.

Gaming Expense Trends

A major portion of KYUK's revenue comes from gaming. As such, there are costs that are associated with using gaming as a fundraising method. This section examines gaming costs related to the purchase of gaming supplies and the payment of excise taxes. It is unknown what the different costs are for supplies and taxes. The organization lumps the expenses of both categories together in its expense reports and does not separate them individually. This section will do the same. KYUK's financial reports vary on what department gaming expenditures are recorded to. The organization recorded gaming expenditures as fundraising expenses for fiscal year 2016. Gaming expenses were recorded as programming expenses for fiscal year 2017. Some minor gaming expenses were recorded as administration expenses for certain years (such as \$821 in fiscal year 2021). This section views gaming expenses as fundraising expenses because the majority of the financial statements for the fiscal years under review did the same. Gaming is ultimately used as a fundraising activity for the organization. Categorizing it as such makes sense. Separating gaming expenses for all four KYUK departments would add unnecessary length to the analysis. All gaming expenses are lumped together.

Gaming expenses decreased by approximately 71% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Expenses were highly variable, however. There was an approximate 56% increase for fiscal year 2016, and gaming expenses stayed relatively flat from fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year

2019. The overall trend had gaming expenses decrease by about 15% during the years of relatively flat funding, and no one year increased by more than 10%. Expenses increased by about 13% in fiscal year 2020 (by about \$14 thousand) before decreasing by about 80% in fiscal year 2021 (by about \$97 thousand compared to fiscal year 2020).

KYUK's gaming expenses decreased by an average of about 5% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average per-year percentage shift was low, which usually indicates relative stability for fiscal categories; however, gaming expenses did have two outlier years for the period under review. Fiscal year 2016 increased by about 56% and fiscal year 2021 decreased by about 80%. The average per-year percentage change is low, because KYUK's gaming expenses stayed mostly flat. The two outlier years still affected the average though. If fiscal year 2016 was removed from the average, the organization would have seen its gaming expenses decrease by an average of about 17% per year for the remaining six years under review. The outlier increase for fiscal year 2016 mitigated some of the effect of the decrease for fiscal year 2021. Removing fiscal year 2016 from the average moved the average down by a considerable amount. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, and fiscal year 2016 remained, the average would have changed to an increase of about 11% per year. What this shows is that despite the average yearly change only being about 5% when all fiscal years are a part of the average, both fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2021 had considerable impact on the average yearly change in gaming expenses.

Gaming expenses had a period of relative stability, but the increase in fiscal year 2016 and the decrease in fiscal year 2021 show that gaming expenses were not stable. It is not known why gaming expenses increased as much as they did in fiscal year 2016 (by about \$45 thousand). It stands to reason that either supply expenses or taxes increased that year (because both supply

and taxes are what gaming expenses are based on in this category). Which one increased remains unknown. It is possible that the City of Bethel increased the excise taxes for gaming activities in fiscal year 2016.

The sharp decrease in gaming expenses in fiscal year 2021 is easier to explain. The decrease was a repercussion of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restriction on in-person activities. KYUK's gaming activities are conducted in person. During the pandemic, people did not have access to the location where gaming occurs. As a result, the organization was able to conduct less gaming activities. This is reflected in the approximate 80% drop in gaming expenses that year, as well as in the approximate 90% decrease in gaming revenue that was explained earlier in the chapter.

This section showed that KYUK's gaming expenses were relatively stable – until they weren't. Similar to other fiscal categories, expenses can sharply increase or decrease depending on what's happening at the organization or what's happening in the market. Earlier in the chapter, it was shown that gaming comprised an average of about 14% of the organization's revenue each year. That is not an insignificant amount. Sharp variation in both gaming revenue or gaming expenses can cause financial instability, because the organization is heavily dependent on gaming activities to survive.

Professional Services Expense Trends

KYUK's professional services expenditures related to fundraising increased by about 18% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Expenses remained mostly flat from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018, never showing variation of more than 3% for any given year. However, professional services sharply decreased by about 51% in fiscal year 2019 before rebounding by

about 88% in fiscal year 2020. KYUK's professional services expenses increased by about 32% in fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's professional services for fundraising increased by an average of about 11% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Professional services expenses had three outlier years, fiscal years 2019, 2020, and 2021. Fiscal year 2019 was directly responsible for the high percentage per year increase, because it had the largest percentage variation of any year under review. Fiscal year 2020 was also an outlier year, but fiscal year 2019 was responsible for the high percentage variation in 2020. Expenses for fiscal year 2019 were almost half of what had traditionally been spent in the category (about \$6500). When fiscal year 2020 rebounded to what was considered the "normal" amount spent in the category (about \$12 thousand), the percentage of increase was the difference between the very low fiscal year 2019 amount and the normal fiscal year 2020 amount. Percentage wise, the increase was large in fiscal year 2020, but the monetary amount was normal for the category.

If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization's professional services for fundraising expenses would have increased by an average of about 24% per year for the remaining six years under review. The increase from 11% to 24% was a direct result of the fiscal year 2020 outlier that was created by fiscal year 2019. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average along with fiscal year 2021, KYUK's professional services for fundraising expenses would have increased by about 7% per year for the remaining five years under review. As was noted at the beginning of the section, professional services for fundraising expenses were mostly flat from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018. An average yearly increase of approximately 7% is high when there was not variation over 3% for those fiscal years. The reason the average percentage is as high as it is because fiscal year 2021 was also an outlier year

(increase of about 32%). When fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 are removed from the average, fiscal year 2021 becomes the dominant outlier year. 7% increase per year reflects that. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, along with the other outlier years, KYUK's average professional services for fundraising expenses would have decreased by less than 1% (-0.78) per year for the remaining years under review. Only four fiscal years remain in the average. Four fiscal years are not enough to ascertain a clear year-to-year trend, but those four fiscal years are still a majority of the years under review. The majority of years show somewhat of a trend, though including more fiscal years would highlight the trend better. What is clear is that the outlier years had a tremendous effect on the yearly trend for professional services, even if the overall trend is still somewhat unknown.

Administrative Expense Trends

KYUK's administrative expenses increased by about 19% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Administrative expenses accounted for approximately 18% of the organization's overall expenses load during the same period. Administrative expenses decreased by about 10% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016. However, the organization's administrative expenses slowly increased every year after. From fiscal year 2016 to the end of fiscal year 2021, KYUK's administrative expenses increased by about 32%. The increases every year were incremental and small, never increasing by more than 7% for any given year. Fiscal year 2021 deviated from the trend, with administrative expenses increasing by about 12%.

KYUK's administrative expenses increased by an average of about 3% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The per year percentage increase was small, which shows that the category was relatively stable during the period under review. Fiscal year 2021's increase of 12% is a small outlier year, because it had greater variation than any other fiscal year. It is

smaller than other outlier years that have been seen in this analysis, but it is still an outlier none-the-less. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, KYUK's administrative expenses would have increased by an average of about 1% (1.35%) per year. It has been shown that the organization's administrative expenses were already stable even with a small outlier year, but upon moving that year out of the average, the category was shown to be even more stable. Administrative expenses were low in terms of the variability that we've seen with other categories in this chapter and the rest of the analysis. However, it is clear that even a small outlier year can change the trend of a fiscal category.

Administrative Labor Expense Trends

KYUK's labor expenses related to administration decreased by about 11% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Administrative labor accounted for an average of about 18% of the organization's total labor expense load during the same period. Labor expenses remained flat in fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016 but rose by about 12% from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2018. Labor expenses sharply decreased by about 26% in fiscal year 2019 and dropped again by approximately 13% in fiscal year 2020. The decreases in fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 accounted for a decrease of about 36%. KYUK's administrative labor then increased by about 29% in fiscal year 2021.

The organization's administrative labor expenses decreased by an average of less than 1% (-0.32%) per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The low average is surprising because of the high yearly variability and amount of outlier years. The reason the average is low is because outlier years with high percentages of change, such as fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021, counteracted each other. The increase in labor expenses in fiscal year 2021 (about 29%)

offset the decrease of fiscal year 2019 (about 26%). Further, fiscal year 2020's decrease in labor expenses (about 13%) counteracted the approximate 10% increase in fiscal year 2017.

An increase in administrative labor expenses did not always correlate to an increase in overall administrative expenses. For example, when administrative labor expenses decreased by approximately 26% in fiscal year 2019, overall administrative expenses increased by about 7% the same year. However, the 29% increase in administrative labor expenses in fiscal year 2021 did correspond to an increase of about 12% in overall administrative expenses the same year. There is no indication that labor increases resulted in overall increases in administrative expenses.

Administrative Professional Services Expense Trends

Administrative professional services expenses accounted for an average of about 27% of KYUK's overall administrative costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Expenses increased at KYUK by about 11% during the same period. Professional services expenses never increased or decreased by more than 9% in a given year. While professional services expenses did not see sharp variations, there were still yearly variations none-the-less. Expenses increased by about 2% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016 and then dropped by about 7% a year later. Expenses increased for a combined 17% for fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2019 before decreasing by approximately 2% in fiscal year 2020. Fiscal year 2021 increased by about 2%. Professional services expenses had high yearly variation, but those variations were not for large amounts.

KYUK's administrative professional services expenses increased by an average of about 2% per year from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021. The largest percentage variation for the period under review occurred in fiscal year 2018 as expenses increases by about 9%. Fiscal

year 2019 was the second largest as expenditures increased by about 7%. Together they represent a 17% increase over two years, but separately, they were not outlier years. Administrative professional services expenses remained relatively flat, but the category still had an impact on the organization. The lowest amount KYUK paid for professional services was about \$84 thousand in fiscal year 2017. Two years later (fiscal year 2019), the organization paid the highest amount – just about \$98 thousand. Though the yearly variation was not high for the category overall, an increase of \$14 thousand (the 17% represented above) in just two fiscal years was still a heavy burden for a small media organization.

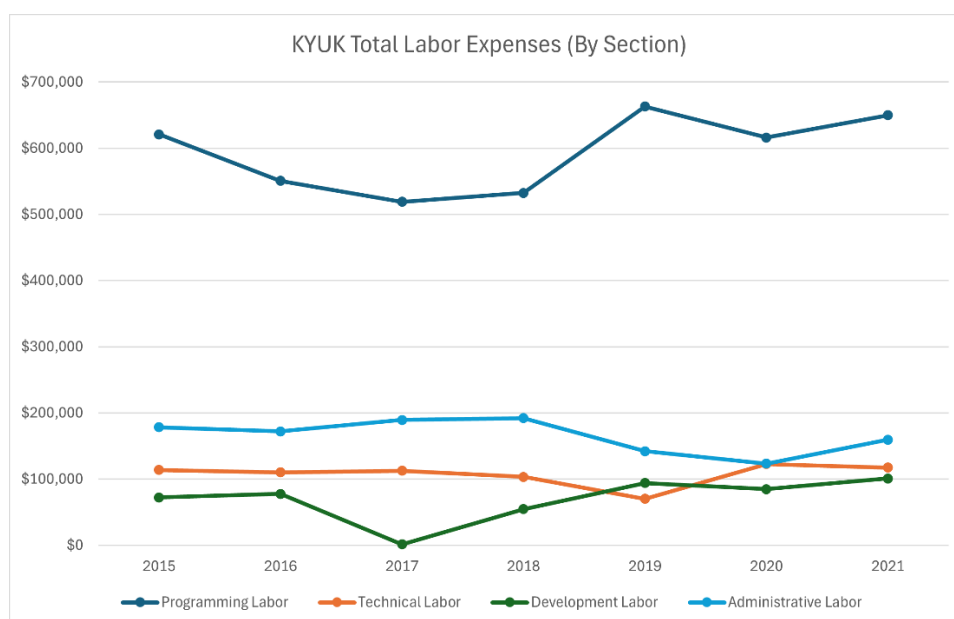


Figure 6.11. KYUK’s labor expenses by section from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

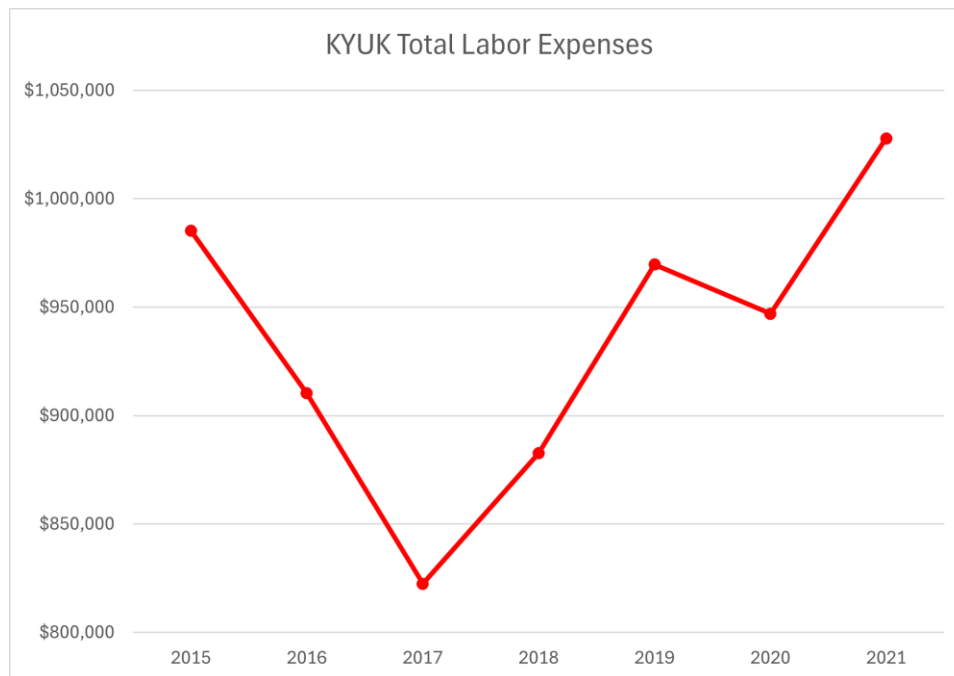


Figure 6.12. KYUK’s total labor expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Conclusion and Summary

KYUK’s overall revenue increased by about 6% during the period under review. The increase was not steady over the seven years and the organization’s revenues had sharp fluctuations depending on the year. KYUK’s membership revenue decreased by about 8%. Variability and outlier years affected the organization’s membership trend. KYUK’s membership numbers were drastically lower than KUAC and AKPM. The highest amount the organization brought in in membership revenue was about \$51 thousand in fiscal year 2020. KYUK does not heavily rely on its membership revenue. The size of the organization’s market, and the inconsistency in membership revenue means that the revenue cannot be considered a given.

KYUK’s gaming revenue decreased by about 83%. Gaming revenue was one of the most consistent earners for the organization, but the amount of gaming revenue was highly variable during the review period. The organization brought in about \$225 in gaming revenue for fiscal

year 2015. In 2019, it brought in just about \$410 thousand. By 2021, gaming revenue had dropped to about \$39 thousand. Gaming revenue was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The venues the organization rented to conduct gaming were unable to operate due to social distancing requirements. As a result, the organization took a massive hit to its gaming revenue. The effects of the pandemic on gaming activities highlighted how inconsistent gaming revenues can be for the organization. Gaming is dependent on the ability of people to game. When they can't, revenues decrease.

KYUK's underwriting revenue increased by about 89%. Despite the increase, underwriting revenue varied wildly from year-to-year. The large increase was impacted by fiscal year 2021, which saw underwriting revenue increase by about 75%. It is unknown what precipitated the increase in KYUK's underwriting revenue that year, especially given the size of its market, but it's likely that governmental and non-profit organizations increased their informational coverage on the station through pair-for public service announcements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's possible the announcements were recorded as underwriting. While the boon in underwriting revenue helped mitigate losses at the organization, it is unknown whether underwriting revenue was sustained at the same level after the review period. If revenue was not sustained, the organization would not be able to rely on underwriting revenue as a consistent source of funding.

Funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) increased by about 10%. CPB funding remained relatively flat during the review period, however, a 6% increase in fiscal year 2018 and a 10% increase in 2021 increased the percentage. Fiscal year 2021's increase was not a direct result of funding from the CARES Act or the America Rescue Plan Act. The CPB increased the organization's base grants by about 10%. KYUK did receive stabilization grants

and PPP loans, but those were not reflected as part of its CPB funding. The extra funding from the CPB and the additional funding from stabilization grants and PPP loans did help offset some of the losses the organization took to its gaming funding.

KYUK's production revenue increased by approximately 193%. The increase was the result of a major outlier year affecting the percentage – 93% increase in fiscal year 2021. 2021's increase was more than likely due to the same reason that possibly affected the organization's underwriting revenue. The station may have produced more paid-for content as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Production revenue was also highly variable from year to year because the amounts of revenue were small. Increases and decreases in revenue increased percentages by a significant amount.

What KYUK defined as "other" grants decreased by 83%. As has been seen with other fiscal categories, revenue from "other" grants had sharp variability from year to year. For example, the category increased by 167% in 2016. It then decreased by about 21% in fiscal year 2018 and then increased by approximately 69%. The category was highly affected by variable years. KYUK did not report its revenue from the State of Alaska in its fiscal reports. It's possible that funding from the state was incorporated into the other grants category. That would explain the sudden decrease with "other" grants funding for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021.

KYUK's overall expenses decreased by about 5% during the review period. Programming expenses decreased by about 2%. Expenses were variable and showed a back-and-forth trend where expenses increased or decreased, sometimes sharply, depending on the year. Programming expenses decreased by about 2%. Program expenses were highly impacted by outlier years. The average yearly trend showed that KYUK's programming expenses stayed relatively flat, but the variation from year-to-year showed that programming expenses were

highly variable. Programming fees, which are the fees that the organization pays to purchase programming for both television and radio, decreased by approximately 75%. The decrease in programming fees was affected by the programming shift of PBS content to AKPM. KYUK no longer programs PBS content directly. Programming labor expenses increased by about 5%.

“Tapes, Media & Production” or what this analysis called “programming materials” experienced a tremendous increase in expenses. Programming materials increased by approximately 1445% during the review period. The category normally does not have much influence on the organization’s expense load, but KYUK spent about \$160 thousand for fiscal year 2019 and about \$215 thousand for fiscal year 2020. The sharp increase was the result of KYUK digitizing its video tape library. The process required KYUK to spend increased amounts on labor and materials.

KYUK’s technical expenses decreased by approximately 12%. Technical expenses are the same as engineering expenses in other categories. However, the organization spent approximately 3% more on technical labor. “Satellite Interconnections”, “Transmitter Utilities”, and “Repairs and Maintenance” were renamed to STR expenses for this analysis. STR expenses increased by about 117%. The percentage is unreliable; however, because each fiscal year had sharp variation and outliers.

Expenses related to development decreased by approximately 41%. The category saw sharp yearly variation and was impacted by outlier years. As a result, development expenses were not consistent from year to year. KYUK’s development labor expenses increased by about 40%. As was seen total development expenses, there was high variation and outliers for some fiscal years. Gaming expenses also decreased by approximately 71% during the review period. Gaming expenses experienced high per-year variability. The category’s trend was also affected

by outlier years. KYUK's development expenses are an oddity. There were decreases in overall development expenses, and it's assumed that gaming expenses are included in the development category. However, development's labor expenses increased by 40% during the same period. It's unknown why a category that experienced such sharp losses, experienced sharp increases in labor. It's possible the labor performed by gaming or development personnel was used for different purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

KYUK's administrative expenses increased by about 19%. Administrative labor expenses decreased by about 11%. Administrative expenses experienced a similar trend to development expenses where the category's expenses dropped by a significant amount, but labor expenses did not. It is unknown what the difference occurred. A possible explanation is that administrative services decreased during the review period, but the compensation for administrative labor increased. Another possibility, like development expenses, was that administrative workers worked more during the pandemic.

KYUK's loss of gaming revenue in fiscal year 2021 was mitigated by increases in underwriting, Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funding, production income, and funding from the CARES Act. Every source of revenue listed appeared to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It remains to be seen if gaming revenues increased as social distancing requirements were eased. It also remains to be seen how the other categories that received a boost during the pandemic will fare in subsequent years.

KYUK's revenue and expenses are heavily impacted by its market. With the exception of the COVID years, which impacted underwriting revenue, KYUK relied on its market for support via its gaming activities during the review period. Underwriting and membership, while present at the organization, were not a focus due to the unreliability of the income. Underwriting and

membership revenue were highly variable, as represented by the effect of outlier years on the categories. Unreliable revenue is not useful for public broadcasting organizations, because variability makes it difficult for organizations to plan for the future. Especially for public broadcasting organizations that do not have the market support that other organizations might have.

Results are the same with unreliable expenses. KYUK, like the other organizations reviewed as part of this project, experienced frequent outlier years (unreliability) with its expenses where they would either increase or decrease sharply depending on the year. Such unreliability makes planning the future very difficult. KYUK already exists in a precarious natural environment, where operating broadcasting stations is difficult due to weather or other natural factors. Their existence is also precarious due to the requirements of being one of the only broadcasting stations in the area. The organization's precarious existence, as shown, is only exacerbated by also existing in a precarious fiscal environment.

CHAPTER 7

Alaska Public Media: Growing to Survive

The Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission (APBC) took out an advertisement in the Anchorage Daily Times on August 14, 1978, to celebrate what it called "Public Broadcasting Day." Public Broadcasting Day celebrated the "Grand Opening and Commencement of Broadcasting" for KSKA at Anchorage Methodist University's (AMU) Grant Hall on Tuesday, August 15, 1978. Public Broadcasting Day also celebrated the "Dedication of the KAKM Satellite Earth Station" at the earth station's site in Eagle River, Alaska that same day. The satellite earth station was an important development for KAKM, because it allowed for a 24-hour link to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and the "outside" world.

KSKA's event had brief statements from Alaska Governor Jay Hammond, Anchorage Mayor George Sullivan, AMU president Glenn Olds, APBC chairman Stowell Johnstone, Admiral William Houser (who served as the director of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's (CPB) satellite interconnection efforts), and other representatives from the CPB. KAKM's earth station dedication had brief statements from many of the same people, excluding the governor, but included University of Alaska Anchorage Chancellor Wendell Wolfe.

The APBC's advertisement was relatively high quality with graphics of the state of Alaska and what appeared to be a man in front of a microphone holding a guitar. The PBS logo was included, but there was no logo for NPR. The ad also contained a drawn map to the Eagle River earth station site. KSKA hadn't started broadcasting yet but was already soliciting memberships for the station. Included in the ad was a square membership form that was meant to

be cut out by readers and sent to KSKA to become a member of the station. The form was labelled as "coupon" and was roughly the size of a typical newspaper coupon for grocery stores.

Public Broadcasting Day was obviously a big deal for the APBC. Public radio was going to be broadcast in Alaska's largest market, and public television was finally able to receive and offer content from PBS and the rest of the world. The APBC's advertisement was unintentionally prophetic for the future of public broadcasting in the area and the state. KAKM and KSKA were separate organizations in 1978, but the advertisement featured their accomplishments together. For the APBC, KSKA and KAKM were "public broadcasting" in Anchorage. There was little distinction between the two organizations – in the advertisement at least. The existence of public broadcasting stations in Alaska's largest market represented the culmination of the APBC's efforts to create a successful public broadcasting system in the state.¹

This chapter examines the progression of KAKM and KSKA and what would eventually become Alaska Public Telecommunication, Inc. (APTI) (and Alaska Public Media (AKPM)) from the middle of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Though public broadcasting was growing in southcentral Alaska when the stations were created in the 1970s, by the mid-1980s, a decline in the state's oil revenue affected state support for public broadcasting. Oil production continued to decline in the 1990s, and by the middle of the decade, public broadcasting in Anchorage and Alaska was fighting for its life. How KSKA and KAKM (and APTI) were subsequently forced to make tough decisions about their futures, and how those decisions forced consolidation of public broadcasting resources in Anchorage and affected local and statewide audiences will also be explored.

Public Broadcasting Comes to Southcentral Alaska

There had been little interest in Anchorage for a public television station in the late 1960s. Public television at the time was thought of as more of an educational venture than a community venture. The University of Alaska seemed like the best place to start a public television station, because the university had the financial resources, political support, and technological expertise to bring public television to the state. The direction the Alaska Educational Broadcasting Commission's (AEBC) took with its mission to develop public broadcasting in the state was directly affected by its first executive director, Dr. Charles Northrip. Dr. Northrip had been employed by the university at KUAC radio before coming to the AEBC. Northrip focused on education and the university's interests as priorities of the early efforts of the AEBC. The university's presence in Anchorage at the time was via its community college and it did not want to develop public television there, because the AEBC had given priority to the university's main campus in Fairbanks.²

The Anchorage market and the AEBC's temperature had changed toward starting a public television station in the area in the early 1970s. Alaska's legislature approved \$556 thousand for the creation of a station in 1972. The money originally came with a requirement that the funds could not be used unless about \$195 thousand (35%) was raised with either federal or private funds. However, difficulty in securing federal funds forced the AEBC to ask the legislature to relax the matching requirement, which it did. Alaska Public Television, Inc. was created in late 1973. The organization completed construction of its television station roughly around the same time (late 1973).³

KAKM began broadcasting May 7, 1975, from the Consortium Library at the University of Alaska's Anchorage campus. Frank Mengel, the station's main engineer, said that KAKM was set up in a bunch of offices and classrooms at the university. He noted that the Consortium

Library building wasn't adequate to handle the station's electricity needs. The ceiling wasn't high enough, and the studio was sweltering because of the lighting system. "It was a good thing our weatherman was short," Mengel said. "He was only about 5 feet tall. If he'd been taller, we would have had more difficulties lighting him and making it work." KAKM's program manager Dick Enders said, "What we were trying to do was get a television station on the air the best we knew. It was very makeshift."^{4 5 6}

KAKM was not created to serve a specific audience, like KYUK, and it was not created to serve as an extension of the University of Alaska's educational efforts, like KUAC. KAKM was intended to be a programming alternative to Anchorage's commercial television stations. KAKM's early programming schedule was similar to KUAC's. The station offered a mix of locally produced programming, instructional programming, and PBS programming. A full-time satellite connection to PBS was not available to the station until 1978, so KAKM (again like KUAC) had to be shipped its PBS programs.⁷

Anchorage was slow to get a public radio station because the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission did not approve funding for the station until 1975. The commission believed that the Anchorage market was already sufficiently served by commercial radio broadcasters, and that funding for stations was better spent in markets that had little to no commercial broadcasting presence. By the time KSKA went on the air, the state had public radio stations operating in multiple markets across the state.⁸

Three organizations applied to operate the radio station, the University of Alaska, KAKM, and Aurora Community Broadcasting, Inc (Aurora Broadcasting). Aurora Broadcasting was a fervent supporter of the creation of a public radio station in Anchorage. It is ironic that KAKM applied to operate Anchorage's public radio station, because both organizations did

eventually merge into one organization. Aurora Broadcasting submitted an application that proposed a type of community-focused public broadcasting station instead of a station that focused on education. Education was certainly a part of KSKA's mission in its early days, but it was not the sole focus of the station. Counter to the prevailing belief by the APBC at the time, supporters of an Anchorage station believed that news, information, and entertainment from the urban Anchorage market was being underserved to Alaska's rural and remote areas. Anchorage's commercial broadcasters were not serving Anchorage-centric content to remote areas. Supporters believed that as the center of influence for the state, Anchorage should be represented by public broadcasting.⁹

The APBC's decision to fund the startup costs of Aurora Broadcasting's proposed station showed a shift that had occurred at the commission. The commission had shifted from an education-centric broadcasting model to a public-centric broadcasting model. The difference was that the education model focused on education as the root mission of a station, a public model focused on the cultural needs and interests of the community. Education was also implied in the public model. The University of Alaska's KUAC had established itself as a hub station for educational broadcasting in the state, and there was little demand for all public broadcasting stations in Alaska to be extensions of the university's goals. The shift in the APBC's focus was reflected when it removed "education" from its name and included "public."¹⁰

The FCC was slow to approve a construction permit for the station. However, the permit was approved in late spring 1978. Alex Hills came on as general manager roughly at the same time. Engineers tested the capabilities of the station's broadcast equipment on Thursday, July 13, 1978 – almost a month before the station officially went on the air. The station's engineer Franklin Butte said that the equipment test went well. Alex Hills predicted a mid-August start

date for the station after the test was conducted. Hills mentioned that the station was going to be very aligned with the expertise and interests of the Anchorage community. “Much of the programming is to be produced by volunteers in their areas of interest, with supervision by the staff of the station,” Hills said.¹¹

The station was heavily dependent on volunteer labor to function. Over 100 volunteers helped to build the station’s music library, produced most of the organization’s shows, and helped develop and mail the station’s program guide and public service announcements. The station planned to air a mix of classical, jazz, and folk music along with in-depth news and public affairs programs.¹²

KSKA signed on at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, August 15, 1978. General manager Alex Hills described the station’s first broadcast as a “live broadcast to end all live broadcasts.” The initial broadcast featured remarks from dignitaries and live music from local artists. KSKA’s first broadcast coincided with the dedication of KAKM’s satellite earth station dedication. The APBC described August 15 as “Public Broadcasting Day.”

Hills said that even though KSKA was labelled as a public radio station, he really thought of it as a community radio station. They said that the concept of public radio was that the station “belongs” to the community. KSKA’s program director, Jim Tighe, believed that KSKA was going to be a “big asset to the community.” Like KUAC and KYUK, KSKA was intended to act as a broadcasting “laboratory” station that helped teach radio broadcasting to students and the community. Tighe taught a radio course at AMU. Teaching broadcasting to students benefited the station because it could utilize the free labor of the students to help with operations or create programming. A benefit to the community was that students could utilize learned broadcasting skills for jobs at other stations.

Jim Tighe said that the intent of KSKA's programming schedule was not to appeal to the largest audiences with the intent of making money for the station. The intent was to offer programming alternatives to southcentral Alaskans. Programming at the station would be based on taste and culture, not commercial viability. Alex Hills reinforced Tighe's statements saying that KSKA aimed to meet the needs of the community, but that the station would have to be "flexible and adaptable" and "always keep an open ear to the program needs of the people." Hills and Tighe said they expected about 70% of the station's programming was going to be locally produced. Content from KUAC and stations around the state were expected to be aired as well. Jim Tighe explained how KSKA intended to program the station:

With a commercial station the whole idea is to make money, to try and get the largest audience. With public radio we recognize the fact that although people may like to listen to rock all day at work, when they get home, they may want to listen to classical music or a discussion. We're going to provide what the people want to hear on the air, something that's not commercially feasible to produce.¹³

The station's transmitter at the time was located at AMU and utilized a 70-foot antenna to get its signal out to the Anchorage area. KSKA's transmitter broadcast at 3000-watts at 103.1 FM. KSKA's signal covered the entirety of Anchorage; however, staff would sometimes call the station a "peanut whistle" in reference to its low transmitting power (and sometimes spotty reception). The mountains surrounding the area prevented its signal from reaching locations blocked by the mountains. Tighe said that the station received calls from people who had picked up the station in Kenai, because the station's signal had "shot across the water." "You might say we've got a signal that's sensitive to terrain," Tighe said.¹⁴

Early Public Broadcasting Programming in Anchorage

According to Alex Hills, the station was an instant success and people called in constantly. KSKA's original operating hours were 6 a.m. until midnight. Radio stations were

generally not automated in the 1970s and operators needed a license from the FCC. KSKA's original programming included classical, jazz, and folk music. Local news was also a staple. The station aired newscasts at 8 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, and 5 p.m. Children's programming was broadcast every day from 11 a.m. until noon. Children's programming generally consisted of music and stories. KSKA broadcast an Alaska Native legend of the raven on the first regular day of programming. A recorded version of Robin Hood was also broadcast.

KSKA also aired NPR content in its early days. *National Public Radio Recital Hall* was a regular on the schedule, along with other NPR music shows. KSKA also broadcast NPR's afternoon "tent pole" news and public affairs show *All Things Considered*. Tent pole shows are programs that are intended to boost listenership and "hold up" a station's schedule – like a tent pole. NPR programming on KSKA was important for the Anchorage media market because the shows were received by satellite and recorded for broadcast every day. Readily available news and public affairs programs allowed listeners to know what was going on in the rest of the country and the world. The availability of satellite transmission and reception was one of the main goals of the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

KSKA also broadcast a community calendar twice every day. Non-profit organizations were encouraged to send messages, meeting notices, and event notices to the station for inclusion on the calendar. Governmental proceedings were also a staple of early programming on the station. State primary elections were covered live in late August 1978. Airing the community calendar and government proceedings fit the mission of public broadcasting, because both were types of content that were generally not available from commercial broadcasters. Non-profit organizations and the government did not tend to have the ability or the budget to produce content or promote events using commercial methods.^{15 16 17}

Elmo Sackett was KAKM's second general manager. They took the position in 1978. Anchorage was booming due to the recent completion of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System, and Sackett recognized that the boom could advance the benefits of public broadcasting in Anchorage and Alaska. He was often seen on KAKM trying to raise money for the station, and he was also instrumental in raising the money for a proper studio and workspaces for KAKM. Sackett died in 1991 at the age of 48.^{18 19}

Lloyd Morris, chairman of the APBC in 1991, said that KAKM was essentially an infant in its earliest days. It needed a parental type of figure and a lot of support to survive. Morris said that Sackett brought the station to maturity:

I remember when [Sackett] first appeared on the fund-raisers and he wore these suits, these jackets that looked like they came out of 'The Music Man.' These checkered, loud jackets. I remember thinking, 'Who is this guy?' But by the time he finished talking, you forgot the suit, and you saw this bearded, impish guy asking, explaining to you what should be important to your life, the education of your youngsters, and understanding what's happening in the world around you.²⁰

KSKA's general manager in 1991, Alice Walsh, said that Elmo Sackett had the ability to convince Anchorage's business community to give money to KAKM. Walsh said that businesses in the area were familiar with Sackett, and that they were well respected in the business community. Walsh also said that Sackett was "very good at raising big money."²¹

Dr. Charles Northrip said that Sackett did not fit the mold of a broadcasting executive. Sackett came from a theater background and had little experience with business. Northrip said that Sackett was both clear about what public broadcasting could do for Anchorage, and excited when he described that information. Sackett's charisma influenced Anchorage to be involved in the station. "He was a good business person; he knew what a non-profit business should be. He was single-minded about his station. He cared about it; it was his job to look after it the way you look after a child," Alice Walsh said.^{22 23}

KSKA started broadcasting concerts from the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra in early December 1978. The first program included Wagner's *Overture to Rienzi*, Debussy's *Prelude to Afternoon of a Faun*, Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, and Rachmaninoff's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in C Minor*. KSKA was scheduled to broadcast the complete season of the symphony in 1979. It was also scheduled to broadcast two performances of the Anchorage Chamber Symphony.²⁴

The APBC brought New York Yankee baseball broadcasts to Anchorage in 1978. The games were heard via tape delay on Sunday afternoons on KSKA. KSKA management said that the games were tentatively being broadcast on the station to determine listener response. Baseball games were not widely broadcast in Anchorage, and certain national sports fit the ideal of underserved programming at the time. KENI-TV was the only station to carry baseball in the market. Monday Night Baseball, which was a staple of ABC's sports programming at the time, was not available in Alaska. The APBC's satellite capability made the games available to other Alaska public stations. KSTK (Wrangell), KFSK (Petersburg), KDLG (Dillingham), and KBBI (Homer) all carried games in some capacity.

Mike Porcaro, who was the executive director of the commission at the time, said that the Yankees were chosen instead of teams closer to Anchorage, because the Yankees were coming off of a World Series win against the Los Angeles Dodgers the year before. KSKA and KAKM had also been carrying other sports that were unavailable by Anchorage's commercial broadcasters. KSKA carried coverage of the Iditarod race prior to baseball coming to the station, and KAKM started carrying German soccer games in 1979.^{25 26}

KSKA announced new children's programming in spring 1979. The station dubbed its children's programming as "an alternative to Saturday morning television cartoons." The

organization offered *Classics for Kids* every Saturday morning. *Classics for Kids* was followed by *Library Stories*. *Classics for Kids* focused on classical music written for children. The show also played popular classical pieces to try and develop interest in the genre. Other genres were also broadcast during the show to expose children to a wide diversity of music. Early public broadcasting staples such as bluegrass, country, swing, and jazz were also featured on the show. The format of *Library Stories* was similar to what would eventually be broadcast on PBS's *Reading Rainbow* in 1983. The show's host chose stories and books that appealed to children and read them over the air.

Children's programming on KSKA's early schedule shows the station's (and the public broadcasting system's) intent to program educational content to underserved audiences – in this case, Anchorage children. Children's programming did not remain a focus on KSKA's schedule, but it did remain a focus on KAKM's. As will be discussed ahead in the chapter, the shift of children's programming from being on radio and television to just television reflected a change in programming priorities for public radio as broadcasters shifted to a more "professional" news-centric focus.

Reduced State Support, Market Competition, and a Focus on Making Money

KSKA's children's programming showed a trend in Anchorage's early days of public broadcasting. Sponsorships. KSKA's children's programming aired underwriting saying that the programs were "made possible by a grant from National Bank of Alaska." Corporate sponsorship is a given for contemporary public broadcasting. They go hand in hand. However, there can be a perception that corporate sponsorship was forced upon public broadcasters as the government reduced its support. That is true in terms of the amount of corporate support public stations came to rely on starting at the end of the 1980s, however, the underwriting during KSKA's children's

programming in 1979 shows that corporate interests had a place on Anchorage's public broadcasting stations right from the start.²⁷

In May 1986, KSKA announced it was switching its public service announcement (PSA) availability from a free "community calendar" style to a hybrid "enhanced" PSA style. KSKA charged \$1 per second for what it called "enhanced" public service announcements. If a PSA ran for 30 seconds, the organization that solicited the PSA would pay \$30 for every airing. KSKA continued to offer a free style of PSA that allowed organizations an opportunity to have their message aired without cost. The difference between the two was that the paid-for announcements were read or played at a set time, and the free PSA was played or read at the discretion of the station. Free PSAs had no guarantee to ever be heard.

The intention of the enhanced PSAs was to give the organization a method of using its available airtime to make money. Public broadcasting stations are affected by available time on their schedules the same way commercial broadcasting stations are, airtime is valuable, however, KSKA's purposeful intention of selling its airtime to those who could afford it was a noticeable shift from how the station viewed the usage of its airtime. In KSKA's early years, non-profit organizations were given airtime regardless of their ability to pay. That was done, because there was a recognition that announcements for nonprofits were filling an underserved need that commercial broadcasters were unable to fill.²⁸

KSKA held its 8th annual music festival in the summer of 1987. The festival, which was originally named the Alaska Bluegrass Festival, changed its name that year to the KSKA Summer Music Festival. The festival was a fundraising effort for the benefit of KSKA. The 1987 festival was criticized because some festivalgoers believed that the name change reflected a change in the overall tone of the event and the station. Instead of sticking to its small bluegrass

and folk roots, the festival became a multi-genre event that tried to appeal to as many people as possible. The festival featured jazz, classical, bluegrass, and other genres that had not been available in past years. The event's venue size had changed multiple times over the years as the event became more popular. The 1987 festival was a multiday event that featured workshops, craft booths, dances, expanded food and drink options, and a winetasting event. 10 thousand to 15 thousand people were expected to attend that year.^{29 30 31}

In January 1987, Governor Steve Cowper recommended that all state support for public broadcasting be removed for fiscal year 1988. An Anchorage Daily News (ADN) article written by Debbie McKinney on April 20, 1987, said that "the system is fighting for its life." Some legislators and supporters of public broadcasting were not happy. The governor eventually submitted a revised budget proposal that spring that allotted \$1.4 million for the system – a significant reduction (about 79%) to the approximately \$6.6 million approved for fiscal year 1987. The APBC said that \$1.4 million would be enough to fund the Utqiagvik (Barrow), Bethel, Dillingham, and Kotzebue stations. The other 12 radio stations and 4 television stations would not be funded and would either have to rely on their markets for support or "go dark" -- go off the air.^{32 33}

Dr. Charles Northrip, the executive director of the APBC, said that if Governor Cowper's cuts went through, that over time, it would be doubtful that any public stations in Alaska could survive. The only exceptions were KSKA and KAKM. Northrip said that because both organizations were in Alaska's largest market, they would have a greater chance at soliciting enough money from the market to stay on the air. Whether KSKA and KAKM could have kept the same level of service without state support remains in the realm of speculation.³⁴

Anchorage's radio market changed drastically from 1984 to 1989. 12 radio stations served the Anchorage area in 1984. That number had gone up to 20 stations by 1989. Vice president of the KGOT Corporation estimated that gross annual advertising revenue dropped from about \$13 million to about \$8.3 million for the whole market. With 20 stations competing for \$8.3 million, the market became much more competitive. The reduction in advertising revenue was predicted to affect programming in the market. Commercial Stations moved away from expensive locally produced programming to cheaper generic national programming. Competition for local talent also increased as stations tried to lure popular hosts away from competitors. An increase in the use of satellite programming was also expected.³⁵

"Everybody has to find a niche when so many stations are competing," Ron Moore, president of Northern Television said. Northern Television owned KNIK FM and KBYR AM. KNIK switched its format from big band music to a light jazz and New Age format called The Breeze in 1987. The Breeze was fed via satellite from Minneapolis.³⁶ "I think they want to sound like stateside radio. The homogenized radio sound so popular today," said disk jockey Gary Sloan.³⁷

KSKA and KAKM also felt the effects of Anchorage's media saturation in 1989. KSKA's management wanted to change the station's format to compete for listeners to sell more underwriting and gain corporate sponsorships. The station was having budget issues and wanted to change its programming to bring in a larger audience. KSKA also looked to cut station services. Funding from the federal government was cut by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s. Funding was also steadily cut by the state of Alaska.³⁸

Alaska's oil companies also decreased donations to arts-based causes, and instead shifted to civics-based philanthropy such as educational, environmental, and smaller community-based

programs. The industry said that the shift in donations to civics-based programs was the result of reduced government spending to those programs. Reduced government support created a demand for the market to fill that demand. The increase in demand for corporate support meant there was less money to go around for programs that were already being supported by corporate money.

Alaska's philanthropic and government spending was also affected by the price of oil. The state's revenue depended on tax revenue from the extraction of natural resources like oil. As the price of oil dropped, the revenue of oil companies went down, affecting the tax revenue the state received from the oil companies. A drop in tax revenue affected how much the state was able/willing to spend on government services. "In the past, I think arts groups only went looking for the big bucks from the oil companies and didn't have to rely on other sources to the same extent as we must today," said Helen Howarth, executive director of the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra.³⁹

The artistic director of the Out North Theater Company said that Chevron included a letter with its 1990 donation that said the theater should expect Chevron's contribution to decline in the future. The decline pushed many of the Anchorage area's arts programs, including public broadcasting, to seek more funds via fundraising campaigns. "I think most arts groups are aware that the oil companies are going to be placing more emphasis on social and environmental causes in the future," said Elvera Voth, executive director of the Anchorage Festival of Music.⁴⁰

Alaska's public broadcasters were encouraged by the APBC and the CPB to look for methods of fundraising that did not rely on what was considered fickle government funding. "I don't believe that public radio as originally conceived 20 or 25 years ago could exist today, given the changes in governmental financing," KSKA board member and ex-president Vince Walker said.⁴¹

Membership numbers were used as an indicator of success for the organization, even though there were other metrics of success, such as government support, grant support, and underwriting support. KSKA reported a drop of about 540 members from 1987 and 1989. The organization also lost about \$37 thousand in membership revenue during the same period. The station's management was worried that the loss in revenue would result in the direct loss of funding from the CPB. KSKA claimed that its fiscal year 1990 support from the CPB was expected to be about \$117 thousand, which was approximately \$33 thousand less than the organization received a few years earlier. Arbitron also reported that KSKA had dropped in its status as one of the most highly supported stations (per capita) in the country. Funding from the state also dropped. KSKA received about \$274 thousand from the state for fiscal year 1986. State funding to the station decreased by about 23% to \$212 thousand by fiscal year 1989. KSKA had a deficit of about \$27 thousand by the end of fiscal year 1988. The deficit increased to about \$50 thousand by the end of fiscal year 1989.

KSKA's management increased membership fees to \$35 (from \$30), and a new high paying "level" was created for people that contributed \$500 or more. Higher paying people received more recognition by the station (a form of status). Development (fundraising) officials also looked to have fundraisers that were not just traditional multiweek coordinated fundraisers (pledge drives). Coordinated fundraisers generally lasted almost two weeks. Events such as concerts, wine tastings, and art auctions became more frequent. Costs were cut by reducing services. KSKA's program director, who had been with the station almost since its inception, was laid off. Part-time employees were let go, and some full-time staff, such as the station's music director, were shifted from full time to part time. The station's programming guide, which had been a multipage high-quality document, was reduced to a single page.^{42 43 44 45}

Alice Walsh, KSKA's general manager described some of the organization's changes:

We upgraded our annual fund-raising process with reminders, the Wine Tasting, this year's Celebrity Artists event. We experimented with our membership drives, reducing what had been 10-minute on-air solicitations to 90-second or three-minute breaks. I instituted our 'Leadership Circle.' Before then perhaps two donors gave KSKA \$1,000 a year. Now there are dozens.⁴⁶

KSKA set a goal of \$125 thousand for its fall 1988 fall fundraiser but missed the mark by about \$28 thousand. Station management believed it was due to classical music fans shifting their attention to KLEF. KSKA was heavily impacted by KLEF, which started broadcasting in Anchorage the same year. KLEF was a commercial broadcaster that programmed classical music and opera. Classical music was a large part of KSKA's programming schedule, because prior to KLEF's sign on, KSKA was the main broadcaster of the genre in Anchorage. Classical music was not KSKA's only genre though, and when the station shifted to another genre, classical music listeners would switch to KLEF and stay there. KLEF started broadcasting opera programs right after it went on the air in 1988. KSKA followed in its footsteps in December 1990 after it started carrying NPR's *World of Opera* and productions from the Metropolitan Opera.^{47 48}

The station sought to provide more "predictable programming" that appealed to more people than the specialized programming that had been the flavor at the station since the beginning. Alice Walsh said that the station had to have more predictable programming to attract larger audiences to the station. Predictable programming is in reference to block programming, where large portions of the schedule are scheduled with similar sounding programs. For example, multiple hours of news programming, followed by multiple hours of jazz programming. Block programming was intended to keep audiences listening for longer periods of time. Larger audiences offered better fiscal stability. Switching to predictable programming was happening amongst public broadcasters across the nation in the 1980s. Walsh said that the

“college campus obscure programming” didn’t work anymore. They also noted that the programming on KSKA was virtually the same in late 1989 as it was in 1985 with new popular national shows that were not being programmed on the station. KSKA management intended to shift the programming of the station from a local flair, that it said didn’t attract listeners, to a “professional” flair that tried to gain as much audience as possible. "One of the things KSKA has to realize is that it can't be all things to all people," said board member Patty Ginsburg.^{49 50 51}

KSKA relied on national surveys that showed public media audiences preferred news programming and entertainment programming over the old-style of programming. The station wanted to attract new listeners by following national trends that emphasized news and jazz while reducing classical music and local music programs. Alice Walsh presented the revamped schedule to KSKA’s board and received support from most members. Some board members were concerned that the changes would lead to a homogenized sound targeted at a mostly middle-class white demographic. They worried that the new schedule would deviate from the station’s goal of focusing on Anchorage’s cultural needs and switch to programming based on economic considerations.⁵²

Alex Hills, the station’s first program manager, said the station’s original mission was "[trying] to do something for those with minority tastes." Programming was eclectic for the station’s first 11 years. KSKA often ran foreign language newscasts, B-sides music, and news and information related to LGBTQ issues. KSKA adhered to the original mission of public broadcasting to program to underserved audiences, and KSKA was the only station in the Anchorage market to offer specialized content. Alaska's record-making industry faced unique challenges due to geographical isolation and limited attention from major record labels. The state's musicians often struggled to gain recognition and radio play, which significantly affected

music exposure and sales. KSKA was often the only Anchorage station that would play locally produced music. The *Homestead* program focused on local acoustic, folk, and bluegrass music.⁵³

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KSKA removed *The American Radio Company of the Air* as a result of its programming changes. KSKA also discontinued WHYI's *Fresh Air*, which was distributed by NPR, citing rising costs and low ratings. *The American Radio Company of the Air* featured Garrison Keillor and used a similar format to A Prairie Home Companion (APHC). KSKA said the program was not seeing the kind of audience response that it wanted, and that the ratings were not keeping up with the cost of the show. APHC temporarily went off the air in 1987 after Garrison Keillor left the show. Instead of airing *World Theater*, which was a variety show designed to take APHC's place on the nation's public radio stations, KSKA continued to air recordings of APHC. KSKA's development director Wendy Kamrass said that KSKA continued to air recordings of APHC, because the station did not want people to stop listening.^{55 56 57}

American Public Radio (now American Public Media), which distributed the program, kept archives of APHC's early shows and made those archives available to stations that wanted to run the program. A similar situation happened with NPR's *Car Talk* program. Tom Magliozzi, who was the co-host of the show with his brother Ray Magliozzi, died in 2014. The popular comedy car repair show was considered an NPR weekend "tent pole" program with about four million people tuning into the program each week. *Car Talk* was NPR's 3rd most popular program. The show was rebranded as *The Best of Car Talk* in 2012 after the hosts retired from the show. NPR also offered archived *Car Talk* content for broadcasts. The rebranding and archival access of the show was intended to give broadcasters time to find a replacement. Stations were concerned that the removal of the show from its broadcast schedules would affect

giving during fundraising. However, *The Best of Car Talk* still averaged about 2.6 million listeners a week.^{58 59}

Some people were ready for the show to leave the airwaves. After the show's rebranding in 2012, Ira Glass, the host of *This American Life*, wrote a piece for public broadcasting's trade magazine *Current* that urged stations to discontinue the show:

A show that's 100% reruns doesn't fit with our mission as public broadcasters. I don't think it's justifiable. Especially not in a timeslot that's essentially primetime on weekends. Run *Car Talk* late nights maybe. Or Sunday night. But not on Saturday mornings. If we're going to have a program that continues on our air forever like *I Love Lucy* reruns, it should be in the timeslots *Lucy* migrated to.⁶⁰

Glass also said that the loss of *Car Talk* would not kill weekends for NPR stations, because *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!*, which was NPR's 4th most listened to show, would still draw people into weekend timeslots. "Zombie Cartalk" started making the rounds on social media as a public media meme following Tom Magliozzi's death. The name was in reference to listeners hearing Magliozzi's voice and humor every week despite his death. *The Best of Car Talk* ended production in 2017, though some stations continued to carry the show. KSKA removed the *Best of Car Talk* from its schedule the same year (almost 3 years after Magliozzi's death).⁶¹

The *American Radio Company of the Air* started airing with Keillor as host in 1989. The show had a format similar to APHC but did not include elements that made APHC popular with listeners (such as references to small town life). Keillor incorporate elements of APHC to what was then being called *Garisson Keillor's American Radio Company* starting in the early 1990s. By 1993, APHC had returned with Keillor as the host. KSKA started running APHC again in August 1993. *A Prairie Home Companion* was broadcast on

KSKA until the end of the show's run and *Fresh Air* continues to be on the station's schedule. Keillor and APHC were frequent visitors to Alaska.^{62 63}

Popular Programming and Diversity

KSKA's programming changes drew criticism from some community members who believed it severed an important connection between the Latino community and the rest of Anchorage. In July 1989, *The Latin Shows*, a Spanish-language music show that broadcast during a Sunday nighttime slot, was proposed for cancellation due to low ratings. The proposed cancellation was opposed by many in the community and by the show's producers. Producer, Maria Rosas quit the show in protest. Another producer, Ramon Garcia, said, "Isn't there a [KSKA] mission about playing music that's not played on other stations?" Garcia said that the show's low ratings were the result of the timeslot, not because of the content of the show. They said that Sunday evenings were a bad timeslot for any program, because "people are preparing for the Monday workday and not listening to the radio."⁶⁴

Inclusion of programs like *The Latin Shows* was intended to work similarly to how Yupik content worked on KYUK. Latinos, who were underrepresented by Anchorage's commercial broadcasters, had a media space to connect with Latino culture. When the program was removed from the station due to ratings, cultural representation for Latinos was also removed due to ratings. Musical genres that had been on KSKA's programming schedule when it went on the air were also removed. Polka, reggae, and bluegrass were originally included on the schedule, because they were underrepresented in Anchorage. Two programs that included local music were also cut from the schedule.⁶⁵

Alice Walsh assured the community that efforts would be made to incorporate the city's ethnic diversity into the programming in a different form. "It may not mean saving the *Latin*

Shows as we know it now," Walsh said. "Latin programming may come back in a different form, but we're certainly going to look at it."⁶⁶

KSKA changed its mind and decided to keep *The Latin Shows* on the schedule. Alice Walsh said the decision was made after the station received calls and letters from the community. Walsh said the station received more communication about *The Latin Shows* than it received about any of the other programming changes. Walsh said that management's minds were changed by the program's producers' argument that an opportunity to improve had not been given to the program. "...we wanted to give them that opportunity," Walsh said.⁶⁷

A condition of the program's return to the schedule was for producers to meet with KSKA program director Bede Trantina about how to improve the show. The station wanted the program to appeal to more listeners, and the show's producers wanted to keep the "personality" that made the show what it was. Another condition was that *The Latin Shows* moved from the 9 p.m. slot to the 10 p.m. slot. The complaint the show's producers had that Sunday nights were difficult due to low listenership did not factor into the move to the later timeslot. KSKA's new format rolled out three days after the announcement that *The Latin Shows* would remain on the schedule (August 14 through August 20, 1989).⁶⁸

KSKA's schedule changes brought criticism that the organization was not diverse enough. KSKA was referred to as "ethnic free radio" in a poke at the organization during an AkPIRG event. AkPIRG is a non-profit consumer advocacy organization that in the 1980s held an event that roasted many in the Anchorage business community. "Ethnic free radio" was in reference to KSKA removing certain genres of music from its schedule. KSKA's board of directors, community advisory council, and most of the staff were all white at the time. Some people believed that nonwhite audiences would be impossible to program to if none were

represented at the station. One example came as an evening jazz show at the station shifted its music programming from a blend of rhythm and blues, funk, and soul to lighter jazz and New Age. The shift was criticized as a way to appeal to white listeners who were more apt to giving to the station.^{69 70} "I think it will hurt blacks," said A.J. Scott who was a volunteer producer of the show "...but according to statistics, blacks have never really supported public radio."⁷¹

The quote above reflects the importance KSKA placed on how "support" for the station affected programming choices. Public broadcasting was originally meant to program to underserved audiences, regardless of their support. Scott's quote shows that there was a recognition, at least among KSKA show hosts, that support for the station was dictating the programming and audiences that were receiving time on the schedule.

The organization attempted to be more diverse in response to people's criticism. Its bylaws were adjusted to allow more members on the board. The board, which was previously comprised of 11 elected members, was changed to appoint 3 more members. "The intent there was to fill in skills that we needed or minorities or whatever factions that were not adequately represented," said ex board president Vince Walker. The community advisory (CAB) board also made attempts to be more diverse. Three nonwhite members were appointed to the board in 1989. "We felt we were represented on the CAB by an awful lot of classical music lovers," said CAB member Jerry Hubbard. "We felt we should have the diversity to represent the community."⁷²

Maria Rosas, a producer of *The Latin Shows* who quit in protest of the program's proposed cancellation, said they believed the attempts by both boards to be more diverse was just a smokescreen to hide the lack of diversity in the station's programming. "They get rid of minority programs and appoint minorities to the [CAB]," said Rosas. "I resent the fact we've

been with KSKA for 10 years, and here comes one person out of nowhere with no concerns about what we're doing, like a Hitler."⁷³

Rosas comment was in reference to Walsh, who had not been with the organization for very long before the changes were announced. Emotions were obviously very high as a result of changes at the station. "I guess it's pretty safe," said Walsh. "None of the programming is controversial. None of it is extreme, socially or politically."⁷⁴

KSKA's changes worked. The organization had a deficit of about \$27 thousand by the end of fiscal year 1988. The deficit had increased to about \$50 thousand by the end of fiscal year 1989. KSKA used money in savings to cover the deficits. A fiscal report submitted to KSKA's board of directors in early 1990 showed that the organization was on track to have a surplus of about \$22 thousand by the end of fiscal year 1990. KSKA's management noted that the organization lost some longtime financial supporters when the station shifted its programming, but they also noted that the organization added new support as well.^{75 76}

By the end of fiscal year 1990, after the changes went into effect, the organization reported a budget surplus of about \$30 thousand. Alice Walsh credited the surplus with programming changes the station made to encourage increased listenership and membership. Walsh also credited cost-saving measures the station enacted, such as staff reductions and the discontinuation of the station's program guide. An endowment fund was created to provide secure yearly support and a buffer for the organization should government funding continue to decline. "...this last year was a success for us, both financially and in terms of serving our listeners," Walsh reported to her board of directors.^{77 78}

Arbitron's fall 1990 survey showed that KSKA's share of the Anchorage audience had increased by about 44% from the 1989 survey. The survey said that KSKA was ranked second in

Anchorage's 35 to 64 age demographic. The survey also said that NPR's "tent pole" shows Morning Edition and All Things Considered also gained listeners. Walsh said she was optimistic but remained cautious. Arbitron released three surveys per year at the time, and that an increase in 1 survey was not enough information to determine whether the changes had been successful.⁷⁹

We don't put too much weight on any one survey. One of the jokes in the industry is if you get an Arbitron that is great, then you put a lot of weight on it, but if you get one that's bad, you say, 'You can't really judge from one Arbitron.' We were pleased, but it's only one survey, and we really have to see what the trends are in order to do any kind of legitimate evaluation.⁸⁰

The surplus for fiscal year 1990 was somewhat of a surprise for the station. Earlier in the fiscal year, KSKA management said that revenues were not keeping pace with expenses. Funding for expenses such as repeater maintenance, advertising, membership premiums, and special events were cut back as a result. However, corporate and foundational support did see increases as ARCO, the Loussac Foundation (a local philanthropic organization), and the Rasmuson Foundation (an Alaska statewide philanthropic organization) all contributed more than their normal amounts to the station.⁸¹

KAKM laid off three people, or 13% of its staff, in July 1991. Of those who were laid off, two were producers and one was a videographer. An executive secretary position was also reduced to half time. Only two producers and one videographer kept their job. Four planned local productions were shelved after the layoffs. "They've cut the heart out of the production team here at KAKM, and what's left behind will only be a maintenance-level production capability," said producer Eric Wallace, who was one of the people cut.^{82 83}

KAKM's layoffs came amidst cuts to the Alaska public broadcasting system by Governor Wally Hickel (AKIP.) in 1991. KAKM's acting station manager Dick Enders also cited increased national programming costs as a reason for cutbacks at the station. Alaska's

legislature approved \$7.5 million for public broadcasting that year, but governor Hickel vetoed 13.8% (just over \$1 million) of the funding. As a result, the APBC slashed about 14% of the budget from every station in the system when it disseminated funding to stations. The decrease came to just about \$103 thousand for KAKM. The reduction in funding also occurred at the same time PBS dues had increased. Enders estimated that PBS fees had gone up by about \$50 thousand from 1990 to 1991 (fiscal years 1991 to 1992). They said that national programming would not be affected by PBS's dues increase and the governor's cuts, but there was going to be a noticeable decrease in local Anchorage and Alaska-based programming. The staff layoffs were the noticeable decrease. Dick Enders said that more cuts at KAKM were expected to happen within the next few fiscal years. The station's programming guide was already scheduled to be cut from 32 pages to 16 pages, saving the organization about \$10 thousand a year, and cuts to insurances benefits were also planned.^{84 85}

Enders said that it was difficult to let people go, but that there were not many alternatives to a reduction in labor when the station was faced with such a large budgetary reduction in a short amount of time. Producer Eric Wallace said that KAKM was seeing a positive response to its local productions. Wallace felt that KAKM's success with local productions could have led to the station receiving more grants and financial support, and that cutting local productions jeopardized that possible support. "It's all rather depressing when the quality of public television is cut for cost considerations," Wallace said.^{86 87}

Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen

The relationship between KSKA and the Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN) became tense as the station was facing cuts and restructuring in the early 1990s. APRN

started a lobbying campaign that was intended to inform politicians in Juneau about the benefits of public broadcasting in Alaska. A lobbyist was hired by the network and spots were produced for network members to broadcast on their stations. KSKA management did not feel that lobbying was appropriate for the network and did not run the spots. The disagreement over the lobbying campaign increased animosity between the two organizations.⁸⁸

KSKA then threatened to leave the network in 1991 after a disagreement about APRN's programming that the station said conflicted with its interests. KSKA's general manager Alice Walsh wanted to leave APRN because the network's programming "didn't mesh with new programming direction envisioned by the station." KSKA saw itself as an organization that could provide statewide programming on its own, especially news coverage, and that carrying APRN programming would conflict with its own goals. KSKA intended to stop carrying APRN's *Alaska News Nightly* program and start producing a show of its own that also had a statewide flavor. KSKA wanted to provide the program to stations around the state. Walsh said that *Alaska News Nightly* was performing badly in the ratings. Other APRN programs, like Governor Wally Hickel's call-in show, were planned to be removed from KSKA's schedule as well.^{89 90}

KSKA's decision to leave APRN was sudden. KSKA's board of directors was ready to approve the station's budget in August 1991, but APRN's funding was not included. Alice Walsh had removed the funding because they planned to use the savings to double funding for KSKA's news reporters. Walsh said that KSKA would offer Alaska news support to NPR's "tent pole" programs *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*. *National Native News*, which is now produced and distributed by Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, was an APRN program in 1991. KSKA was going to keep the show because it was also broadcast by NPR.⁹¹

KSKA was important to APRN's survival, because Anchorage was Alaska's largest broadcasting market, and the station provided the network with its largest audience (and potential for monetary support). APRN depended on underwriting and corporate support in the same way that KSKA did, and competition for underwriting dollars caused frustration at both organizations. APRN and KSKA utilized their own respective fundraising methods and materials, but both organizations were competing for the same resources for what some considered the same services. Corporate sponsors have a finite pool of resources for supporting non-profit organizations, and when there's competition for those resources, organizations can feel they are losing out on resources they might have had otherwise. That is what happened with KSKA and APRN.⁹²

Both organizations restricted usage of their donor lists. Providing fundraising resources to another public broadcasting organization meant that one organization might receive less fundraising support for itself. There was little to no sharing of fundraising resources between KSKA and APRN. In the instances that the organizations loaned out their donor list to other non-public broadcasting organizations, the usage of the lists was heavily controlled. Written contracts were issued to the recipient of the lists that dictated the time and manner of how the lists were used. Donor lists were often restricted to times when KSKA and APRN were not fundraising, and the lending of lists was usually for one use only.⁹³

When KSKA announced its intention to leave, APRN said that the system had to present a unified front as continued cuts to Alaska public broadcasting were floated by the Hickel administration. KCHU in Valdez had dropped out of the network earlier in the year citing budgetary issues. "We strongly believe it's in the best interest of all the stations to maintain the

network," said Bill Legere, manager of KTOO radio in Juneau and chairman of APRN's board.

"It diminishes all of us by not having a connection with Anchorage."⁹⁴

APRN intended to shop its content around to other non-profit stations in Anchorage if KSKA dropped its programming. Jane Angvik, a former member of the Anchorage Assembly and past president of the Alaska Native Foundation voiced their concerns about the friction between the two organizations:

People in Anchorage need to know what's going on in the rest of the state and it's my opinion that APRN is the only avenue that really does that. What makes APRN unique is that many of its news reports are produced by people living in the Bush. It's real important for urban and rural understanding that we hear more about each other. APRN says if they don't have KSKA as their vehicle, they'll find someone else in Anchorage. If that happens, if they end up competing like that, then I see out and out war. At a time when public broadcasting is under assault anyway, I think that would be a bad idea.⁹⁵

KSKA and APRN negotiated to keep the station in the network. The Anchorage Daily News (ADN) published an article on August 30, 1991, that said about two dozen people attended KSKA's board meeting the night before (August 29, 1991). Part of the board's agenda for the meeting was to discuss KSKA's future with APRN. Most of the attendees disapproved of KSKA leaving the network. The article also mentioned that details of the negotiations between KSKA and APRN were kept secret at the meeting – including from some of the other board members.⁹⁶

The article described the following tense scene at the board meeting:

APRN board member Rich McClear began reading a letter to the KSKA board detailing what the network was offering to patch things up. He was interrupted by KSKA's president, Louise Lazur, who admonished McClear to be quiet. She said there was a deal to keep the offer secret. McClear and APRN President Diane Kaplan hurried outside to discuss what to do. A few minutes later, Kaplan stuck her head back in the door to object to the secrecy.

'The letter was adopted at a public meeting and as far as we are concerned it's a public document,' she said.

KSKA board member Jane Angvik asked why the board couldn't see the offer.

But Lazur, backed by several KSKA board members, was adamant that the points of negotiation remain secret. And then the board voted to stay in the network, at least temporarily, as negotiations continue.⁹⁷

The details of “the letter” mentioned in the quoted material above were meant to be kept secret from the public and some of KSKA’s board members, but the ADB received a copy of the letter, which it published. To keep KSKA in the network, APRN said that it would allow the station to be included in more of the network’s decision making. The network also offered to share its production facilities in Anchorage and provide free satellite service for KSKA programming. APRN also said that it was open to conducting coordinated fundraising activities with KSKA instead of competing for the same dollars.⁹⁸

Alice Walsh did not agree to APRN’s proposal. However, KSKA’s board agreed to fund APRN \$5 thousand for 3 months of programming while negotiations continued. Less than a month later (September 20, 1991) KSKA announced that it would remain a member of APRN. The network agreed that KSKA could pick and choose what shows it wanted to carry, as well as only carry excerpts from shows such as interviews or stories. The network also agreed to allow KSKA to air APRN programs at a different time than the shows were aired live. KSKA agreed that APRN could market shows that KSKA rejected to other stations in Anchorage. Some of the proposed concessions from the “letter” at KSKA’s August 29 board meeting (such as satellite uplink costs and usage of APRN’s production facilities) were not mentioned in the agreement. Disagreements about competition over business and individual support in the Anchorage market were still unsolved as well.^{99 100}

More APRN content was added to the station’s schedule by spring 1992 (about 5 months later). The author of an ADN opinion piece published in March 1992 said that KSKA had been quietly returning APRN content back to its schedule. The author also

wondered whether KSKA remaining a part of APRN may have had something to do with the public broadcasting station Cook Inlet Region, Inc. was planning for Anchorage. The development of the new station, KNBA, will be discussed ahead in this chapter.¹⁰¹

Though the date falls outside of the review period for this project, it's important to mention that Alaska Public Telecommunication, Inc. (a consolidated organization of KAKM and KSKA) (APTI) assumed control of APRN on July 1, 2004. Consolidation of APRN into APTI had been floated multiple times throughout the 1990s. The organizations combined their operations to reduce news production overlap in the Anchorage market. The agreement also eliminated fundraising, underwriting, and corporate support competition between the two organizations. APTI also assumed administrative and technical responsibilities for the network. Both organizations had been working together since the end of 2001 under a service agreement.^{102 103}

According to APTI president Paul Stankavich, APRN was barely breaking even monetarily in 2004. The organization employed 14 people when the merger occurred. No one lost their job immediately after the merger was completed, but it is assumed that APTI released or reassigned APRN positions in the proceeding years. The board structure of the network was also kept intact, as member stations still comprised the majority of the company's board of directors.¹⁰⁴

Growing Up and Consolidation

KAKM dedicated a new studio in August 1992 after about 17 years at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). The organization held a fundraising drive to pay for the (then \$3.4 million) 20 thousand plus square foot facility. The facility was built as a television studio, instead of the office spaces and classrooms the station inherited from UAA. The Elmo Sackett

Broadcast Center was named after the station's general manager who was with the station from 1978 through 1991. Sacket had envisioned a professional facility for the television station but did not live to see it completed. They died in 1991.

Dean Hoke became KAKM's general manager in January 1992. The station's administrative offices, production facilities, and a warehouse the station kept were scattered over three different locations. The scattering of the station occurred in 1978 after KAKM signed a 10-year lease with the UAA for production space. In 1984, UAA said that they would not renew the station's lease in 1988. KAKM started looking for space to rent or build new facilities. Alaska's legislature allocated \$1.8 million to the organization and Alaska Pacific University signed a 70-year lease for 3 acres where KAKM could build its facilities. The station started soliciting funds in November 1990. By February of 1991, KAKM had received almost \$1.5 million in pledges. Construction started in May 1991 and the site was dedicated in August 1992.

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Dean Hoke said the new KAKM facilities would have never been built without the support of large donations from the business community. "The people who had to step up to the plate with the major gifts, did," said Hoke. "That was critical. The corporate community came through." In 1992, the lobby of the new facility prominently featured a wood-plexiglass piece that had the names of business and people inscribed on it. The names included those who donated toward the cost of the building. The studio facilities were named for Elmo Sackett, but the site at Alaska Pacific University was named for PTI Communications, a communication company that was eventually purchased by Alaska Communication Systems. PTI Communications donated \$250 thousand toward the costs of construction. "In order to do one of those kinds of campaigns," Hoke said, "you have to have lead gifts like that to make it work."¹⁰⁷

Of course, many people around the state contributed smaller gifts toward the building's construction costs. Every KAKM employee was also recorded as having donated toward the project. "That's why you see that wall of honor out there," Hoke said. ". . . I think everyone wanted this to happen so much, they were willing to make over-and-above gifts to help make it possible." Other large donors received recognition by having their names on rooms in the facility. Apparently, the elevator was named for a law office that gave a large donation to the project. "We decided the law business was pretty up and down, so it was a good thing to name after them," said KAKM's public information specialist Donna Scott.^{108 109}

The facility included new production areas. A studio, editing bays, video and audio suites, a graphics room, and a master control room were included. New equipment including cameras and tape machines were also acquired. Most of the new equipment was paid for by a grant from the federal government. Film storage was available next to the control room for the first time at the new facility. Betty Worthington, who was a programming specialist at KAKM, said that in the old facilities tapes were often carried from storage which was not close to the studio. Worthington noted that some containers weighed up to 30 pounds. "[Now] I won't get any exercise going up and down stairs..." they said.¹¹⁰

KSKA's fundraising efforts continued to improve following its schedule changes and service reductions (and cuts from the state). The station raised over \$50 thousand during its fall membership drive in September 1993. The goal of the fundraiser was \$40 thousand. The fall drive was one of three fundraisers the organization held in 1993. 726 people pledged support to the station. 363 were new pledges. Average contributions during the fall 1993 drive increased by about 2.5%. The average contribution was \$63.53. The 1992 average was \$61.97. The CPB said that KSKA's average donation in 1993 was what was usually seen for stations in similar sized

markets. However, average increases were always encouraging. By contrast, some rural market stations saw higher average donations. KBRW in Utqiagvik (then Barrow) brought in an average of \$99.24 during their 1993 fundraiser. KDLG in Dillingham reported an average of \$83.08 in 1992. KTOO's average for 1993 was \$82.36. KCAW in Sitka reported an average of \$79.84, and KBBI in Homer reported an average of \$77.83.¹¹¹

The boards for KSKA and KAKM studied ways to combine operations and management in early 1992. The idea for consolidation came as the state and the federal government pushed more defunding for public broadcasting. Predictions for the decline of Alaska's oil output in the 1990s were also cited as a reason for possible consolidation. The consolidation studies were conducted as the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission was also examining ways stations around the state could consolidate to save money. "We need to search for ways to revamp the state's public radio and television system," APBC Executive Director Dr. Charles Northrip said. The five-month study showed that about \$125 thousand per year could be saved by consolidating KSKA and KAKM.^{112 113}

There was some disagreement about the merger among members of the stations. One member claimed that no understandable plan was provided to the membership, and that concerns raised by members were dismissed by the board. "For 15 years we've been nurturing this lovely apple, and now all of a sudden it seems you want to marry it to an orange," said KSKA member David McCabe. The apple was KSKA, and the orange was KAKM. McCabe also said that a merger between APRN and KSKA made more sense than a merger between KSKA and KAKM.¹¹⁴ Hubert Gellert, a KSKA board member, expressed concern that the merger would force KSKA to support KAKM. KSKA at the time was debt free, but KAKM had an outstanding debt of about \$350 thousand for a loan to add 4,000 square feet to the station's building. "There's

a kind of glitzy attraction to mergers. It has a nice ring to it, it looks like you're doing something," Gellert said. "But nobody has ever explained exactly, why does this do us any good?"^{115 116 117}

KSKA and KAKM agreed to merge their operations on Thursday, August 19, 1993. A consolidation of broadcast operations, engineering, and administrative duties were part of the merger agreement. The merger was voted on in a series of membership meetings where members of both organizations voted to approve the merger (or not). KAKM had 11,248 eligible voting members and KSKA had 3,609 eligible voting members. 3,826 of eligible KAKM members, and 1,521 of eligible KSKA members voted on the merger proposal (roughly 34% and 42% of eligible voting members). 3,605 KAKM members voted in favor of the merger and 231 voted against. 1,348 KSKA members voted in favor of the merger and 173 against. Approximately 92% of people who voted approved the merger. A two-thirds majority of people who voted was required for the merger to be approved.¹¹⁸

KSKA and KAKM also had to get approval (which they eventually did) from the FCC, and the state of Alaska for the merger to proceed. The goal was to have combined operations running by January 1, 1994. "Now we get into the wonderful world of bureaucracy," said Dean Hoke, general manager of KAKM. "Actually, I am a bit surprised by the vote. I had thought that it would pass, but I thought it'd be close. Both of us broke records in terms of the percentage of people voting on an issue."¹¹⁹

The merger formed Alaska Public Telecommunications, Inc. (APTI). The boards of the two organizations were combined, which resulted in the elimination of five seats. Prior to the merger, KSKA had a board of 11 members, and KAKM had 15 members. The merger redefined the board seats to 21 members. Both Dean Hoke and KSKA's general manager Alice Walsh said

they still needed to send details to the board on how they envisioned the management of the organization to function. Walsh said they did not want to be co-managers of both stations – each envisioned their own place. It was important for both managers that the identities of the stations remain roughly the same, with both keeping their respective call letters.^{120 121}

The CPB was not directly involved in the merger, but the corporation was interested in the outcome. It saw the merger as a template that could be used for similar consolidation efforts that were happening across the country. Mergers in Kentucky and Maine around the same time were fairly complicated and messy. Priscilla Weck, director of station grants administration for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, said that CPB was "very excited about the steps the Anchorage stations are taking."¹²²

Dr. Charles Northrip believed that the merger would allow for cost savings and better service through the consolidation of the 2 organizations. Doug Moore, who was the executive director of the APBC at the time, also thought consolidation made sense. He said that declining government support and increased competition for private dollars forced public broadcasters to find methods to keep their services stable. Consolidation was one of those methods.¹²³

Cuts Redefine Alaska Public Broadcasting

In 1995, Alaska's House Finance Committee approved a spending plan that would have resulted in the elimination of state funding for Alaska's public broadcasters. The committee proposed reducing funding for Alaska's public broadcasters from about \$4.3 million to \$2.9 million. Public television stations, however, which had received about \$2.1 million the year before, were slated to have their funding completely removed. The finance committee was presented with options to move public television stations off of state funding. The managers of the state's four television stations proposed a 10% cut and a consolidation of operations where

one television station would be the central point that provides national programming to the others. The committee rejected the idea in favor of complete cuts.

Alaska's public broadcasters believed that completely defunding the system would have led to the closure of three of the four public television stations in the state, stopped service on the Rural Alaska Television Network (RATNET), shut down the Alaska Public Radio Network, and made small public radio stations repeaters of larger stations. KAKM said it could have survived without state money, because the size of the Anchorage market allowed for enough membership and underwriting support, but that its content would have drastically changed. Cuts to public radio stations were slated to be applied equally across the system, with smaller organizations receiving the same cut percentage wise as larger organizations. Public broadcasters were especially concerned about the negative impact on rural Alaska. APRN predicted that public radio stations in 12 markets (Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Haines, Homer, Valdez, McGrath, Kodiak, Dillingham, Kotzebue and Utqiagvik (then Barrow)) would more than likely be forced to become repeaters. Public broadcasters also feared losing federal grants that were tied to state funding – such as supplemental funding from the CPB. Losing CPB funding would have severely impacted public broadcasters that relied primarily on federal support.¹²⁴

Legislators that were in favor of the cuts argued that state funding should be focused on essential services like roads, schools, and senior services. Those who were against the cuts said that public broadcasting was essential, because it brought urban and rural Alaska together through political policy content, safety content, and localized content. Public broadcasting provided content that was not available via commercial outlets (the point of public broadcasting). Critics of the proposed cuts also argued that the cuts were not needed. Oil prices were stable at the time. Republican legislators were accused of following the national trend of the mid-1990s of

calling for defunding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.¹²⁵ "I would love to see public broadcasting become truly public," Vic Kohring (R. Wasilla) said. "Public means dollars coming from the general public. We don't have enough dollars to fund everything. We have to identify what are the most essential functions."¹²⁶

Kohring's twist of the word "public" shows that critics of public broadcasting felt that tax-supported funding was not adequate for public broadcasting. Tax-based funding did not fit their definition of "public." Kohring's version of "public" meant that people's direct monetary support constituted "public" support, not tax-based support. Though technically, the public was supporting the station through their tax dollars. Kohring's definition of "public" also shows a distinct lack of recognition on one of the reasons why public broadcasting was considered public – it was supported by taxpayers. Kohring's quote also lacks why the Alaska system was supported with tax-based funding in the first place – the market was not programming content that did not have the potential to make a profit.

The same year, APTI made a proposal to Alaska's state legislature for new equipment that would have made KAKM the main public television broadcaster in the state. KAKM would have assumed the broadcasting operations of the state's other three public television stations. The proposal also included taking over RATNET. The plan APTI submitted to the legislature included funding for automating RATNET's programming in Anchorage. Though it wasn't part of the official proposal, APTI also hinted that it would benefit public broadcasting in the state to take control of the APRN.¹²⁷

APTI's proposal did not go over well with the other public television stations in the state, because those stations were not consulted about the proposal before it was submitted to the legislature. John McDonald, KYUK's general manager, said that the proposal appeared to

sidestep another plan that all four stations were already working on. The “Alaska 1” proposal, as it was tentatively called, combined the state’s four public television stations into two stations with KYUK assuming control of RATNET. KAKM would have been the only station in the state that bought PBS programs.¹²⁸ The station would have then relayed PBS programming to the other stations. KUAC and KTOO would have produced content for the system. KUAC would have produced educational content, and KTOO would have produced government-based content.

The “Alaska 1” plan made financial sense, because KYUK paid roughly \$400 thousand for PBS programming in 1995 yet received only about \$500 thousand in support from the CPB. Most of KYUK’s federal assistance went toward paying PBS’s programming costs. Other operational expenses were paid for by state funding or private support. Due to the small size of KYUK’s market, its ability to adequately fund its other expenses was diminished compared to the state’s larger markets.¹²⁹ The “Alaska 1” plan also had KYUK assuming control of RATNET. The rationale for giving KYUK control of the network was that RATNET’s overall audience was similar to KYUK – Alaska Natives and “Bush” Alaskans. Costs did not appear to be major considerations for placing the network under KYUK’s control. “It only makes sense that RATNET be programmed in the Bush,” said Bill Legere, spokesperson for Alaska’s television stations and manager of KTOO. “It’s for the Bush.”¹³⁰

Susan Reed, APTI’s president, said the organization’s alternative proposal was not discussed with the other stations, because APTI was under pressure to get the proposal submitted to the legislature on time. “[Anchorage legislators needed to] know what our capital needs were to remain viable,” Reed said. KUAC’s Jerry Brigham said they were not upset by APTI’s proposal, because they figured it was an act of desperation. Brigham said the whole system was

in survival mode. Brigham also said that they didn't expect the legislature would agree to APTI's plan. "I think the reason they've done it is they're desperate," said APRN president Rob Rawls.¹³¹

Alaska's lawmakers cut \$20 million from the state budget in May 1995. Lawmakers cut state spending due to expected decreases in oil revenue. However, unlike the budget crunch Alaska experienced a decade earlier, Alaska's 1995 budget issues were due to expected decreases in oil production (barrels of oil per day) not decreases in price. Crude oil prices increased by about 10% from 1994 to 1995, and then increased again by about 33% in 1996. However, oil production dropped by about 5% from 1994 to 1995, and then another 6% in 1996. Alaska's oil production dropped by approximately 27% from 1988 (when Alaska oil production peaked) to 1995. Alaska's lawmakers were expecting production (and revenue) to continue to decline and were looking for ways to reduce expenses. Republican lawmakers wanted up to \$70 million in cuts.^{132 133 134 135 136}

Though Alaska's oil production revenues were declining, some lawmakers and supporters of public broadcasting felt that Alaska's Republican lawmakers' attempts to cut funding to the system were affected by political theatrics than fiscal restraint. In 1994, Republicans took control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since the 1950s. One of the tenets of the *Contract with America*, written by Congressperson Newt Gingrich (R. Georgia) and Congressperson Dick Armey (R. Texas) and signed by most Republican representatives, was to reduce what the party perceived as wasteful government spending. Public broadcasting was in that category of wasteful spending for Republican lawmakers.¹³⁷

Minority leader Jim Duncan (D. Juneau) described the political climate in Alaska as one that was following national trends:

What's happening in Alaska is the Republicans are trying to copy what the Republicans are doing nationally; what Newt Gingrich is doing. I think it's a step back into the dark ages. We don't need to jump off the cliff this year. We could give public broadcasting a chance to adjust to less income in the future. You just don't cut them off immediately. It's an overreaction on the Republicans' part.¹³⁸
 In an unnamed letter to the editor published by the Anchorage Daily News on

February 25, 1995, the author used wording that invoked freeloader imagery to describe those who consume public broadcasting content but did not give financial support. "If you know what we're talking about here, and you're not a member of KSKA, you're sponging off the generosity of others. It's your civic duty to send membership money to KSKA."¹³⁹

The "freeloader" and "sponging" descriptions of people who listen or watch public broadcasting without giving financially is interesting, because the same descriptors were used by people to justify not supporting public broadcasting with government funding. On one side, public broadcasting consumers were "freeloaders" if they consumed public broadcasting content from a station that was primarily government funded. On another side, public broadcasting consumers are "freeloaders" if they consume public broadcasting without supporting the station financially. The author also used the political climate of the time to justify guilt-tripping people into giving to the organization. "Either Speaker Gingrich gets his way, and public broadcasting gets stripped of government money, or fans of public broadcasting will force him to retreat."¹⁴⁰

State funding for public broadcast consistently dropped as the state's revenue dropped. Alaska's funding for public broadcasting dropped from \$7.4 million to \$4.3 million from fiscal year 1985 to fiscal year 1995 (about 42%). The cuts enacted by lawmakers in 1995 (for fiscal year 1996) reduced funding for public broadcasting to \$2.95 million (about 32%). Such a sharp

decrease in funding over a short period of time caused the system to come up with drastic measures to ensure its survival.^{141 142 143 144}

APTI's state funding was cut by approximately \$500 thousand in 1995. KSKA's grant from the state was cut by \$125 thousand. KAKM's grant was cut by approximately \$375 thousand. APTI expressed displeasure and confusion over the cuts because they appeared to disproportionately affect the organization. Susan Reed was unsure why the cuts to APTI were so heavy. They also asked why KSKA and KAKM only received 7% of the state's funding for public broadcasting when Anchorage had more people than all the other markets in the state combined. The state's other public broadcasters received cuts to their grants, but the cuts were equally distributed (by percentage) throughout the system. The APBC claimed that Anchorage stations could make up the difference by utilizing the Anchorage market for its fundraising efforts.¹⁴⁵

The APBC's decision to force APTI to rely on its market to survive amidst the state's cuts was not surprising. The APBC was under pressure to encourage stations to rely on their markets. APTI's push to become more self-reliant in the late 1980s and early 1990s showed the APBC that APTI had already shifted its funding structure to be more reliant on its market and less on the government. APTI showed it could survive (with a lot of effort and difficult decision making) without government funding, and the APBC shifted most of the slim resources it had left to stations that couldn't.

Reed's question asking why other stations in the system received more state funding (as a percentage) than APTI was surprising. The statement showed a lack of care for other public broadcasters in Alaska. It also showed a lack of adequate justification to APTI from the APBC in explaining why small stations needed more support. The lack of consideration for the financial

health of small stations in the system shows how insulated (fortunate?) APTI was in Alaska's largest market. Reed's comments reinforced concerns Alaska's small public broadcasting stations had for consolidating Alaska public broadcasting to one organization in an urban market. There appeared to be little reflection from APTI on why public broadcasters in markets that couldn't support stations needed to exist or needed more government support. Audience size and station reach appeared to be Reed's main considerations because those factors were important for APTI's success in its urban market. Those factors, however, were not at the heart of the creation of Alaska's public broadcasting stations (including KAKM and KSKA). Audience size and station reach were relatively new metrics (for Alaska public broadcasting at least) to judge performance. If APTI felt that audience size and reach were metrics of performance, then no other organization in the state would have been performing well. No other organization would have deserved funding.

To accuse Reed of being wrong for their statement would be missing the point. The language used and actions taken by APTI were a response to the political economic climate of public broadcasting in Anchorage, Alaska, and the United States at the time. APTI had to exist (and appear to thrive) within a climate that was continually reducing the system's resources and continually questioning the nature of the system's programming. The responsibilities of APTI's management were based on the health of the organization within its market and not necessarily the health of the Alaska public broadcasting system overall. That being said, the organization was still a part of the overall system, whether it wanted to be or not. It would be assumed that the health of every public broadcasting organization in Alaska would be the concern of every other organization in the state, including APTI.

In a reversal of the “Alaska 1” plan that the APBC and the state’s public television stations had been working on, KUAC was asked to lead what became the “AlaskaOne” station. AlaskaOne consolidated the programming of KUAC, KYUK, and KTOO. KAKM was originally slated to be the lead station, but KAKM’s board did not want to lose its identity as an Anchorage station. KAKM decided to remain independent of the network and program the station on its own.¹⁴⁶

APTI survived the state’s cuts in 1995 by cutting costs. KAKM and KSKA laid off staff, changed their programming, and increased their fundraising efforts. APTI laid off 18 employees by July 1996. Administrative jobs were consolidated between KSKA and KAKM. Both stations had kept certain administrative jobs in an attempt to retain their respective identities following their merger. The consolidation eliminated 11 jobs, and seven others were eventually cut from other departments. The layoffs were in addition to the organization stopping the production of its programming guide and moving KSKA from its rented studios at Alaska Pacific University to the facility at the Elmo Sackett Broadcasting Center.

KAKM moved televised courses taught via the University of Alaska Anchorage to late night slots. The intent was to put programming into the time slots that would attract larger audiences and attract more underwriting and corporate support. KAKM also moved *Newshour* to 6 p.m. and canceled a business show that was previously in the time slot.¹ *Newshour* was the more popular show, and it was believed that people would stick around for other PBS shows that aired at 7 p.m. Children’s programming was also moved from just early morning slots to both morning and midday slots for the same reason. “Children’s shows are easier to sell to sponsors,” Susan Reed said.

¹ *Newshour* refers to The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour which became The Jim Lehrer NewsHour in October 1995.

According to a 1996 Anchorage Daily-News opinion piece that described KAKM's finances, the station received about 70% of its revenue from the Anchorage market that year. The piece also described the station's goal as being able to live without state money. Despite some increases in corporate contributions, such as BP Exploration which increased its donation to public television by over 30% in fiscal year 1996, it was believed that corporate sponsorships alone could not have made up for the decrease in state funding. "We're trying to do more, but there's no way corporate sponsors are going to make up the difference," said Tom Gallagher BP's public affairs officer.^{147 148 149}

Alaska Native Public Broadcasting Comes to Anchorage

The FCC approved an FM broadcasting license for Koahnic Broadcasting Corporation in fall 1993. The call letters of the station were not yet determined when the license was issued, but Koahnic and its parent company Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) temporarily used KBC.¹⁵⁰ The FCC eventually assigned KANH as the station's call letters in November 1993. KNBA, the Native Broadcasting Alliance, was established in 1995 after a station in California stopped using the call letters. CIRI funded the station (and Koahnic) to advance Alaska Native-based culture in Alaska. KNBA planned to offer Alaska Native oriented programming, including Native news, music, sports, traditional stories, and coverage of important events such as the Alaska Federation of Natives convention. The station's organizers believed Anchorage needed a second public radio station for audiences that were not being served adequately by KSKA – mainly Alaska Natives and younger people.

Anchorage's Alaska Native population had grown by about 60% since 1980 as more people moved from villages to the city. KNBA wanted to be an electronic community center for Alaska Natives. Alaska Native culture and news were lightly represented by Anchorage's media

organizations, despite the city having the largest population of Alaska Natives in the state. Anchorage was (and still is) home to one of the largest Native American populations anywhere in the country. KNBA was the first urban Native-run public broadcaster in the country. KNBA's focus was on urban Alaska Natives. KYUK was still operating, but its focus was on rural Alaska Natives. There were no Alaska Native newspapers in print at the time either. The Tundra Times, formerly operated by Bethel Broadcasting Inc., stopped printing in December 1991. "It's a silent community here in Anchorage," said KNBA's marketing director Dawn Dinwoodie. "The things people do here aren't being recognized. We want this [KNBA] to feel like home."^{151 152 153}

APTI's Alaska Native programming was light in 1993. KSKA offered National Native News, Native America Calling, and Alaska News Nightly. All three programs contained Alaska Native content. National Native News and Native America Calling were produced by Koahnic and distributed by APRN for stations in Alaska. KAKM also offered a weekly program called Heartbeat Alaska that included Alaska Native content. CIRI's president Roy Huhndorf said that it was not APTI's fault for the lack of Alaska Native content on its stations. They said that APTI was focusing on what was perceived to be the dominant audience in Anchorage at the time, and that audience was key to the stations' survival. "[APTI is programming to] what they perceive to be their immediate audience, and that's really the white upper-class population living in Anchorage. That's not either right nor wrong. That's just their decision."

Koahnic's president Susan Braine said that APTI's programming and most programming offered by commercial outlets didn't apply to most Alaska Natives in Anchorage in the mid-1990s, because most Alaska Natives were between the ages of 18 and 42. Braine said that Alaska Natives didn't listen or watch, because little content applied to their interests. "KSKA serves its membership very well," said KNBA's program director Kathy Mitchell-Sayer. "But as a Native, I

don't find them that interesting [...] we want to cater to the rest of the community." "What we've observed is that programming that reflects the Native history or culture and lifeways that just doesn't seem to be making it into current programming. We feel it's time to be moving in that direction," said Lydia Hays, executive director of the CIRI Foundation.

As has been seen with other stations, KNBA intended to act a training ground for Alaska Natives that wanted to pursue a career in broadcasting (both public and commercial). The idea was that someone could learn broadcasting (administration, technical, and operational) at KNBA and take that knowledge back to their town or village. The station also had the goal of focusing on education, jobs, and health. KNBA also offered a legal call-in show and a job-listing hotline. "The migration of [Alaska] Natives to Anchorage from rural Alaska is accelerating due to probably lack of opportunity to either get the cash economy jobs or even the lack of opportunity to pursue traditional lifestyles," said CIRI President Roy Huhndorf. "There are lots of things that Native people enjoy listening to and communicating about [...] different problems that are unique to the Native community that are not talked about much on the rest of the media."¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁵

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Despite KNBA's lofty goals, the station had a difficult start for reasons entirely out of its control. Funding from the state that was intended for the organization's startup costs was removed by the APBC after Alaska's lawmakers cut funding for public broadcasting in 1995. Commissioners defended the decision by saying that giving startup money to a station did not make financial sense when most of the stations in the system were seeing declines in funding. APBC commissioner Steve Straight said that Anchorage's Alaska Natives should work with APTI toward a common programming goal and that starting a new public radio station in the city was a bad idea given the budget crunch. KNBA dismissed Straight's suggestion.¹⁵⁷ The removal

of funding by the APBC prompted a representative from KNBA's board of directors to comment they believed the APBC's actions were racially motivated. Every APBC commissioner at the time presented as "white."¹⁵⁸ "It's clear to us if this were not a Native station, you would not be taking this action," said Diane Kaplan, KNBA board representative.¹⁵⁹

KNBA was not out-of-line in dismissing Steve Straight's suggestion. KSKA's programming shift earlier in the decade pushed out underserved audiences and genres for programming that aimed for larger audiences and larger donations. There was little reason for Koahnic and CIRI to believe that APTI would reverse that trend and adequately program Alaska Native content. If APTI believed that Alaska Native content fit its goals, it would have already been programming that content. KSKA's proposed cancellation of *The Latin Shows* in 1989 and the subsequent fallout didn't help the perception that the organization was not willing to work with or meet the needs of Anchorage's underserved audiences.

KSKA was also dealing with allegations of racism after it instituted a "soft ban" on rap music in 1995. A volunteer host had played rap that had profanity in it. KSKA's management said that the station received three complaints in five weeks about profanity in songs. KSKA program director decided to "soft ban" the genre as a whole instead of reinforcing that the songs must be free of profanity to be played on the station. "I needed to take a drastic measure to what I thought was a very serious abuse of our airwaves," said KSKA program director Bede Trantina.

KSKA was one of only two stations in the market to offer a rap program prior to the "soft ban." The other station was a low power student-run station at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Reggie Ward, who was the host of the show, claimed about 60 listeners called him after he announced the end of the show on KSKA. "I'm very, very frustrated," they said. "All rap is not bad. There's a better way we can handle this." "People are angry," said 35-year-old rap fan

Tony Davis. "Some are thinking this was a racist decision. They're literally taking everything away," they said. "Black people don't have nothing."¹⁶⁰

Trantina said that the FCC could have fined the station if someone complained about songs that had profanity in them. FCC fines are very rare, but since KSKA was struggling financially, it did not want to take the chance that it could be fined for something under its control. Trantina said that free speech was not absolute on the radio, and that the language that one couldn't publish in a newspaper was not appropriate for the radio. KSKA did not allow "indecent material", even though the FCC allowed for indecent content to be broadcast during "safe harbor" hours from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Trantina said that the size of the staff and volunteer base at the station prevented the station from adequately policing what aired.^{161 162 163}

Ward was playing rap again by 1996 on KNBA.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion and Summary

This chapter examined the progression of KAKM and KSKA (and what would eventually become Alaska Public Telecommunication, Inc. (APTII)) from the middle of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. KSKA and KAKM were created as programming alternatives for the Anchorage market at a time when the state's economy was booming due to oil production. The stations' fortunes changed in the latter half of the 1980s as Alaska's oil production was impacted by price and production declines. Both Alaska and U.S. lawmakers questioned public broadcasting's programming and purpose amidst calls to reduce government budgets.

Alaska's oil production continued to decline in the 1990s, and defunding public broadcasting was in vogue across the nation. Alaska's lawmakers drastically cut funding to the system. KAKM and KSKA were forced to make difficult decisions about the operations of their respective organizations, the programming they served, and how they served their audiences.

KSKA and KAKM combined into one organization (APTI) in late 1993. State lawmakers continued to cut funding to public broadcasting in the wake of Newt Gingrich's *Contract with America* and amidst continued declines in oil production. 1995 was especially difficult for public broadcasting in Alaska as lawmakers drastically cut funding to the system. APTI's funding took a heavy hit from the APBC due to the state's cuts. The commission said APTI had positioned itself properly enough to survive on its own using private donations in Anchorage.

The next chapter will explore the finances of Alaska Public Media from fiscal years 2015 to 2021. Chapter 8 examines how Alaska Public Media leverages its market in ways that organizations in smaller markets cannot. The chapter will also look at the organization's financial trends leading up to and immediately following the state's cuts, while also considering the organization's response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER 8

Alaska Public Media: Financial Analysis

KSKA and KAKM were created in the 1970s as programming alternatives for an Anchorage media market that was already brimming with programming variety. The stations' programming was tailored to the interests of Anchorage's underserved audiences until the 1980s when Alaska's oil production was impacted by price and production declines. State lawmakers made cuts to public broadcasting, and both stations were forced to make changes to their programming and operations as a result. Oil production continued to decline in Alaska in the 1990s, and national and state lawmakers reassessed the value of public broadcasting. Lawmakers continued to cut public broadcasting. KSKA and KAKM combined into one organization (APTI) in late 1993 as a matter of necessity and then faced massive cuts from the state two years later. APTI (now Alaska Public Media, AKPM) was asked to rely on its large market to support itself in the wake of the state's cuts.

This chapter examines the finances of AKPM from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021.^{1 2}
 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 AKPM exists in the largest market in Alaska. As a result, the organization has had many advantages of existing in a large market, such as increased access to contributions and underwriting revenue. It has also faced disadvantages, such as being forced to rely on the market during downturns in Alaska's economy (and cuts in state and federal support). AKPM draws from its market in ways organizations in smaller markets can't. However, AKPM's financial existence is precarious because of the reliance on its market. How or if AKPM was affected by the state's cuts to public broadcasting in 2019 will also be explored. The chapter also examines AKPM's financial trends leading up to and immediately following the cuts as well as how the organization was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall Revenue Trends

Alaska Public Media's (AKPM) overall revenue from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 came to approximately \$45 million. The organization's revenue increased by approximately 47% during the same period. AKPM received funding from the CARES Act for fiscal year 2021. The funding accounted for approximately 7% of the organization's total funding that year. The funding was subsequently forgiven by the federal government. CARES Act funding, which acted as a stabilization method for the organization during the COVID-19 pandemic, partially skewed the financial numbers of the organization for fiscal year 2021. AKPM's total support would have increased by approximately 37% (instead of 47%) from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 if CARES Act funding was removed.

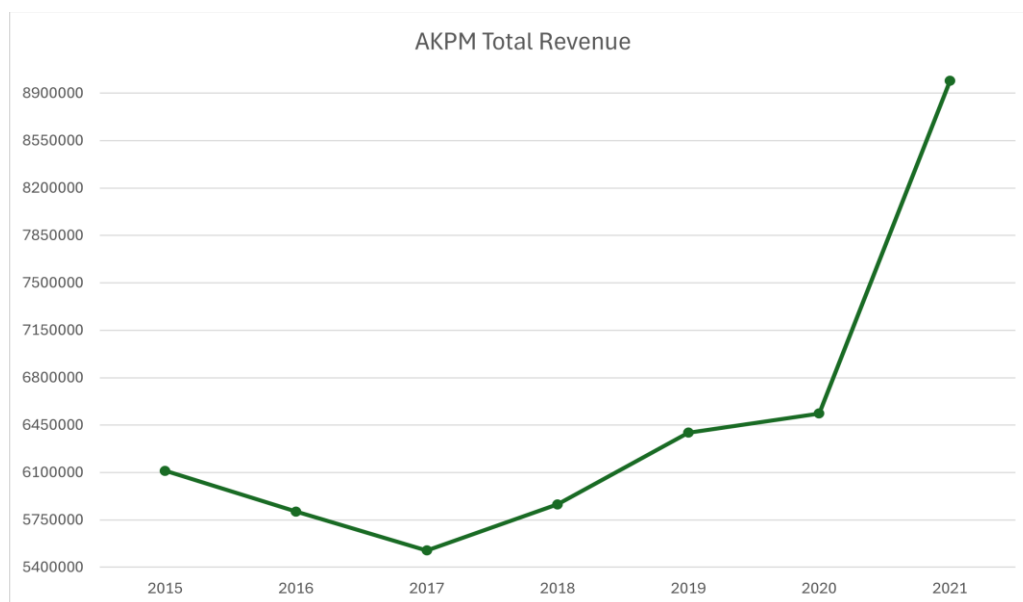


Figure 8.1. AKPM's total revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

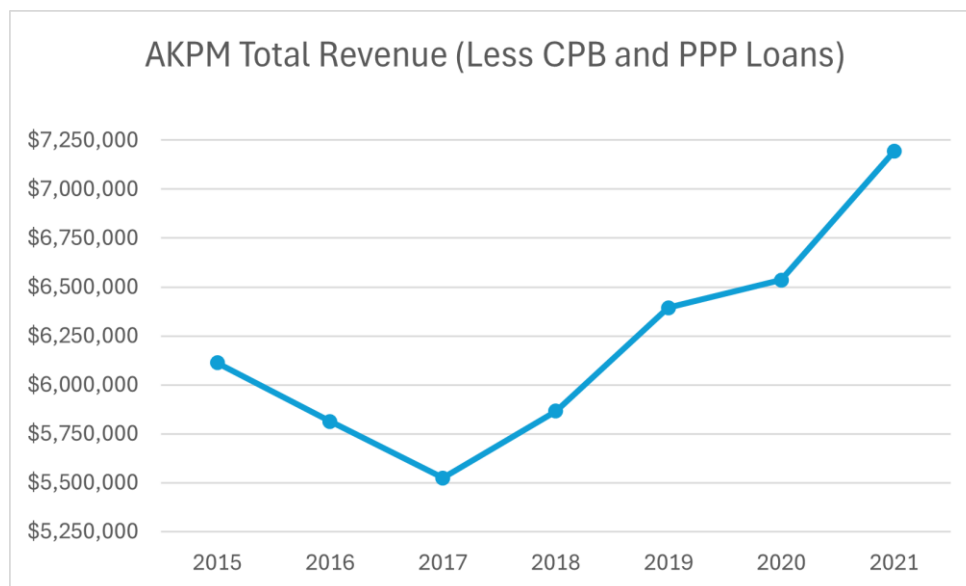


Figure 8.2. AKPM's total revenue with CPB funds and PPP funding removed.

Fiscal year 2021, with or without CARES Act funding, was an outlier year for the organization's revenue. Revenue increased by approximately 37% for fiscal year 2021 with CARES Act funding. However, if CARES Act funding was omitted, total support for the organization would have increased by approximately 28% that year. 28% remains an incredible and unusual yearly increase in total revenue. The previous six fiscal years varied wildly in terms of total revenue. Fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017 saw an approximate decrease of about 10%, and revenue rebounded by approximately 11% from fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2020 (before the spike in 2021).

The cause of the spike in revenue for fiscal year 2021 is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. Part of the increase came as AKPM received a roughly 95% increase in funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) that fiscal year. The increase came to approximately \$1.17 million. As will be explained in the "other" grants revenue section, another cause of the spike in total support for fiscal year 2021 came as the organization saw a large increase in grants support.

\$175 million in stabilization funds were allocated for public broadcasting organizations across the United States as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The CPB was responsible for disseminating those funds to public media organizations. According to the CPB, AKPM received approximately \$751 thousand in extra stabilization grants along with its normal radio and television service grants for fiscal year 2021. However, AKPM reported an extra \$871 thousand (along with its normal grants) from the CPB. If AKPM's funding from the CPB increased by \$1.17 million that year, there was a \$300 thousand to \$400 thousand discrepancy in the extra funding amounts reported by both AKPM and the CPB.¹⁷

The answer for the discrepancy came almost by accident by digging into the dregs of AKPM's financial reports for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021. CPB appropriations for the current fiscal year and the previous fiscal year are reported in the early pages of AKPM's fiscal reports.¹⁸ However, nearly at the end of the fiscal reports, AKPM offers "Schedule of Activities by Department" sections that parse out the organization's income from the CPB in a different way.¹⁹ The Schedule of Activities by Department section showed income received from the CPB by AKPM's radio arm and television arm individually, instead of as one lump amount to the organization as a whole. The fiscal reports' early pages break down CPB funding into one lump amount. The fiscal reports' later pages show AKPM's fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 CPB allocations with the extra ARPA funding added to departmental totals. The information provided at the bottom of AKPM's financial reports is a richer set of information regarding the organization's CPB allocation.

AKPM received approximately \$801 thousand more for its fiscal year 2021 television grant than what was received for fiscal year 2020. Likewise, the organization received approximately \$369 thousand more for its fiscal year 2021 radio grant than what was received

for 2020. Combined, the increased amounts came to approximately \$1.17 million – the amount of the total increase from the CPB. If the ARPA funding reported by AKPM (\$871 thousand) is removed from \$1.17 million, the increase in CPB funding comes to approximately \$300 thousand, which is the discrepancy amount in the above paragraphs.

AKPM received approximately \$1.2 million in CPB funds in fiscal year 2020 and approximately \$2.4 million in CPB funds in fiscal year 2021. The \$2.4 million included an extra \$871 thousand in ARPA funding. However, the organization also reported receiving approximately \$1.5 million in CPB funds as a base amount in fiscal year 2021. Removing the \$871 thousand the organization received in ARPA funding from its fiscal year 2021 total of \$2.4 million means the organization's funding amount with its typical yearly grants came to approximately \$1.5 million. The difference between \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2021 and \$1.2 million received in fiscal year 2020 comes to approximately \$300 thousand – the amount of the discrepancy in funding outlined above.

The funding discrepancy reflected an approximately \$300 thousand or 25% increase in community service grant (the organization's base television and radio grant) funding from the corporation for fiscal year 2021. The increase was not contributed to by CARES Act or ARPA funding. It is still unknown why the reported amounts of extra ARPA funding (\$871 thousand and \$751 thousand) from AKPM and the CPB differ so drastically. It appears the amounts reported by AKPM are the more accurate of the two. It is also unknown as to why AKPM received an approximately \$300 thousand increase in its base CPB appropriations for fiscal year 2021.

Looking at AKPM's non-federal financial support (NFFS) shows that the organization reported approximately \$2.86 million in NFFS for fiscal year 2020 and \$2.97 million in NFFS

for fiscal year 2021. Reported NFFS amounts are important, because increases or decreases in the amount of NFFS can influence support from the CPB beyond an organization's base grant. In essence, the more non-federal support an organization brings in, the more money the CPB provides beyond the service grant's base amounts. While AKPM's reported NFFS increased by approximately 4% from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021, the increase is not enough to account for the increase in CPB support.

Sustaining Membership Revenue Trends

It should be noted that AKPM's contribution revenue is represented as "sustaining memberships" in its fiscal records and not as "contribution" or "donation". The sustaining membership distinction is interesting, because the moniker shows a preference on what type of contributions the organization prefers. The organization is one of many public broadcasters in Alaska to use sustaining memberships in its contribution solicitations to its audience. AKPM is also not the only public broadcasting organization under review that uses the "sustaining membership" moniker to define contributions in its financial records (which are how they are represented to the public and to the CPB).²⁰

AKPM defined a sustaining membership as "Any level that is comfortable for you, is comfortable for Alaska Public Media. Sustainers must give at least \$5/month (\$60/year), but other than that, there is no minimum or maximum level for membership!"²¹

A sustained membership (as defined above) is when a contributor gives at least \$5 a month to the organization. The key point is that a donation is something that occurs repeatedly on a regular basis without the need for a pledge or membership drive. The benefit of a sustained membership is that the organization can collect contributions in a guaranteed fashion. The money coming in from a sustained membership is essentially money-in-hand. Traditionally, public

media organizations would rely on a pledge (a promise to contribute) and hope the pledge would be fulfilled. A pledge-based system is unstable from a budgetary point of view, whereas sustained memberships are more stable. Sustaining membership models have become popular at most medium and large market public broadcasting organizations.

However, in AKPM’s financial records, the sustained membership moniker lumps in contributions that do not adhere to the organization’s definition of sustained. If a contributor phones in to give a one-time donation of \$100, the donation is recorded as a sustained membership – at least in the organization’s public-facing financial records. If a contributor contributes in a way that deviates from the sustained membership definition, the contribution is considered a sustained membership anyway.²² Essentially, all monetary contributions from the public are reported as sustained. The contribution information discussed below will use AKPM’s definition of sustained memberships to not cause confusion about the data.

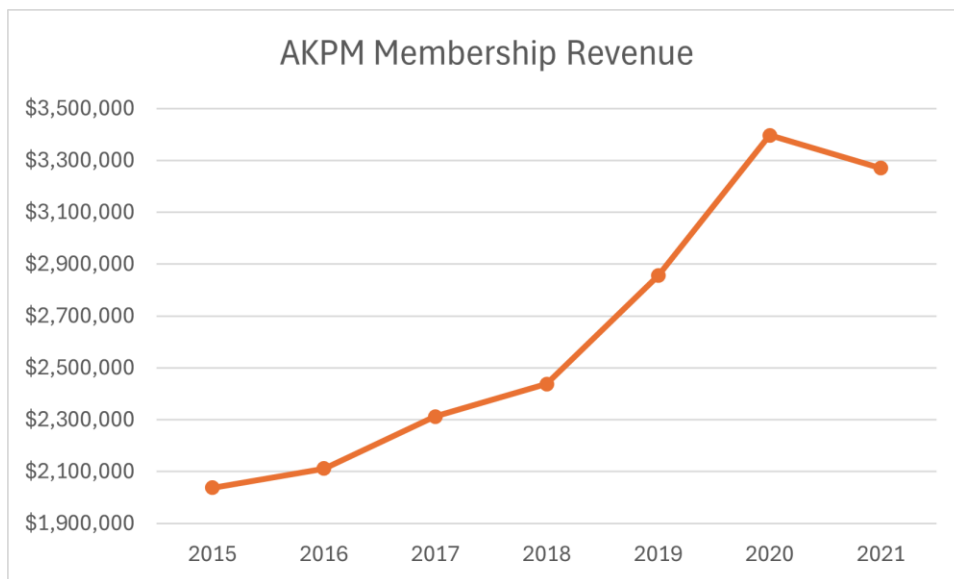


Figure 8.3. AKPM's membership revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

With AKPM’s usage of the “sustained membership” moniker in their financial records a bit clearer, the organization’s sustained membership contributions (total contributions) rose by

about 61% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021. Fiscal year 2021 was a bit of an oddity, because the organization saw a decrease of approximately 4% in sustained membership revenue that year. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the dataset, AKPM saw its sustaining membership revenue rise by approximately 67% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020 or what amounted to about a 10% increase each year. Fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 (even with the decrease in sustaining membership revenue that year) were bumper years for the organization compared to the 5 years prior. Sustaining membership revenue jumped by approximately 19%, or approximately \$540 thousand, from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020. Fiscal year 2021's sustaining membership revenue, despite showing a 4% decrease from fiscal year 2020, was sustained (pun intended) above fiscal year 2019 membership revenue levels by approximately 15% (\$415 thousand).

Peter Host, AKPM's Director of Development, said two factors played into the dramatic increase of sustaining memberships. Both were deliberate by the organization. One was direct messaging to the audience about the benefits of sustaining memberships. The other was that sustaining memberships were easier for the audience (when compared to pledges of support).

Host also said that sustaining memberships also came with a large incentive to give:

A big factor is that there is a member benefit for folks who are giving over sixty dollars in a given year. That is PBS Passport. PBS provides its programming then it disappears into the past. PBS Passport allows streaming for free for a period of time, and if you want to have access you need to be a member. There are a lot of folks who are PBS fans, and they want to have access to its back catalog.

That was a reason that we got so many sustainers because a lot of people came on board specifically because of that. They decided, 'Okay I'll give five dollars a month and I have access to all this PBS stuff that I like and it supports the station.'²³

Host said that people started to recognize the benefits sustaining memberships gave to the organization:

We've put it out there in the messaging that [sustaining membership] gives us a more solid base and ability to sort of plan for the future and know what's likely to come in a given period. [Sustaining membership] allows for us to sort of grow and plan in a more stable way. Lots of our donors understand why [sustaining membership] would remove some of the uncertainty from our reality.²⁴

Peter Host also said that the increase in sustaining memberships was the result of a change in how people chose to give to causes they support. People have become comfortable with subscription-based payment models, and public broadcasters have benefited from that trend by allowing people to subscribe to their station (and PBS).

The mixture of our local messaging as well as the structure of giving and then the passport benefit have been a really big deal. I think the sustaining membership kind of model fits really well into the type of services that people seem to be subscribing to these days in terms of like streaming services. A lot of folks don't want to go through the rigmarole our membership drives pushed at Alaska Public. I would say that over time we went from this like massive peaks and valleys to sort of rolling hills that you can see during drives. There is a bump in revenue for sure and bumps in new members, but over time they get less and less.²⁵

Events Revenue Trends

An interesting trend related to fundraising is that AKPM's revenue from events dropped by approximately 94% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018. Events brought in approximately \$163 thousand in revenue to the organization in fiscal year 2015, but by fiscal year 2018, events revenue had dropped to \$9.3 thousand. There was a slight increase in revenue from events in fiscal year 2019, but the organization reported no income from events for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021.

Peter Host clarified why revenue from events decreased during the period under review. "We don't hold fundraising events. We use events to build relationships and understanding with our members and community. Such a huge time and money cost for a relatively small return."²⁶

As was explained in chapter 7, KSKA used to host one of the largest musical events in the Anchorage area. The organization also used to host other fundraising events such as auctions

and wine tastings. The shift away from events is interesting, because somewhere along the line, it was determined that events as a fundraising method were not worth the effort. Though Host mentioned that events are still used to build relationships with the community, the decline in events to fundraise has to have had some negative effect on community outreach, just by the fact that events rarely ever happen.

Underwriting Revenue Trends

AKPM's reported underwriting revenue dropped by approximately 10% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.²⁷ The yearly average for underwriting revenue decreased by about 2% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The drop in revenue was not consistent from year-to-year, however. The organization showed a 17% decrease in underwriting revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017. From fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2019, underwriting revenue increased by about 5%. Contrary to the trend that was seen with the organization's sustained sponsorship numbers, which saw an increase of approximately 19% in revenue from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020, underwriting revenue decreased by approximately 6% during the same period. AKPM then saw an 11% increase in underwriting revenue during fiscal year 2021.

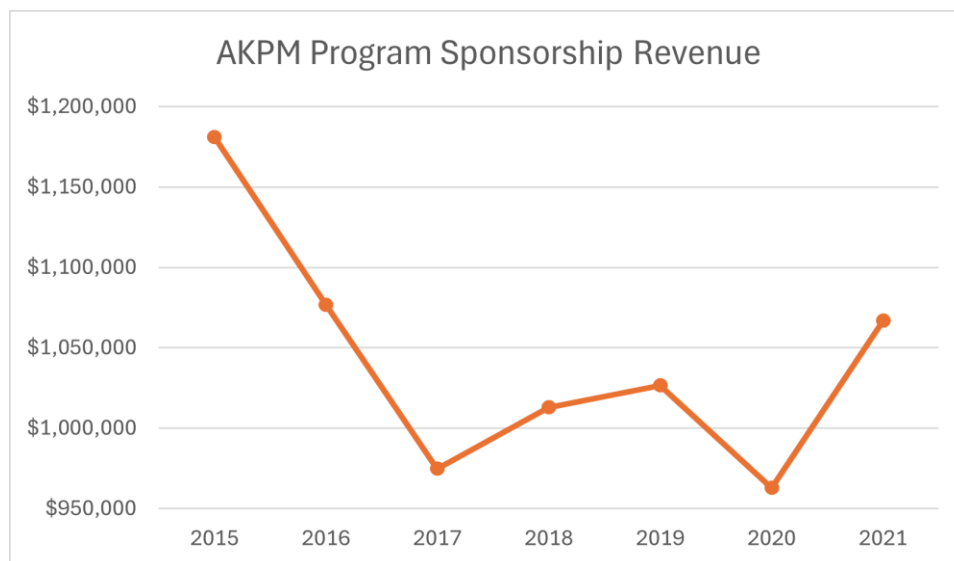


Figure 8.4. AKPM's program sponsorship (underwriting) revenue from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

AKPM's underwriting trends from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021 show that underwriting was not a stable form of revenue, because underwriting as a form of advertising, relied on the health of the business market. When the market faced financial insecurity, there was less money being spent on services like advertising. AKPM's 6% drop in underwriting revenue for fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2020 reflects Alaska's financial insecurity during the same period – the same insecurity that necessitated (at least in the mind of its Governor) the discontinuing of state funding to the public broadcasting system.

Cheryl Austin, AKPM's Director of Corporate Support, said that underwriting income was certainly affected by Alaska's economic climate. Alaska's oil producers were frequent underwriters on Alaska's public broadcasting stations. However, BP left Alaska in 2020, and its departure affected the amount of money being spent for advertising and philanthropy in Alaska. AKPM took a hit on its underwriting revenue as a result of BP's departure.²⁸

Austin also said that that underwriting dropped because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Performances and other arts events were cancelled, and the audience said it desired COVID-19

support information on the radio and television stations. “Who had the money at the time?” Austin said. The organization also offered six months of free messaging for some established underwriters. The idea was to strengthen the organization’s bond with established underwriters that may have been struggling at the time. Free underwriting was also allowed only for local underwriters.²⁹

State of Alaska Appropriation Trends

AKPM already saw a drastic decrease in funding from the state of Alaska before the governor vetoed funding to the system in 2019. The organization received approximately \$553 thousand for its appropriation in fiscal year 2015. By 2019, the state’s appropriation dropped to about \$397 thousand. State funding decreased by about 28% during those 5 fiscal years. Fiscal year 2016 saw a particularly drastic slide as funding from the state dropped by approximately \$122 thousand or roughly 22% from fiscal year 2015. On average, the organization saw an annual decrease of about 8% in state funding before the appropriation was zeroed out.

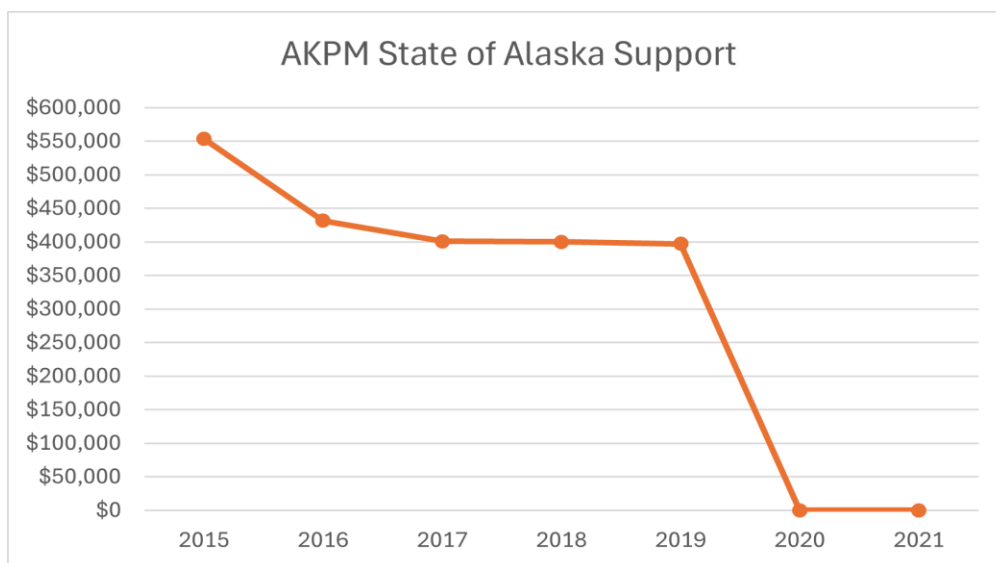


Figure 8.5. AKPM's revenue from the State of Alaska from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

The fact that the state was showing a drastic change in commitment to public broadcasting in the years prior to the governor's cuts needs to be emphasized. Approximately 9% of AKPM's fiscal year 2015 revenue came from its state appropriations. By fiscal year 2019, the state appropriation accounted for approximately 6% of the organization's revenue. An unfortunate byproduct of using financial information from fiscal year 2015 though fiscal year 2021 for this study is that a complete picture (or even a current comprehensive picture) of the state of Alaska's downward trend in public broadcasting support cannot be seen. There simply isn't enough data. However, the financial data that has been analyzed shows a clear downward path toward defunding of the system – a proverbial “writing on the wall” of Alaska's commitment to public broadcasting.

“Other” Grants Revenue Trends

Revenue from what AKPM describes as “other” grants rose drastically by approximately 1056% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. In 2015, the organization reported receiving approximately \$72 thousand in “other” grants. By fiscal year 2021, “other” grant revenue increased to approximately \$836 thousand. As will be shown in further sections of this chapter (and in the rest of the fiscal review chapters), sharp increases or decreases in revenue or expenses are usually from outlier years that are unprecedented compared to the years prior. AKPM's “other” grants are no exception.

The organization's “other” grant revenue rose by roughly 10% in fiscal year 2016 only to fall by about 13% a year later. However, fiscal year 2018 saw the start of AKPM's meteoric rise in grant revenue. The rise continued through the period under review. “Other” grant revenue jumped by roughly 115% in fiscal year 2018 and by approximately another 101% for fiscal year 2019. Fiscal year 2020 “other” grants jumped another 78%, and fiscal year 2021 “other” grants

rose by 55%. The increases are unprecedented, as not only did the increases continue after the state's cuts to the system, but also continued during the financial insecurity of COVID-19 pandemic.

Alaska Public Radio Network Dues Revenue Trends

AKPM's dues from Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN) stations decreased by 78% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. In fiscal year 2015, APRN brought in roughly \$433 thousand in revenue from dues. By fiscal year 2021, that amount had dropped to roughly \$95 thousand. Fiscal year 2019 saw the lowest revenue from dues as the network brought in approximately \$78 thousand that year — an 82% drop from fiscal year 2015 dues revenue. Fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 saw a roughly 22% jump in APRN dues revenue (\$95 thousand mentioned above); however, dues revenue has not recovered to fiscal year 2015 levels.

Overall Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's total expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 came to approximately \$41 million. The organization's average expenses during the same seven-year period came to about \$5.84 million per year. The yearly expenses for fiscal year 2015, fiscal year 2016, fiscal year 2017, and fiscal year 2018 came in under the seven-year average, while the yearly expenses for fiscal year 2019, fiscal year 2020, and fiscal year 2021 came in over the seven-year average.

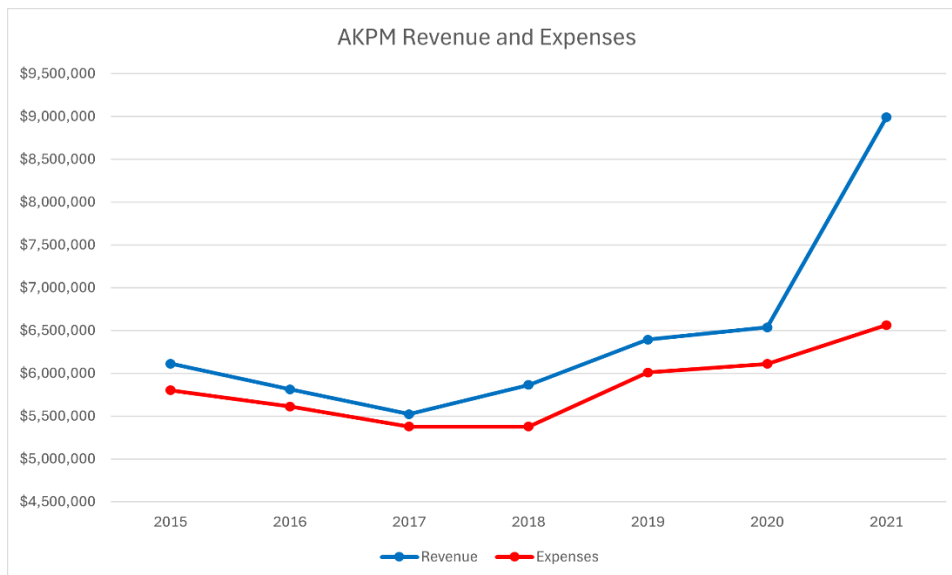


Figure 8.6. AKPM's revenue and expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

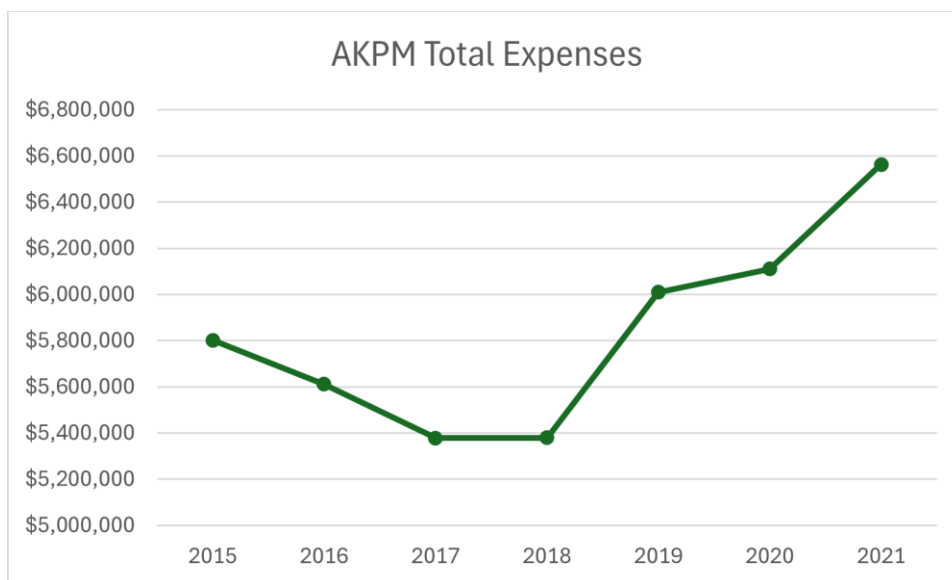


Figure 8.7. AKPM's total expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

AKPM saw a 13% increase in expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021.

However, expenses were not consistent from year-to-year. Fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017 saw a 7% decrease in total expenses; however, fiscal year 2017 appeared to be a turning point of sorts for the organization's expense load. While fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2018

increased only slightly (less than 1%), expenses rose by 22% from fiscal year 2017 through fiscal year 2021. The largest yearly increase came in fiscal year 2019 when expenses increased by approximately 11%. The average yearly increase from 2015 to 2021 was about 2%. The yearly average from 2017 to 2021, the years that saw an increase in expenses, came to just about 5% for those 5 years.

Labor Expense Trends

Labor expenses are related to the compensation of employees for the organization's use of their labor (time). Alaska Public Media differentiates its labor expenses into 5 different types – overall labor costs, programming labor costs, engineering labor costs, development labor costs, and management labor costs. Those 5 types will be examined below.

Alaska Public Media also differentiates expenditures based on what the expenses are spent on. There are two main types of expenditures. The first type of expenditure is related to the act of broadcasting. This includes programming and production expenses as well as engineering expenses. AKPM refers to these expenditures as “Program Services” expenses in its yearly financial reports. The second type of expenditure is related to the support of broadcasting. This includes expenses related to development (fundraising) and underwriting (advertising) activities as well as management (operations) activities. The organization refers to these expenditures as “Support Services” expenses in its yearly financial reports. For consistency, program services labor expenses and support services labor expenses will also be represented below.

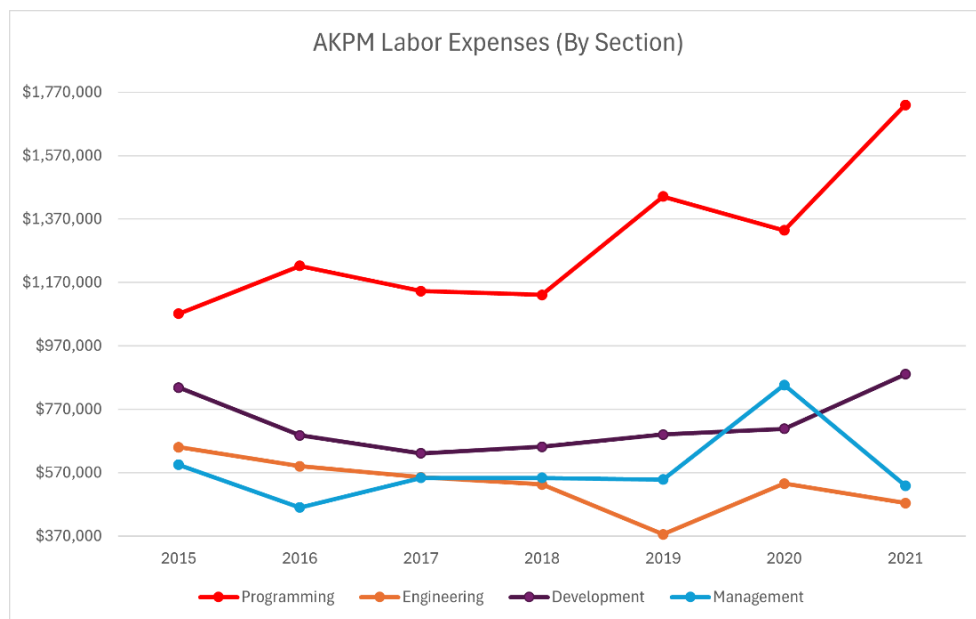


Figure 8.8. AKPM's labor expenses by section from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

AKPM's total labor costs, which include program services and support services labor costs, accounted for an average of approximately 54% of the organization's expense load from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Total labor costs increased by 15% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. However, the increase was not consistent from year-to-year. The organization's labor costs decreased by about 9% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018. Labor costs swung upward for fiscal year 2018, and by fiscal year 2021, had increased by approximately 26%.

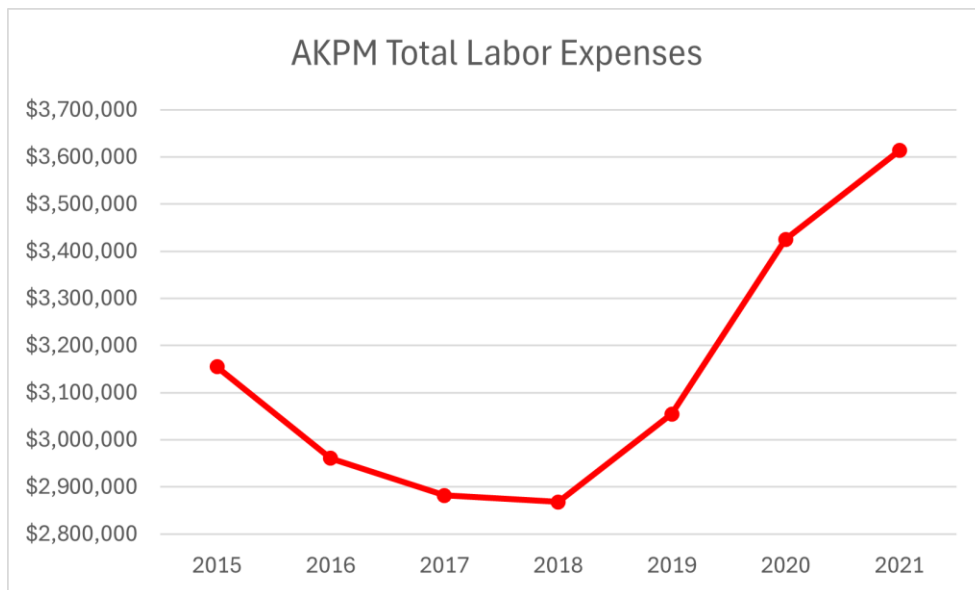


Figure 8.9. AKPM's total labor expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Program Services Labor Expense Trends

Programming and production expenses along with engineering expenses are what AKPM defines as “program services” expenses. Program services expenses are expenses that are spent on the act of broadcasting at the organization. Labor costs associated with program services accounted for approximately 58% of the organization’s total labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 which in turn accounted for approximately 31% of the organization’s overall expense load during the same 7 years.

Program services labor expenses did not increase or decrease wildly from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020. No single year increased or decreased by more than 9% during those 6 years. The average yearly increase from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020 came to just about 2% per year. However, program services labor expenses for fiscal year 2021 increased by approximately 18% -- almost double compared to fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2020. The average yearly increase in program service labor expenses rose to about 5% per year when

included in fiscal year 2021 program service labor costs (fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021). The increase came as a result of the 30% increase in programming and production labor costs in fiscal year 2021. Though engineering labor costs decreased (12%) that year, the rise in programming and production labor costs was enough to affect the overall rise in labor costs for program services.

Programming and Production Labor Expense Trends

Labor costs related to programming and production accounted for approximately 41% of AKPM's total labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021 – by far the largest labor percentage compared to engineering, development, and management. Increases in programming and production labor costs were substantial from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization saw a 62% increase in programming and production labor costs during those seven years.

Fiscal year 2017, fiscal year 2018, and fiscal year 2020 all saw decreases in programming and production labor expenses. The decreases for those years were not substantial compared to the increases for other years, however. Programming and production labor expenses never rose more than 7% during those years. Fiscal year 2016, fiscal year 2019, and fiscal year 2021 each saw double digit increases of approximately 14%, 28%, and 30%, respectively.

The organization had an average yearly increase of about 9%. As was shown above, the increased labor costs for fiscal year 2019 (28%) and fiscal year 2021 (30%) were outlier years. If the outlier increase for fiscal year 2019 was omitted, and the outlier increase for fiscal year 2021 remained, the average yearly increase in programming and production labor costs dropped to approximately 6% per year for the remaining years under review. The average yearly increase in programming and production labor costs dropped to approximately 5% per year when fiscal year

2021 was omitted, and the outlier increase for fiscal year 2019 remained. Average programming and production labor costs would have dropped by less than 1% (0.21%) per year if both outlier years were omitted.

Engineering Labor Expense Trends

Engineering labor expenses accounted for the least amount of labor expenses compared to programming, development, and management. Labor costs related to engineering accounted for approximately 17% of AKPM's total labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Labor expenses related to engineering decreased by approximately 27% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Engineering labor expenses decreased by approximately 42% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2019. Fiscal year 2019 saw engineering labor costs drop by approximately 30% from fiscal year 2018 levels. Fiscal year 2019 represented the lowest year for engineering labor expenses during the seven years under examination, coming in at about \$375 thousand. However, engineering labor expenses dramatically increased a year later – increasing by 42% for fiscal year 2020 (to about \$536 thousand). Engineering labor costs dropped again slightly by 12% in fiscal year 2021 (about \$474 thousand). Though engineering labor costs rose sharply in fiscal year 2020, they remained far below their fiscal year 2015 levels (about \$651 thousand).

AKPM's engineering labor expenses decreased by approximately 3% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average yearly decrease in engineering labor costs was greatly affected by the fiscal year 2020 increase. If fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average, the average yearly decrease would have come to just about 12% per year for the remaining six years in the average. The yearly average decreased significantly when the outlier was removed from the average. Fiscal year 2020 was the only fiscal year increase the organization saw during the period under review. Once again, an outlier year drastically affected the trend for a fiscal

category. The severity of the per-year decrease should also be mentioned, because the decrease (once fiscal year 2020 was removed) was heavily impacted by fiscal year 2019 (30% decrease). The average yearly decrease would have come to just about 8% per year if both fiscal years 2019 and 2020 were removed from the average. Expenses would have continued to decrease each year just by a lower percentage.

Support Services Labor Expense Trends

Similar to how programming and production and engineering expenses were represented as “program services” expenses in AKPM’s expense reports, development and management expenses are represented as “support services” expenses in AKPM’s expense reports. Labor expenses for support services dropped by approximately 2% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. There were outlier years where expenses either increased or decreased by significant amounts, however. In fiscal year 2016, support services labor expenses fell by approximately 20%. The decrease was due to substantial decreases in both development and management labor costs that year (18% for development and 23% for management, respectively). Fiscal year 2020 was also an outlier year as support services labor expenses rose by approximately 26%. Development labor expenses rose by about 3% that year, however, management labor expenses rose by approximately 54%. The 54% increase represented the majority of the increase for support services labor costs that year.

Support services labor expenses for fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021 were relatively stable and did not see more than a 9% increase or decrease during those years. Fiscal year 2020 was an outlier year and saw a 26% increase that year, fiscal year 2021 saw an approximate 9% decrease in support services labor expenses. Support services labor expenses only increased by an average of less than 1% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021.

The fiscal year 2020 outlier year greatly affected the yearly average. AKPM's support services labor expenses would have decreased by approximately 4% if the 26% increase from fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average. One outlier fiscal year drastically affected the trend for support services labor expenses, and when the outlier was removed, the trends shifted from a yearly increase to a yearly decrease.

Development Labor Expense Trends

Labor costs related to development accounted for approximately 23% of AKPM's total labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Development labor costs increased by about 5% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The increase was not consistent from year-to-year, however. The organization saw development labor costs decrease by about 25% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. The organization appeared to reverse course in fiscal year 2017 and saw an increase of about 40% from that year until fiscal year 2021.

Though there was a direction shift in development labor expenses starting in fiscal year 2017, the organization's development labor expenses did not swing wildly from year to year. There was a substantial decrease in development labor costs in fiscal year 2016. The organization saw a decrease of about 18% that year. Though development labor costs started to rebound in fiscal year 2017, they did not reach 2015 levels again until fiscal year 2021. Fiscal year 2020 development labor costs were still about 16% below what they were in fiscal year 2015. Fiscal year 2021 was an outlier year. The organization saw an increase of approximately 24% that year that accounted for most of the 40% growth from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2021.

Development labor expenses increased by about 2% per-year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. However, the increase was due to the fiscal year 2021 outlier year. The average would have changed to an approximate decrease of about 3% per year if fiscal year 2021 was

removed from the average. Again, one fiscal year outlier affected the trend, and the trend shifted from a yearly increase to a yearly decrease when the outlier was removed from the average.

Management Labor Expense Trends

Labor costs related to management accounted for approximately 19% of AKPM's total labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization saw a decrease in management labor costs of approximately 11% during the same period. As with labor costs related to programming and production, engineering, and development, decreases and increases in management labor costs varied greatly from year-to-year. The organization saw an approximate decrease of 23% in management labor costs from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016. A year later (fiscal year 2017) labor costs rebounded by approximately 20%. Fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2019 stayed almost flat, never increasing or decreasing by more than 1%. Fiscal year 2020 was a major outlier year. That year saw management labor costs increase by approximately 54%. A year later (fiscal year 2021), management labor costs dropped again by approximately 38%.

Management labor costs had outlier years for four of the seven years under review. Determining an accurate average yearly increase or decrease is difficult with frequent outlier years. In other words, it's difficult to show an accurate pattern. From fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021, the organization saw an average yearly increase of about 2% per year in management labor costs. Removing fiscal year 2021 (38% decrease) from the average shows that the organization's management labor costs increased by roughly 10% for the remaining six years under review. Removing fiscal year 2020 (54% increase) from the average along with fiscal year 2021, shows the organization's management labor costs decreased by an average of 1% per year

for the remaining 5 years. Both fiscal year outliers had tremendous effect on the category's per-year trend.

Total Program Services Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's total program services (programming and engineering) expenditures accounted for approximately 62% of the organization's expense load from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021. 62% is the sum of all expenses related to program services. That includes labor expenses. As noted previously, program services labor expenses accounted for 31% of the organization's expense load during the review period. If labor costs are not factored into the program services expense load, the organization saw approximately 31% of its total expenses go toward programming and production and engineering from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021.

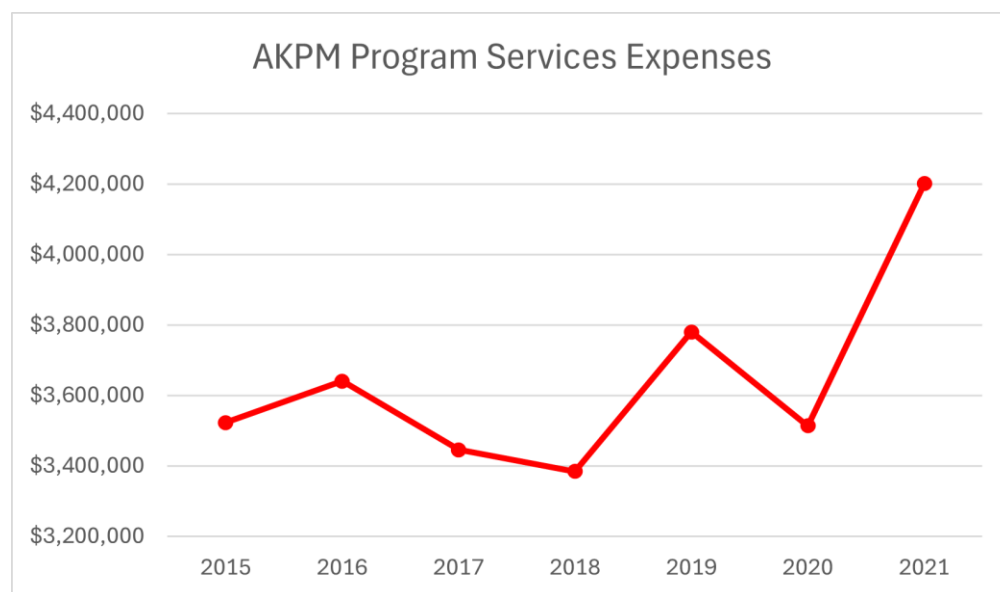


Figure 8.10. AKPM's program services expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Total program services expenses (including labor) increased by about 19% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Despite the increase, program services expenses remained relatively flat during the period with only fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 being outlier

years. Fiscal year 2019 saw an approximate increase of about 12%, and fiscal year 2021 saw an increase of about 20%. The organization saw an approximate 3% average yearly increase in total program services expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average yearly increase includes fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 as outlier years. The organization would have seen program services expenses rise by approximately 2% if fiscal year 2019 was removed as an outlier year from the average. If fiscal year 2019 remained, but fiscal year 2021 was removed as an outlier from the data, AKPM would have seen program services expenses rise very slightly at approximately 0.1% over the remaining six years under review. The removal of the outlier year increases stabilized the trend, showing that the outliers sharply affected the average.

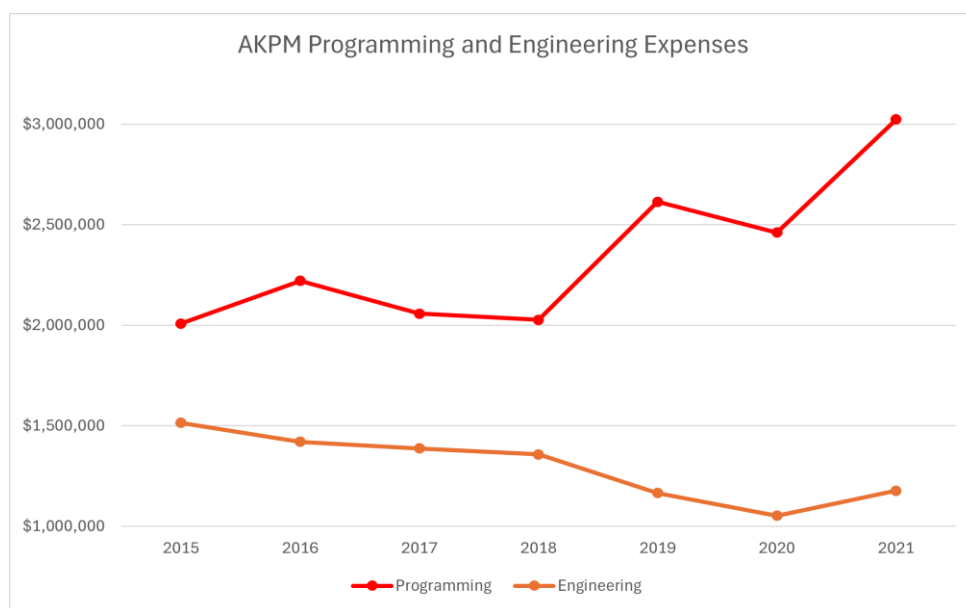


Figure 8.11. AKPM's programming and engineering expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Programming/Production Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's programming and production expenses increased by approximately 51% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Increases in expenses were not consistent from year-to-year. Fiscal year 2017, fiscal year 2018, and fiscal year 2020 saw

decreases in programming expenditures. However, when programming and production expenditures increased, they increased by significant amounts. The organization saw a jump of approximately 11% in programming and production expenditures in fiscal year 2016. Fiscal year 2019 programming and production expenses increased by 29%, and fiscal year 2021 saw an increase of approximately 23%.

Alaska Public Media saw an average yearly increase of approximately 8% in programming and production expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 greatly affected the organization's yearly average. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization would have seen an approximate increase of about 4% for the remaining 6 years. If fiscal year 2019 programming and productions expenses remained, but fiscal year 2021 programming and production expenses were removed, the organization would have seen an average approximate increase of about 5% for the remaining 6 years. If both fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 outliers were removed, AKPM's average programming and production expenses would have seen a decrease of approximately 1% over 5 years.

Program Acquisition Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's expenses related to the acquisition of programming, or purchasing programming content, were on average about 14% of the organization's yearly expenses from 15 to 21. The organization did not individually break down the costs of programming for radio, television, APRN, or the Alaska Rural Communication System (ARCS) on its financial reports. It should be assumed that the reported program acquisition costs are representative of all the content purchased by the organization. Programming that is rebroadcast by Alaska Public Television stations such as KYUK and KTOO would also be assumed to be included in program

acquisition expenses even though those broadcasters continue to hold onto their respective broadcasting licenses and are not officially owned and operated by Alaska Public Media.

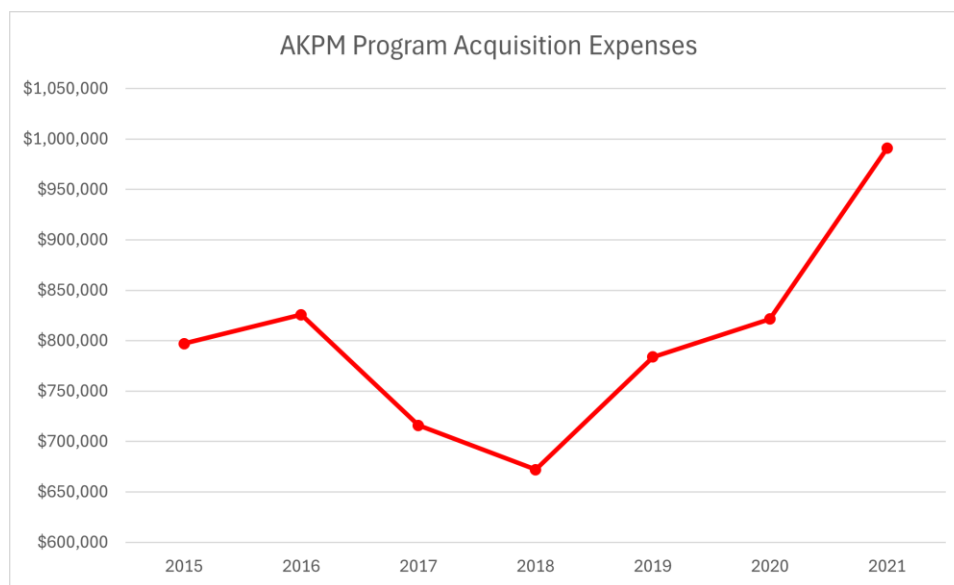


Figure 8.12. AKPM's program acquisition expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Program acquisition expenses increased by approximately 24% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The costs of programming acquisition were not at all consistent from year-to-year. Programming acquisition expenses decreased by approximately 19% from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2018. Fiscal year 2017 represented the bulk of the decrease, as the organization saw programming acquisition expenses fall by about 13% that fiscal year. The organization saw programming acquisition costs increase by approximately 26% from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2021. Program acquisition expenses increase by approximately 17% in fiscal year 2019. Fiscal year 2020 expenses increase by about 5%. The largest jump in program acquisition expenses came in fiscal year 2021 as the organization saw an increase of about 20%. Program acquisition expenses for fiscal year 2021 were the largest amount under the seven years under review, coming to just about \$990 thousand that year. In contrast, AKPM spent about \$716 thousand on program acquisition in fiscal year 2017.

Alaska Public Media's average yearly increase in program acquisition expenses came to just about 4% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The average was heavily influenced by the large increases for fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021. The organization would have seen an average yearly increase of approximately 2% if fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, the organization would have seen an average yearly increase of just about 1% in the remaining six years under review. Removing the two outlier fiscal year increases adjusted the trend where the average continued to increase over the review period, but the overall increase was to a lesser extent.

Engineering Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's engineering expenses decreased by approximately 22% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. AKPM actually saw a decrease of approximately 31% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020; however, the organization had a 12% increase in engineering expenses in fiscal year 2021 that affected the amount of the decrease. Alaska Public Media saw an average yearly decrease of about 4% in engineering expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The 12% increase in engineering expenses for fiscal year 2021 makes that year an outlier year for the organization. AKPM would have seen an average yearly decrease of about 7% in engineering expenses if fiscal year 2021 was removed from the yearly average.

Total Supporting Services Expense Trends

Alaska public media labels expenses that support the act of broadcasting as supporting services. Supporting services generally do not engage in the direct act of broadcasting like programming services do. There are certain exceptions, however. Supporting services' usage of airtime is generally not based on producing or procuring content that is desired and consumed by audiences. The usage of airtime by supporting services is spent in support of station operations

and programming e.g., pledge drives, underwriting, or other fundraising functions that require airtime for their execution.

Supporting services expenses fall under two categories, development expenses and management expenses. Development expenses are related to public outreach and fundraising activities, including underwriting (advertising). Management expenses are related to the managerial functions of the organization (not related to broadcasting production), such as accounting, budgeting, regulation adherence, political discourse, and anything else that does not fit within programming services and development labels.³⁰ This section will break down AKPM's total support services expenses, and then breakdown development and management expenses on their own.

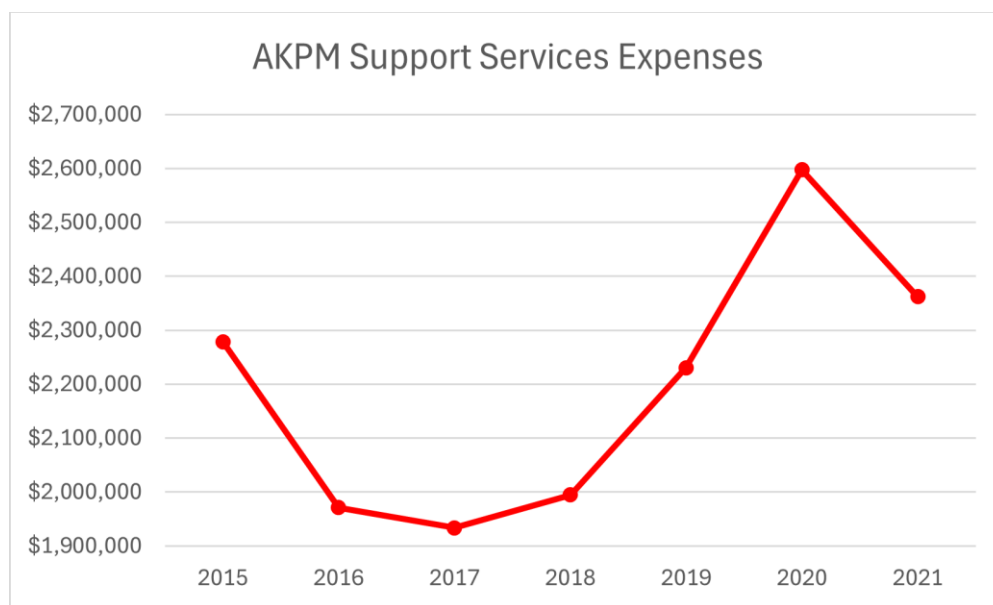


Figure 8.13. AKPM's support services expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Alaska Public Media's supporting services expenses increased by approximately 4% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The increase was not consistent from year-to-year. The organization saw a decrease of about 14% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. However,

supporting services expenses rose by approximately 3% in fiscal year 2018, by 12% in fiscal year 2019, and by about 16% in fiscal year 2020. The increases for those three fiscal years totaled about 32%. Fiscal year 2021 saw a decrease of about 9%.

Supporting services expenses rose by an average of about 1% per-year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. There were three outlier years for the organization during the seven fiscal years under review – fiscal year 2016 (14% decrease), fiscal year 2019 (12% increase) and fiscal year 2020 (17% increase). The organization would have seen an approximate increase of about 4% in supporting services expenses if fiscal year 2016 was removed from the average. If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization would have seen its supporting services expenses decline by approximately 1% for the remaining 6 years. AKPM would have seen its supporting services expense decline by approximately 2% if fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average. When fiscal year 2016's decrease was removed from the average, the average per-year trend further increased. When the increases of fiscal years 2019 and 2020 were removed, the trend switched to an overall decrease for the remaining years under review. The trend was heavily influenced by the outlier years.

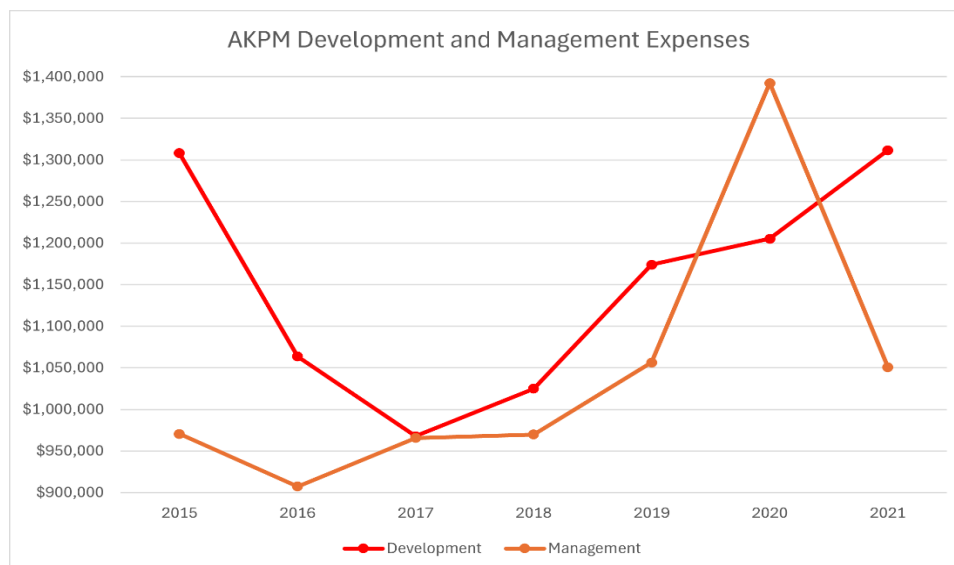


Figure 8.14. AKPM's development and management expenses from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021.

Development Expense Trends

Overall development expenses increase by less than 1% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization saw an approximate 26% decrease in development expenses from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2017 saw an approximate decrease of 19% that year. However, fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2021 saw an increase of approximately 36%. Development expenses increased by approximately 15% in fiscal year 2019. Despite the outlier years in fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2019, development expenses did not see significant increase or decreases from year to year. Expenses either steadily increased or decreased over time. The organization saw its development expenses increase by less than 1% on average from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. If fiscal year 2016's outlier year was removed from the average, the organization's development expenses would have increased by an average of approximately 6% for the remaining six years under review. The organization's development expenses would have fallen by an average of approximately 2% if fiscal year 2019 was removed as an outlier year from the average.

Management Expense Trends

Overall management expenses increased by approximately 8% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Management expenses fell by approximately 7% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016, but they rose by about 55% over the next four fiscal years. Fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2021 were particularly unstable for management expenses. The organization's expenses rose by approximately 32% in fiscal year 2020 and then decreased by about 25% in fiscal year 2021. AKPM saw its management expenses increase by an average of approximately 3% per year from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. However, outlier fiscal years 2020 and 2021 greatly affected the average. AKPM would have seen its management expenses decrease by approximately 3% if fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average. The organization would have seen its management expenses increase by about 8% if fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average. Management expenses were influenced by outlier years. When fiscal year 2020 (32% increase) was removed as the dominant outlier year, the trend moved from an average per-year increase to an average per-year decrease. A similar thing occurred when fiscal year 2021 was removed (and fiscal year 2020 was kept). The average per-year increase trend was reinforced. Outliers dramatically affected the trend.

Purchased Services Expense Trends

Alaska Public Media's purchased services increased by approximately 123% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Purchased services expenses increased by approximately 15% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018. Fiscal year 2017 saw an increase of about 10%. While fiscal year 2015, fiscal year 2016, and fiscal year 2018 did see increases in expenses, the increases were relatively small (never increasing by more than 2%) compared to fiscal year 2017. Fiscal year 2019 is where the flat increases changed. That year purchased services

expenses increased by approximately 77%. Expenses rebounded in fiscal year 2020 by about 9%. However, fiscal year 2021 saw another increase of about 20%. The organization saw its purchased services expense rise by about 93% from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2021.

AKPM's purchased services expenses increase by approximately 17% per year on average from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 were outlier years, as the organization saw substantial increases in purchased services expenses for both years. As the major outlier year, if fiscal year 2019 was removed from the average, the organization's average yearly increase would have dropped to approximately 5% for the remaining 6 years. If fiscal year 2021 was removed from the average, the organization's average yearly increases would have remained roughly the same at about 17% for the remaining 6 years.

Alaska Public Media's purchased services expense numbers were heavily impacted by the fiscal year 2019 outlier year. While the organization would have still seen its expenses in this category rise over the course of the years that were examined, the average rise would have been smaller without the outlier year. This is an example of how outlier years can greatly affect perception of the health of public media organizations. If the organization remains relatively stable for a majority of years under review, one year can greatly affect the perceived health of the organization.

Programming Purchased Services Expense Trends

Purchased services expenses related to programming increased by about 292% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. Despite the large increase, it's important to note that there was dramatic variability in purchased services expenses during the seven years under review. Expenses changed drastically from year to year. However, the overall trend with purchased services expenses appeared to increase in the aggregate despite the variability from year-to-year.

The organization saw purchased services expenses related to programming increase by approximately 120% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2017. There were dramatic increases for those fiscal years. Programming purchased services expenses increased by about 41% in fiscal year 2016 and had increased again by approximately 56% in fiscal year 2017. Programming purchased services expenses dropped by about 19% in fiscal year 2018. Fiscal year 2019 saw a substantial increase in programming purchased services expenses as they increased by approximately 120%. Fiscal year 2020 saw expenses fall again by about 22% and then rise by about 27% for fiscal year 2021.

Average purchased services expenses are difficult to find a coherent trend for due to the variation from year-to-year. Every year's percentage change would be considered an outlier year in other categories under review. Outlier years would generally be anything that increases or decreases by over 10% in a year. If the amounts for fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021 are used, programming purchased services expenses saw an average yearly increase of about 34% during the seven years under review. If fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average, as it was the largest major outlier year, the organization's yearly average for programming purchased services expenses would have seen an increase of about 17% for the remaining six years under review. The remaining six years were heavily influenced by the increases in fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017. If fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017 are removed, but fiscal year 2019 is kept in the average, average yearly increases in programming purchased services expenses still remain high (32% and 29% respectively). The reason why is because fiscal year 2019 is such a large outlier year, that including it in yearly averages drastically skews results.

Engineering Purchased Services Expense Trends

Purchased services expenses related to engineering increased by approximately 704% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. As was seen with purchased services expenses for programming, expenses for engineering purchased services saw tremendous variation. Expenses related to engineering purchased services actually decreased for the majority of the seven years under review. However, two major outlier years offset those decreases. From fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2018, the organization saw engineering purchased services decrease by about 98%. The amounts spent for each of the 4 years were relatively low. Engineering purchased services came to \$6610 for fiscal year 2015, \$2658 for fiscal year 2016, \$476 for fiscal year 2017, and \$106 for fiscal year 2018. While there are sharp decreases from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018 by percentage, the actual money spent each year remained low.

The reason the amount spent from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018 is relevant, is because what was spent in fiscal year 2019 was approximately quadruple what was spent from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2018, combined. The organization spent about \$42 thousand on engineering purchased services in fiscal year 2019. That is an increase of about 39572% from fiscal year 2018.³¹ Just as sharply as engineering purchased services increased in fiscal year 2019, they sharply fell in fiscal year 2020. That fiscal year saw a decrease of about 88%. Despite the decrease, the amount spent that year (\$5190) would have still easily fit the combined totals of fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2018. The decrease in fiscal year 2020 would normally paint fiscal year 2019 as a one-off outlier year, and given the percentage increase seen that year, that would make sense. However, fiscal year 2021 was also a major outlier year, as engineering purchased services increased again by approximately 924%.

Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021's engineering purchased services represent major outlier years for the organization. However, every year under review would have been

considered outlier years when compared to the revenue and expense outliers from other categories. That makes finding an overall average trend difficult. If every fiscal year was included in the average, the yearly average would have increased by approximately 6700% per year. That figure is obviously impacted by the 2 major outlier years. For the sake of simplicity, every year except fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 will not be considered outlier years. Fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 are so large as outliers that they would greatly influence the average even if every other year were to be removed.

If fiscal year 2019 was removed from the data pool, the average for AKPM's engineering purchased services would have increased by about 123% per year over the remaining six years under review. The average is heavily impacted by fiscal year 2021. If fiscal year 2019 was kept in the data pool, and fiscal year 2021 was removed, the yearly average would be greatly affected by fiscal year 2019 – seeing an approximate 7853% increase. If both fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2021 were removed from the data pool, AKPM's engineering purchased services would have seen an average yearly decrease of about 80% per year. The dramatic shift further highlights how outlier years can drastically skew the perception of an institution's health in certain categories.

Development Purchased Services Expense Trends

Purchased services expenses related to development decreased by approximately 32% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. However, as was seen with programming and engineering purchased services expenses, there was wide variation in development purchased services expenses from year to year. Fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2017 saw an approximate decrease of about 66%. The trend flipped in fiscal year 2018 as expenses rose by about 52%. By fiscal year 2019 development purchased services rose again by approximately

113%. The trend reversed in fiscal year 2020 as expenses fell by 24% and then fell again by 18% for fiscal year 2021.

Development purchased services expenses saw wide variation from year to year. An accurate trend is somewhat difficult to find because of the variation and the presence of what would be considered outlier years in other categories. If each fiscal year was kept in the average, AKPM would have seen its yearly development purchased services expenses increase by approximately 7% on average from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. If fiscal year 2019 (as the largest outlier year) was removed from the average, the organization's average yearly development purchased services expenses would have decreased by about 15% for the remaining six years. The shift from small average increase to substantial average decrease by removing one outlier year shows again how one outlier year can greatly affect the perception of fiscal health for the organization.

Management Purchased Services Expense Trends

Purchased services expenses related to management decreased by approximately 114% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. An interesting trend with management purchased services expenses is that unlike purchased services expenses for programming, engineering and development, management expenses have continually increased since fiscal year 2015. Of course, there has been variation from year to year in how much they have increased, but compared again to what was shown with programming, engineering, and development, management purchased services expenses only had one fiscal year that would be considered a major outlier year.

Fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2018 both saw relatively large increases in management purchased services expenses (18% and 13% respectively), but as was seen with outlier years in

other categories, some outlier years are large enough to negate defining certain other years as major outliers.³² Fiscal year 2020 was one such year. That year, management purchased services expenses increased by about 47%. While fiscal year 2020 is not nearly the same size of outlier that we've seen in other categories, it is big enough where the fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2018 outliers are overshadowed. If every fiscal year was included in the average, management purchased services expenses would have seen an approximate yearly average increase of about 15%. If fiscal year 2020 was removed from the average, management purchased services expenses would have seen an approximate yearly increase of about 6%.

Conclusion and Summary

Alaska Public Media's revenue increased substantially from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2021. The organization's overall revenue increased by approximately 47% during the review period. In fiscal year 2015, AKPM brought in approximately \$6.1 million in revenue. In 2021, the organization brought in just about \$9 million. The overall increase is misleading, however. Revenue had only grown by about 5% from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020. There were also a few years where revenues decreased (2016 and 2017, respectfully). Fiscal year 2021 revenues increased by about 37%. Overall revenue was highly variable from year to year.

The reason for the tremendous growth in revenue was that the organization received stabilization funds from the CPB as part of the CARES Act. CARES Act funding was solicited due to the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic. From fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020, AKPM's revenue from the CPB increased by about 16%. However, CPB funding increased by about 95% in fiscal year 2021. Along with CARES Act funding, AKPM also received a substantial increase to its base community service grants. The large increases dramatically affected the trend of AKPM's overall revenue.

The organization's sustaining membership contributions rose by about 61%. There were three factors that affected the increase. The organization directly appealed to its audience about the benefits of sustaining memberships. Another was that membership was easier for people to set up and maintain. Memberships did not require people to pledge their support and pay later. Membership was a subscription service. Another important factor was that the base level of membership gave members access to PBS Passport, PBS's online streaming service. Memberships sharply rose in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021. It remains to be seen if the increases will be sustained in subsequent years, or if the gains were partially affected by the state's cuts or the pandemic.

AKPM's events revenue decreased by approximately 93% from fiscal years 2015 to 2019. The organization reported no income from events in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021. Events brought in approximately \$163 thousand in revenue to the organization in fiscal year 2015, but by fiscal year 2018, events revenue had dropped to \$9.3 thousand. AKPM stopped holding events as fundraisers due to the time required for holding events being a lot more than the return in revenue. The discontinuation of events as fundraisers is a reversal of the organization's historical trend of holding events. It is unknown whether the COVID-19 pandemic affected AKPM's choice to discontinue events.

AKPM's underwriting revenue dropped by approximately 10% from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021. Underwriting did not consistently increase, however. The category experienced years where revenue increased and then decreased. Underwriting was not a stable form of revenue, because underwriting as a form of advertising relied on the health of the business market. When the market faced financial insecurity, there was less money being spent

on underwriting. AKPM's 6% drop in underwriting revenue for fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2020 reflected Alaska's financial insecurity during the same period.

The organization's revenue from the State of Alaska decreased by 100%. However, AKPM lost about 25% of its state funding in the five years before funding was completely removed. However, revenue from what AKPM described as "other" grants rose drastically by approximately 1056%. In fiscal year 2015, AKPM received approximately \$72 thousand in "other" grants. In fiscal year 2021, the organization received approximately \$835 thousand. The increase represented a large portion of AKPM's increase in revenue and helped to mitigate some of the organization's cuts from the state.

AKPM's revenue increased substantially during the review period. Funding from the CPB increased drastically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, funding from the State of Alaska was completely eliminated, even during the pandemic. It is unknown whether the increase in revenue from the federal government will be sustained following the pandemic. It is more than likely that the organization will see its federal government-based revenue stabilize and its state revenue continue to be nonexistent.

AKPM experienced tremendous growth with its membership revenue but saw variability with its underwriting revenue. Historically, AKPM had been pressured to rely on its market for survival. However, it appears that the market's support was fickle depending on what kind of support is asked for. Membership support for the station was strong, but underwriting support varied depending on the health of the business community. Grant funding appeared to be another bright spot for the organization's revenue stream, but it remains to be seen whether growth (or even level maintenance) can be sustained at the level the organization has seen for the seven years under review.

AKPM's overall expenses increased by 13% during the review period. However, expenses were not consistent. Overall expenses varied greatly depending on the fiscal year. The organization's total labor costs, which included program services and support services labor costs, increased by 15%. Total program services expenses, or expenses related to programming and engineering (including labor), increased by about 19%. Program services labor expenses did not increase or decrease wildly from fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2020. However, program services labor expenses for fiscal year 2021 increased by approximately 18%.

Programming and production expenses (without engineering) increased by approximately 51%. The organization also saw a 62% increase in programming and production labor costs. Program acquisition expenses increased by approximately 24%. Engineering expenses (without programming and production) decreased by approximately 22%. Labor expenses related to engineering decreased by approximately 27%.

The increases for most program services expenses would usually indicate that AKPM spent more on those services throughout the period under review. The reality is that most of the categories were highly variable from year to year. Most categories experienced outlier years where expenses sharply increased during one or two fiscal years and then dropped back down to levels seen before the outlier. Outlier years affect the perception of how a fiscal category performed over a period of time. Program acquisition and engineering were both affected by outlier years that distorted their fiscal trends.

Alaska Public Media's supporting services expenses, or services related to management and development (fundraising), increased by approximately 4%. Labor expenses for support services dropped by approximately 2%. Development expenses increased by less than 1%.

Development labor costs increased by about 5%. Management expenses increased by approximately 8%. Management labor costs decreased by approximately 11%.

Outlier years drastically affected the averages of AKPM's expense categories. Program services, support services, and almost every labor expense category had their trends impacted by outlier years. Outlier year variation, whether the variation was an increase or decrease, drastically affected AKPM's financial trends. As noted in various sections earlier in the chapter, removing outlier years often reversed a category's overall trend. Revealing those effects was intended to show that AKPM's financial existence is still precarious. AKPM operates in what is considered by many to be the most stable market in Alaska. However, as the financial analysis has shown, the organization still exists in a state of precarity despite the perceived stability of its market.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion: A Precarious Existence

This dissertation provided general histories of the three Alaska public broadcasting organizations, KUAC in Fairbanks, KYUK in Bethel, and Alaska Public Media (AKPM) in Anchorage. The contemporary fiscal trends of the organizations were also examined. When Alaska's Governor vetoed funding to the system in 2019, Alaska's public broadcasters used narratives that had been used time and again to justify their existence – value of public broadcasting to taxpayers, democratic participation through diversity of news coverage, and value of programming to audiences. The narratives were the same narratives used by the national public broadcasting system during its own various crises. The usage of similar narratives made sense as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), *Current* (the industry's trade periodical), NPR, PBS and other organizations often influenced and reinforced the narratives stations used during times of duress. National organizations often provided narratives and material for stations to use. Narratives were often constructed for effect (solicitation of funds, promotion of the value of public broadcasting) and were also sometimes difficult for local audiences relate to.

Dominant narratives tended to drown out other narratives that were important to public broadcasting organizations both in times of crisis and otherwise. The contemporary discourse of the Alaska public broadcasting system often lacked a sense of context, history, and purpose. A lack of context, history, and purpose left the system open to criticism and actions that were detrimental to its existence (such as defunding). The system scrambled to find an identity when forced to counter criticisms and actions from opponents.

This research asked the following questions in attempt to provide a sense of context, history, and purpose for the three organizations under review:

RQ1: How have KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media developed economically? How has state support changed over the course of the stations' lives? What were the fiscal trends of the organizations prior to the state's defunding of the system?

RQ2: How and why were KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media originally created and how did the organizations evolve over time?

RQ3: How have the operations and programming at KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media developed over time, and how have the organizations' obligations to their audiences changed? How has defunding the Alaska public broadcasting system affected the diversity and concentration of media in Alaska?

RQ4: What actions can be taken by Alaskans, the state and local government, and the Alaska public broadcasting system to ensure that the system continues to fulfill its historical mission of service to underserved audiences?

Using a political economy of media and communications framework, the general history, operational and programmatic trends, and past and present economic trends of KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media were examined. The research showed why KUAC, KYUK, and Alaska Public Media were created and how the organizations evolved over time. How the organizations developed operationally and programmatically, and how (or if) their obligations to their audiences changed, were also investigated. The research also examined the fiscal trends of the organizations prior to the state's defunding of the system and examined how the organizations developed economically and how state support changed over the course of the stations' lives.

The historical research expanded on previous research trends in a few different ways. Previous research generally focused on the Alaska and national public broadcasting systems as a larger whole and not necessarily how organizations developed and operated on their own. An important part of this project was to show how the organizations under review developed and continued to exist on their own as singular entities. By focusing on the organizations on their own, individual perspectives were achieved that had rarely been examined previously. Those perspectives allowed the organizations to have a larger representational voice as well as a place within the larger public broadcasting milieu.

Previous research on Alaska public broadcasting mostly focused on the system as part of the larger telecommunications environment in the state. As a result, organizations in Alaska's public broadcasting system have struggled to find their own research identity (context and purpose).

This dissertation also expanded on existing literature by examining past and present economic trends for the organizations under review. Economics has always been a main theme in public broadcasting's discourse. Despite economics being an important part of public broadcasting's existence, there had been surprisingly little research on the financial trends of organizations. There was almost no research on the financial trends of individual organizations. This dissertation sought to rectify that gap.

A better understanding of the financial trends of organizations within the Alaska public broadcasting system provides an understanding of why the system and organizations within the system make the choices they do concerning operations and programming, and how the system developed as it did.

Historical Development Summary

The three organizations reviewed for this project were created for entirely different reasons and existed in entirely different markets and natural environments. KUAC was created as a tool for the University of Alaska to expand its educational offerings and outreach throughout Alaska's Interior and the rest of the state. KYUK was created to offer media services and Alaska Native representation in a part of the state that offered little in the way of media access. The stations that comprised what would eventually become AKPM (KSKA and KAKM) were created as programming alternatives in an already saturated Anchorage media market. Another intention of the stations was to offer ways to expose rural Alaskans to urban Alaska perspectives.

The organizations' early years were similar in that relatively sustained political and financial support from the state and the organizations' parent institutions (for those that had them) allowed the organizations to "find their legs" operationally and learn how to best serve the needs of their markets' underserved audiences. The organizations had to deal with the peculiarities of Alaska's natural environment and the lack of traditional and telecommunications infrastructure. Out of necessity, there was often cooperation between the organizations in producing and sharing both local and national content due to the lack of reliable telecommunications technology in the state at the time. Technology was the main barrier for the content that was produced by the organizations or made available from the Lower 48. When full-time access to the rest of the country eventually became available by satellite, the audiences of the three organizations were finally connected to the rest of the world. The organizations were afforded the ability to program a wide variety of content for their underserved audiences.

The story of KYUK, AKPM, and KUAC became one of sustained financial and political precarity once the technological barriers were overcome in the late 1970s. The political trends in the state during the 1980s reacted to the small-government rhetoric of the Reagan administration,

and Alaska's economy was impacted by a decline in oil prices and production. State lawmakers started to question the role of public broadcasting and started to cut financial resources to the public broadcasting system amidst the downturn in the economy. All three organizations under review for this project were forced to make reductions in services, programming, and operations (labor reductions). KUAC was doubly affected as the state's financial insecurity forced the University of Alaska to trim its own budget, resulting in cuts to KUAC from both the state and the university. The downturn in government funding during the 1980s marked a point when public broadcasters across the country, including Alaska, started to focus on appealing to their respective markets with popular programming with the intention of gaining larger audiences. Targeted appeals for funding (pledge drives and fundraisers) and solicitation of business (corporate) support also increased with the intention of gaining more viewers and listeners.

Alaska's oil production continued to decline in the early 1990s. Pro-market small-government political rhetoric also continued at the federal and state levels during the decade. Defunding public broadcasting was in vogue across the nation. Both Alaska and U.S. lawmakers continued to question public broadcasting's programming and purpose amidst calls to reduce government budgets. Continued cuts to the Alaska system and changes to Anchorage's broadcasting market forced KSKA and KAKM to cut services, redesign their respective program schedules, and focus more on soliciting support from the Anchorage market (membership support, underwriting support, and corporate support). Lack of resources also forced KSKA and the Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN) to compete for resources. The competition was detrimental to the relationship between the organizations. KSKA and KAKM agreed to consolidate into one organization (Alaska Public Telecommunication, Inc. (APTII)) in late 1993 due to increased competition for resources from the state and the Anchorage markets.

Consolidation efforts were intended to have Anchorage's public broadcasting resources operated by one organization to save money and reduce fundraising competition. APRN was eventually consolidated into APTI in 2004 for the same reasons.

KUAC was also affected by financial issues in the early 1990s. State lawmakers continued to cut funding to public broadcasting before and after Newt Gingrich's *Contract with America* and amidst continued declines in oil production. The University of Alaska was forced to trim its budget, which resulted in KUAC losing more money from each cut. The university also questioned KUAC's role as a part of the university's educational objectives. Cuts from the state and the university forced KUAC to reduce its labor resources by cutting staff and consolidating positions (a single person doing jobs that were previously done by multiple people). The organization was also forced to reduce its local programming and rethink its national and educational programming schedule.

Like AKPM, KUAC was forced to increase its reliance on its market to make up the difference in unreliable government-based funding. KUAC increased solicitations to its audience for financial support. The solicitations included increased calls for corporate support and underwriting support. KUAC also relied on its market to support the station with non-monetary contributions. The organization often partnered with businesses and people (such as artists) in the community to offer products and services that could then be utilized for financial support. The benefit for the business would be association with the station and essentially free advertising. The benefit to the station would be positive association with a community entity and the ability to receive products and services that it could not otherwise purchase.

KYUK was also forced to downsize its operations amidst cuts to state funding. KYUK was in an especially fragile position because it heavily relied on government support due to the

lack of financial opportunities in its market. The organization was also reliant on gaming revenues for support, because “traditional” public broadcasting fundraising methods (pledge drives) were ineffective. For a long time, KYUK was the only non-military broadcaster in the Bethel area, and thus carried a lot of weight on its shoulders to continue providing content that appealed to its predominantly Alaska Native audience. KYUK was forced to adjust its programming (especially local programming production) and reduce its labor costs through layoffs and consolidation of positions as the state reduced funding.

1995 was especially difficult for Alaska’s public broadcasters. KUAC, KYUK, and AKPM (APTI) took a heavy hit to their state funding as lawmakers once again cut funding to the system due declines in oil revenue and political pressure to cut government spending. AlaskaOne was created in response to the cuts. The station was a consolidation of programming responsibilities for KUAC television, KYUK television, and Juneau’s KTOO television. AKPM, which had decided not to join AlaskaOne, lost a large portion of its state funding that year. The Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission reasoned that the AKPM could rely on its market to make up for the losses. AKPM had started to utilize its market after previous cuts to the system. KYUK lost a large portion of its state funding as well. Despite KYUK’s weak market and need for government support, the organization took a large hit to its state funding, because of KYUK television’s programming transfer to AlaskaOne. Oddly, KYUK was given operational control of the Alaska Rural Communications Service (ARCS) (formerly RATNET). The justification for giving KYUK control of the network was that the organization better understood of the network’s core audience – Alaska Natives. KYUK relinquished control of ARCS two years later due to budget issues. KUAC’s state appropriation was not hit as hard as the other organizations that year, because it assumed operational control of AlaskaOne. However, KUAC radio’s

appropriation was cut, and the state's budget reductions once again forced the University of Alaska to reduce its own budget. The university's reduction affected KUAC's appropriation from the university.

Alaska had slowly redefined its commitment to public broadcasting. That drastically affected the operation of organizations within the system. What was once a broadcasting system that had relatively stable political support and aspirations for stable financial support due to natural resource extraction, turned into a system facing financial and political desperation. Organizations were frequently questioned about their value and forced to rely on their markets for support (despite most having weak markets). Organizations were forced to downsize their operations, provide less services and programming to their audiences, and were forced to make decisions about their operations that contradicted aspects of public broadcasting's original intentions (increased commercialization and targeted programming).

Financial Analysis Summary

The finances for KYUK and AKPM from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2021 were examined. KUAC's finances from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2021 were also examined. The intent of the analysis was to provide context about the fiscal health of the organizations and examine how the organizations were faring financially in the years prior to the state's cuts to the system. An added benefit occurred as the review period occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (the only time this will be said about the pandemic).

The analysis showed that the three organizations under review operated under financial insecurity leading up to the state's cuts and during the pandemic. Insecurity wasn't necessarily in the form of consistent financial decline for the organizations. Instead, precarity came from inconsistencies with both revenue and expense. When finances do not experience consistency,

even over the course of one or two fiscal years, that can make fiscal planning extremely difficult for an organization. KUAC's and AKPM's underwriting revenue is an example of a fiscal category that did not remain consistent from year to year. Inconsistent finances also occurred at KYUK when its underwriting revenue drastically increased in fiscal year 2021. Though the short-term gain boosted the organization's budget during the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic, such a large gain could not be counted on to be maintained in subsequent years. Another example of financial inconsistency occurred when membership revenues drastically increased for both AKPM and KUAC. Financial instability also occurred when KUAC's funding was decreased from the state and the University of Alaska. The difficulty of financial planning under such variability is what caused financial precarity for the public broadcasters under review.

Inaccurate or misleading fiscal trends also affected the fiscal environments of the organizations. For example, KYUK's gaming revenue consistently increased during the review period. However, the overall trend for the organization's gaming revenue showed a sharp decrease. Gaming revenue increased over most years, but the overall trend was affected by one fiscal year where gaming revenue drastically decreased. That year and others like it were designated "outlier" years in the fiscal analysis. KYUK experienced an "outlier" year for fiscal year 2021 when gaming revenue decreased by about 90%. The drop was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Outlier years often affected the overall trends of fiscal categories making it appear that the category was seeing a trend in one direction, but in reality, was trending in another direction. The fiscal analyses exposed many more instances of outlier years and shifting trends for all of the organizations under review. The prevalence of outlier years has shown, planning can become much more difficult when fiscal trends are misrepresented by outliers.

The financial impact of each organization's market was also apparent in the analysis. AKPM and KUAC were able to utilize their larger markets, seeing increased sustaining membership revenue. KYUK had difficulty in soliciting membership revenue in such a small market. The difficulty of supporting a broadcast station (the inability of the Bethel area to support a commercial station) was one of the primary reasons Bethel was targeted for a public broadcasting station in the first place. KYUK also experienced cultural considerations that impacted the effects of direct fundraising. As noted above, KYUK also experienced difficulties with its gaming revenue during the pandemic. The difficulty was a direct result of people's inability to access the gaming facilities at the height of the pandemic's social distancing requirements. KYUK's gaming revenue (and gaming expenses) were directly impacted by conditions affecting the people in the organization's market.

However, for KUAC and AKPM, existing in larger markets did not always translate to financial security. Both organizations experienced inconsistency with their underwriting and membership revenues during the review period. Each organization saw considerable variability depending on the year, and revenues were rarely consistent. Revenues also remained variable during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic as well. AKPM saw a decrease in underwriting early in the pandemic, but then saw revenue increase to levels greater than before the pandemic. KUAC also experienced variability in underwriting revenue prior to the state's cuts but saw a consistent decline during the pandemic.

The revenues for the three organizations were inconsistent, unreliable, and highly dependent on the conditions of their respective markets. Each organization faced increased precarity as a result.

When Governor Dunleavy vetoed funding to the system in 2019, they both continued and finalized what had become an almost 30-year tradition by lawmakers in the state. By the time the system was defunded, funding cuts and political vulnerability were a normal part of existence for Alaska's public broadcasters. The tradition was finalized, in the sense that once funding was completely removed, there would be nothing to remove in the future. The state, and to some extent the University of Alaska, which had once been dedicated to supporting public broadcasting, chose to let public broadcasting fend for itself (federal support notwithstanding).

Repercussions and Consequences of Precarity and Defunding

While all of Alaska's public broadcasting organizations suffered repercussions, Alaska's rural public broadcasters were disproportionately affected by the cuts. Alaska's public broadcasting system was defunded under the assumption that the broadcasting marketplace would be able to provide for the news, information, and entertainment needs of Alaska's underserved audiences. The state's public broadcasters were expected to tap their respective markets to make up for the decline in government funding. Organizations that existed in larger markets, such as AKPM, tried to utilize their markets to make up for the loss of government funding (which as this dissertation has shown, had varying results). However, stations that relied on rural or remote markets for support found adequate fundraising virtually impossible. The economy just wasn't there. The inability of a remote market to support a commercial station was the whole reason public broadcasting stations were started in many markets in the first place.

KSKO in McGrath is one of the smallest public broadcasters in Alaska in terms of audience size –roughly 12 hundred people. However, the station has one of the largest broadcast areas among Alaska's public broadcasters. 6 repeater stations broadcast KSKO over just about 500 miles, or roughly the same air distance from Portland, Oregon to Sacramento, California.

The remoteness of some Alaska communities, such as McGrath and nearby villages, are hard to adequately describe when comparing them to rural communities in the Lower 48. KSKO's broadcast area is so large out of sheer necessity. Some of Alaska's rural communities do not have the same access to media, communications technology, and other goods and services that rural communities in the Lower 48 take for granted. Though KSKO's audience is small, the station remains the only outlet to the outside world for the majority of people in the area. Many people are completely dependent on KSKO for news, weather, and safety information. The city of McGrath considers KSKO vital as an emergency outlet.¹

During a meeting of the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission on September 27, 2022, Paul Walker Jr. of KSKO was asked by a commissioner on how the commission could help the station. Walker emotionally responded by saying that the way to solve the station's problems was simple. Money. The station could use more money. Walker, who at the time of the meeting served as KSKO's only full-time jack-of-all-trades employee (their coworker, mayor of the town, and only other station employee, had died the night before), described an operating environment that was on the verge of breaking down:

We're going to have to replace the equipment at all of our repeaters along the lower Yukon. All of the repeaters are greater than 20 years old. We visited the repeaters 2 weeks ago. They're all in a state of disrepair and failure. 2 out of the 4 are not on the air because they're in a state of disrepair. Everything needs to be replaced. 2 communities have been without radio service for months due to aging equipment. Our building is falling apart. It's one of the oldest buildings in this town.²

The replacement of equipment will come at a considerable cost to the station. KSKO will not only have to replace the aging equipment and housing but will also have to contract an engineer to install the equipment (the station does not employ an engineer). Travel costs to the repeaters' remote areas will also be substantial. KSKO's operating environment (similar to what was shown with KYUK) highlights how difficult operating a broadcasting station in a remote

area can be. That difficulty is exacerbated because KSKO and other remote stations cannot rely on their small markets to make up for reductions in government funding or provide money for equipment replacements.³

At the same 2022 Commission meeting, Mollie Kabler, executive director of CoastAlaska, reiterated the difficulties remote stations faced with fundraising, and why state funding was important:

Some of our small stations serve a very small population, and they're isolated by geography. Islands, mountains, whatever. Those folks still need services, but it's awfully hard to squeeze dollars out of say 2000 people. That state funding was a key component of helping stations meet their non-federal funding threshold.⁴

Kabler's comment also highlighted an important repercussion that remote stations faced as a result of the state's cuts – elimination of support from the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting:

Several stations in the state have received notice from the feds and specifically the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that they're on a trajectory to lose their federal funding because they don't have enough non-federal funding to qualify. This does not mean they're not viable organizations, they are, they're in the black and they pay their bills. But they don't have enough nonfederal funding to meet the threshold required by the corporation to receive those funds.⁵

The funds that were provided by the state, while not that much by the time the cuts went into effect, were key in helping small stations meet the financial threshold for receiving funding from the corporation. KBRW in Utqiagvik was one of the stations that was notified that its CPB funding was under threat. Stations in larger markets had the possibility of seeing reductions in their appropriations from the CPB as a result of the state's cuts, but they were not under threat of losing all of their funding like remote stations were.⁶

Though Alaska's remote public broadcasters were disproportionately affected by the state's cuts and an uncertain operating environment, organizations in the state's larger markets were affected as well.

KUAC made the call to turn off its "HD" radio stations (*KUAC2* & *KUAC3*) and some of its supplemental television stations in 2019 to mitigate some of its programming contract costs amid cuts from the state and the university.⁷ The stations provided entertainment, news, and information to Fairbanks-area audiences on supplemental channels "alongside" the main radio station frequency and the main television channel.⁸ *KUAC 2* and *KUAC3* also broadcast public meetings that did not fit on KUAC's regular radio schedule.⁹ One of the discontinued channels included *360 North*, which was a statewide public affairs channel produced by KTOO – a public media organization in Juneau (the state's capital). *360 North* offered Alaska political, historical, and Alaska Native interest programming and content that was not easily found on commercial outlets in the state. *360 North* also broadcast meetings and news from the state legislature and the governor's office.¹⁰ Access and availability to the content *360 North* provided to Interior residents, especially Alaska government information and meetings, became limited when KUAC stopped carrying the station.

The benefit of supplemental stations, such as *KUAC2*, *KUAC3* and *360 North*, was that they enabled public media organizations to overcome the challenges of time scarcity. Supplemental stations allowed organizations to broadcast content that might not have otherwise made their main television and radio schedules. Discontinuing its supplemental stations and cutting programming worked in bringing down KUAC's costs; however, the reduction in services undercut KUAC's mandate to program to underserved audiences and made that mandate much harder to accomplish.

This dissertation and the examples above show just a few of the effects the state's cuts have had on Alaska's public broadcasters and their audiences. There are many more organizations that are not represented in this dissertation that have been affected by the cuts in different ways. Had this dissertation been able to account for those organizations, an unprecedented change in media diversity and access would have been seen all across Alaska. Though parts of the system are well over 50 years old, and the state's telecommunications infrastructure (including internet infrastructure) has grown over the years, many Alaskans are still reliant on the system for receiving news, information, and entertainment. Further reduction or complete removal of Alaska's public broadcasting system would be a devastating loss for the people of Alaska.

A Short Look at Alaska Public Broadcasting and the Internet

The Alaska Public Broadcasting system was created when the state's telecommunication infrastructure was unable to adequately provide news, information, and entertainment to all Alaskans. The system has served its purpose well and is still an important part Alaskans' media consumption. The internet has allowed Alaskans to create and access content at unprecedented speeds and quantities (when compared to radio and television); however, the state's internet infrastructure has suffered from some of the same limitations that its telecommunications infrastructure faced over the years. Alaska is a big state with a harsh environment, an underdeveloped infrastructure base (roads and energy), expensive goods and services, and sparse spread-out populations. Those conditions do not create an environment that's friendly to infrastructure development.

Internet infrastructure, such as fiber optic lines and microwave systems, developed from the inside out. Internet infrastructure in Alaska's larger markets, like Anchorage and Fairbanks,

developed because the financial incentives were in those locations that allowed for development. Larger populations meant larger demand for internet resources. Internet infrastructure also developed in areas that serviced the state's oil and gas industry (such as along the road system from Valdez to the North Slope). Markets that offered little financial incentive (like small geographically isolated villages) for the creation of internet infrastructure either did not receive it or saw internet development that offered less services and speeds than the rest of the state and country. The federal government increased its funding for internet infrastructure in Alaska's remote areas, but the rollout has been slow.^{11 12}

The Alaska Rural Communications System (ARCS) offered satellite delivery of television and radio content to rural audiences for many years (even before the popularization of the internet). Though internet infrastructure is improving in Alaska, Mollie Kabler explained to the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission in 2022 that ARCS was still the preferred method of content delivery for rural organizations and residents with poor internet resources:

ARCS service carries several streams of public broadcasting content used to feed translators that serve deeply rural Alaska. That is a part of that service that is really critical to several public radio stations that serve smaller stations by delivering their signal to translators through satellite. Which is one of the most reliable and relatively inexpensive ways [to deliver content]. In Alaska we don't have adequate broadband or internet in many locations to be able to have those translators operate via the internet, which is increasingly described as a terrestrial solution and used in the Lower 48.¹³

KSKO's Paul Walker Jr. further explained how internet resources are not yet reliable in remote areas.

The greatest challenge is technology. We get our signal to our repeaters over the internet. I like to say that technology and the Alaska bush are not things that work well together. We are at the mercy of Viasat and GCI [the area's two internet carriers]. I mean as an example, it's beautifully sunny outside, and Viasat can just drop out. If we lose internet in McGrath, we lose the feed to all of our repeaters. They all go silent because we lose internet.¹⁴

Kabler also highlighted that over-the-air delivery of content was cost effective for remote residents. “The nice thing about over-the-air broadcast is that it doesn’t cost people the high dollars to either pay for something like Starlink or a regular service provider to use the station. Over the air broadcast is going to be the solution that is the most cost effective for the most people.”¹⁵

Kabler’s mention of Starlink is important. Starlink is a low-earth satellite system meant to be an easy cost-effective way for rural and remote residents to get high-speed internet access. There are expectations that low-earth satellite internet access will alleviate some of the infrastructure issues faced by Alaska’s remote residents. “I do think the future is low-earth satellite transmissions streaming. If it does happen, obviously it would be in many ways superior to an over-the-air ARCS transmission, except ARCS programming is free,” Dave Donley, Deputy Commissioner for the State of Alaska’s Department of Administration said.¹⁶

Internet infrastructure is developing rapidly in Alaska. However, internet infrastructure is not yet at the level that adequately provides for the news, information, and entertainment needs of all Alaskans – especially rural Alaskans. The internet will play an important role in Alaska’s media future; however, it would be foolish to hinder or abandon a media system that is already capable of providing for Alaska’s media needs.

Limitations

The limitations highlighted in this section come with a sense of irony, in that many of the limitations follow similar trends faced by Alaska’s public broadcasters. For example, the primary and secondary sources used to form the project’s historical narratives were found in greater quantities from sources located in Alaska’s larger markets. This was made apparent by the narratives for KUAC and AKPM which were much more thorough (and longer) than KYUK’s

narrative. Both KUAC and AKPM had many more informational sources available. There were archives of The Tundra Drums, which was Bethel's newspaper of record, but the archives were incomplete. The Tundra Drums also produced much less content than other newspapers in Alaska such as the Anchorage Daily News and the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. Quite a bit of content concerning KYUK came from Fairbanks-based newspapers such as The Pioneer All-Alaska Weekly and the Tundra Times. Information about KYUK was also available from academic sources created by faculty and students outside of Bethel. One of the reasons KYUK was included in the project was to add perspective from a public broadcaster located in a rural market. However, the project would have benefitted from more direct information gathered from the Bethel area.

Another limitation is that the project could have utilized more perspectives from Alaska's public broadcasting stations. The three main broadcasters under review all operated a television station and a radio station. Organizations that operate only radio stations in rural areas would have provided a depth to the narrative that was unable to be achieved by the three reviewed broadcasters. KYUK does provide a rural perspective, but the majority of broadcasters in Alaska are located in small markets. Additional histories and fiscal analyses would reveal more information and context about the system. The decision was made to exclude most stations, because adequate historical source material was difficult to find for Alaska's small stations. Most stations do not have the resources to adequately archive historical materials, and many of the same stations lack newspapers of record. What historical materials are available are either located in centralized archives, such as those at the University of Alaska Fairbanks or the state library in Juneau, or they are located at the stations themselves. Travel costs to view station archives were prohibitively expensive.

Similarly, this project intended to include KTOO radio and television as part of the analysis. KTOO is located in Juneau. I compiled and analyzed the financial data of the organization, but the history of the organization was much more difficult to compile than the three other organizations. The decision was made to exclude KTOO from the project due to the difficulty in constructing a historical narrative.

Including KTOO would have been valuable for a variety of reasons. The organization is the public broadcaster operating in the state's capital. It has a significant role in how Alaska's public broadcasters report on the political process in the state. KTOO also operates a television station, which was a member of AlaskaOne. The organization is also located in the southeast region of the state. That region, like many other regions, was completely unrepresented in this analysis. KTOO radio is also a member of CoastAlaska, which is a nonprofit organization that handles certain operational functions for many public broadcasting stations in the southeast. CoastAlaska was formed amidst the state's cuts to public broadcasting in the 1990s as a way to help stations save money. KTOO was created and evolved in similar ways to the three reviewed organizations and including it in the project would have added additional valuable context.

Another limitation of this project is that it is light on using direct voices from people currently working in the system. Personal communications with officials at all three organizations were used to supplement information or provide context to information found in documentation, but narratives from others working in the system are not present. Including the voices of workers in lower-level positions would have added increased context. Similarly, more voices from people who previously worked at the organizations under review, especially during major events, would have provided more depth and context to the historical narratives.

Ideas for Future Research

Ideas for future research expand on some of the limitations of this project. A historical and financial analysis of Alaska's public broadcasters would benefit from an analysis of KTOO radio and television in Juneau. KTOO fits within the analyses that have already been conducted, because the organization is one of the four operators of a public television station in the state. As mentioned above, KTOO was influential in how coverage of state politics was reported in Alaska, and the organization currently has a dedicated audience.

For there to be a truly representative context about the development and maintenance of the Alaska public broadcasting system, organizations located in Alaska's small towns must be studied. Whether future researchers use similar methods to this project or not, any research, whether historical, financial, story driven, ethnographic, etc., would provide a much-needed voice for those organizations. Alaska's small public broadcasting organizations tend to get left out of narratives because there is much more information and access available from the state's larger organizations.

Voices of those currently working and those who have worked for an Alaska public broadcasting station must also be preserved. There is a severe lack of first-person accounts from people who have worked in the system. There are resources available that provide the voices of some of the early practitioners of public broadcasting in the state, but a much more concerted effort needs to be carried out to hear more voices. Alaska's historians, the state, and Alaska's public broadcasters need to be much more concerned about recording the perspectives of those who have and currently do work within the system. Perspectives after 2000 are especially needed.

Increased access to historical archiving resources is also vitally important for any future research on Alaska's public broadcasters. While I was conducting research, I was told that

historical documentation about the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission was unavailable from the state, because the resources were not online, and there was no one left to ask or provide the materials. The materials were requested from someone who used to be in charge of the materials, but once the state cut funding, their job was eliminated, and they refused to do labor for free. The website that was maintained with the documentation was shut down after the state's cuts. Some documents from the defunct website were obtained from various archiving websites; however, the people who public broadcasting is supposed to serve may not have adequate resources or knowledge on how to access those documents. Archiving websites do not provide a complete collection of documents either. Direct archiving is taking place at some organizations (such as KYUK), but archiving is lacking throughout most of the system as well as within the state government. If adequate research is to be conducted, it is vitally important that public broadcasting organizations, the state, or future researchers find, catalog, and archive historical materials so they can be accessed in the future. Otherwise, a large portion of the system's history will be lost.

Notes

Chapter 1

¹ Tyler Falk, “Alaska Public Broadcasters Lose State Funding,” *Current*, August 21, 2019, <https://current.org/2019/08/alaska-public-broadcasters-lose-state-funding/>.

² James Brooks, “Dunleavy Vetoes \$444 Million from Operating Budget,” *Anchorage Daily News*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.adn.com/politics/alaska-legislature/2019/06/28/gov-mike-dunleavy-vetoes-444-million-from-alaska-state-operating-budget/>.

³ Andrew Kitchenman, “Public Broadcasting Stations in Alaska Trying to Make up for Loss of State Funds,” *Alaska Public Media*, October 3, 2019, <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2019/10/03/public-broadcasting-stations-in-alaska-trying-to-make-up-for-loss-of-state-funds/>.

⁴ United States Congress, “Public Broadcasting Act of 1967,” *Current*, 2010, <http://current.org/2010/07/public-broadcasting-act-of-1967/>.

⁵ Any organizations that stopped operating after 2023 would not be accounted for in the narrative.

⁶ Justin Fox, “Behind Alaska’s Big Fight Over Oil Money,” *Bloomberg.com*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-08-07/alaska-s-big-fight-over-oil-and-gas-revenue>.

⁷ Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc., “100% Reduction Impact Public Broadcasting,” *The Alaska State Legislature*, January 2020, http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=31&docid=58283

⁸ Falk, “Alaska Public Broadcasters Lose State Funding.”

⁹ Tyler Falk, “Public Broadcasters in Alaska Face a Convergence of Crises,” *Current*, 2020, https://current.org/2020/05/public-broadcasters-in-alaska-face-a-convergence-of-crises/?wallit_nosession=1.

¹⁰ Tyler Falk, “Iowa Public Radio Loses University Funding,” *Current*, 2020, <https://current.org/2020/05/iowa-public-radio-loses-university-funding/>.

¹¹ As well as previous calls for defunding the system (1994, 2008, etc.).

¹² The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is responsible for the collection and dissemination of federal money to public broadcasting organizations. It is also the “face” of public broadcasting.

¹³ Dru Sefton, “Trump Budget Seeks to Zero out CPB Funding by 2018,” *Current*, March 16, 2017, <https://current.org/2017/03/trump-budget-seeks-to-zero-out-cpb-funding-by-2018/>.

¹⁴ Dru Sefton, “Illinois Licensee to End Funding for Tri States Public Radio,” *Current*, 2018, <https://current.org/2018/08/illinois-licensee-to-end-funding-for-tri-states-public-radio/>.

¹⁵ Dru Sefton, “Listeners Ask University to Rethink Defunding of Tri States Public Radio,” *Current*, 2018, <https://current.org/2018/08/listeners-ask-university-to-rethink-defunding-of-tri-states-public-radio/>.

¹⁶ Julian Wylie, “N.J. Governor Proposes First Funding for Pubmedia in a Decade,” *Current*, 2021, <https://current.org/2021/03/n-j-governor-proposes-first-funding-for-pubmedia-in-a-decade/>.

¹⁷ KDLG, “About KDLG,” *KDLG*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.kdlg.org/about>.

¹⁸ Alaska Public Media, “Alaska Public Media Funding,” *Alaska Public Media*, February 22, 2022, <https://www.alaskapublic.org/about/funding/>.

¹⁹ KUAC TV9 FM 89.9, “About Us – KUAC TV 9 – FM 89.9,” KUAC TV9 FM 89.9, March 9, 2021, <https://kuac.org/about-us/>.

²⁰ KHNS, “About KHNS | KHNS Radio | KHNS FM,” *KHNS*, February 15, 2011, <https://khns.org/about-khns>.

²¹ Koahnic Broadcast Corporation, “About KBC,” *KNBA*, February 18, 2014, <https://www.knba.org/programs/2014-02-17/about-kbc>.

²² “Coordinated” was purposefully used above to differentiate between discourse that was released by individual stations versus the system as a whole.

²³ An example of proactive coverage that was difficult to find would be meetings of the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, or reports about the system that were delivered during the meetings.

²⁴ Alaska Public Broadcasting, Inc., “100% Reduction Impact Public Broadcasting.”

²⁵ Robert Woolsey, “Governor’s veto ends all funding for Alaska’s public radio, tv stations.,” KCAW, June 28, 2019, <https://www.kcaw.org/2019/06/28/governors-veto-cuts-all-funding-for-alaskas-public-radio-tv-stations/>.

²⁶ Kitchenman, “Public Broadcasting Stations in Alaska Trying to Make up for Loss of State Funds.”

²⁷ Andrew Kitchenman, “How Public Media Is Covering the Story of Broadcast Funding Cuts in Alaska,” *Alaska Public Media*, October 7, 2019, <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2019/10/07/how-public-media-in-alaska-decided-to-cover-cuts-affecting-itself/>.

²⁸ KUAC FM/TELEVISION, “KUAC to Discontinue Five Channels,” KUAC FM/TELEVISION, August 5, 2020, <https://kuac.org/kuac-to-discontinue-five-channels/>.

²⁹ KUAC FM/TELEVISION, “Budget Cuts Affect KUAC Programming: Reminder,” 2015, <http://kuac.org/budget-cuts-affect-kuac-programming-reminder/>.

³⁰ Matthew D. Schroder, *A Discourse Analysis of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Reaction to Proposed Funding Cuts, 2017*, (Unpublished master’s thesis, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.)

³¹ KUAC FM/Television, “About Us – KUAC TV 9 – FM 89.9.”

³² John Witherspoon et al., *A History of Public Broadcasting* (Washington, D.C.: Current, 2000).

³³ Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, Second edition. (London: SAGE, 2009).

³⁴ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*.

³⁵ Phil Graham, “Political Economy of Communication: A Critique,” *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 3, no. 3 (2007): 226–45, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17422040710775012>.

³⁶ Tom Duncan, *Alaska Broadcasting, 1922-77: An Examination of Government Influence.*, (University of Oregon, 1982).

³⁷ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, “Meeting #1,” Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, March 18, 2021, <https://doa.alaska.gov/apbc/media/meeting1.mp3>

³⁸ The Department of Administration took on responsibility for publishing meetings of the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission following the defunding of the system. The department was not creative with the naming scheme of the audio files. “Meeting 1” does not accurately reflect the date, time, and place of the commission’s meetings.

³⁹ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*.

⁴⁰ Johnathan Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media: An Introduction.*, (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁴¹ Adam Smith, *The wealth of nations.*, (San Bernadino, CA: Shine Classics, 2014, Original work published in 1776).

⁴² Janet Wasko, "The study of the political economy of the media in the twenty-first century." *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 10(3), (2014): 259–271, https://doi: 10.1386/macp.10.3.259_1

⁴³ Peter Golding, and Graham Murdock., "Culture, communications and political economy," *Mass media and society* 2, no. 1 (1991): 15-32.

⁴⁴ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication.*

⁴⁵ Golding and Murdock, "Culture, communications and political economy."

⁴⁶ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication.*

⁴⁷ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication.*

⁴⁸ Golding and Murdock, "Culture, communications and political economy."

⁴⁹ Smith, *The wealth of nations.*

⁵⁰ Jora R. Minasian, "The Political Economy of Broadcasting in the 1920's." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 12, no. 2 (1969): 391-403.

⁵¹ David Hendy, "A political economy of radio in the digital age," *Journal of Radio Studies*, 7 (2000): 21.

⁵² Robert W. McChesney, *Telecommunications, mass media, and democracy: The battle for the control of US broadcasting, 1928-1935*, (Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁵³ Eileen R. Meehan, *Why TV is not our fault: Television programming, viewers, and who's really in control*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

⁵⁴ William A. Richter, *Radio: A complete guide to the industry. Vol. 4*, (Peter Lang, 2006).

⁵⁵ Herbert I. Schiller, "Not yet the post-imperialist era." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 8, no. 1 (1991): 13-28.

⁵⁶ Tim Wall, "The political economy of Internet music radio." *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 2, no. 1 (2004): 27-44.

⁵⁷ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication.*

⁵⁸ Golding and Murdock, "Culture, communications and political economy."

⁵⁹ The sizes of the markets are based on Alaska standards of market size, and not necessarily standards used in the Lower 48. Anchorage may be considered a mid-sized market by Lower 48 standards. Similarly, what is considered "rural" in Alaska can vary drastically by what's considered "rural" in the Lower 48.

⁶⁰ The names of the organizations that did not provide public documents was omitted from the narrative on purpose. I felt that "naming and shaming" the organizations would detract from the purpose of the study. However, should someone read this endnote and want to know that information, the information will gladly be given via email.

⁶¹ Jack W. Mitchell, *Listener Supported: The Culture and History of Public Radio* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005).

⁶² Willard D. Rowland Jr., "Continuing Crisis in Public Broadcasting: A History of Disenfranchisement," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 30, 3 (Summer 1986): 251–74.

⁶³ Witherspoon et al., *A History of Public Broadcasting*.

⁶⁴ Alan G. Stavitsky, Robert K. Avery, and Helena Vanhala, "From Class D to LPFM: The High-Powered Politics of Low-Power Radio," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 340–54.

⁶⁵ Alan G. Stavitsky, "'Guys in Suits with Charts': Audience Research in U.S. Public Radio," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 177.

⁶⁶ Robert J. Blakely, *To Serve the Public Interest: Educational Broadcasting in the United States* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1979).

⁶⁷ And warfare. The Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska were invaded by Japanese forces in 1942.

⁶⁸ Duncan, *Alaska Broadcasting, 1922-77: An Examination of Government Influence*.

⁶⁹ Heather E. Hudson, *Connecting Alaskans: Telecommunications in Alaska from Telegraph to Broadband*, (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2015).

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Chapter 6

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the financial information for this chapter was compiled and aggregated from the sources listed from endnotes four through seventeen. Information pertaining to certain years, such as programming costs for fiscal year 2015, can be referenced from the financial statement of the same year (ex. *Audited Financial Statements June 30, 2015 and 2014* would contain information for fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015).

² The narrative contains fiscal information where basic math such as averaging and percentages were used to reveal trends and patterns not reflected in the source materials. The

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¹⁶ There are obvious exceptions. Large non-profit organizations and well-funded government organizations did have advertising and production budgets. However, the organizations that utilized community calendars were usually not large and did not have advertising budgets.

¹⁷ The narrative mixed and matched information from the sources listed above.

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²⁵ Tim McDiffett, “Yankees Come To Town Via Radio Airwaves,” *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 1, 1979, B1.

²⁶ “Sports Calendar - On The Air,” *Anchorage Daily Times*, February 23, 1979, 25.

²⁷ “KSKA Offers Classics,” *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 15, 1979, J4.

²⁸ “Alaska Ear - May 25, 1986,” *Anchorage Daily News*, May 25, 1986, B2.

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³¹ Elizabeth Pulliam, “BEYOND BLUE GRASS THIS YEAR, KSKA FESTIVAL,” *Anchorage Daily News*, July 23, 1987, H12.

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what stations the money could fund at previous funding levels. It's possible \$1.4 million could have been spread out across all public broadcasting stations in the state. The end result would have been that all stations would have received significantly less funding.

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⁴² Linda Billington, "SURVIVAL RADIO."

⁴³ Linda Billington, "KSKA FISCAL HEALTH UNCERTAIN," *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1990, C1.

⁴⁴ Linda Billington, "BUDGET WOES BRING CHANGES TO KSKA STATION CUTS."

⁴⁵ "Opinion, August 12, 1989," *Anchorage Daily News*, August 12, 1989, B8.

⁴⁶ Mike Dunham, "FOR QUEEN OF THE PARNASSEUM, A NEW CHALLENGE," *Anchorage Daily News*, October 31, 1993, F1.

⁴⁷ Linda Billington, "SURVIVAL RADIO."

⁴⁸ Peter Porco, "RADIO IS FAITHFUL TO SMALL OPERA AUDIENCE," *Anchorage Daily News*, September 16, 1990, E2.

⁴⁹ Linda Billington, "KSKA FISCAL HEALTH UNCERTAIN."

⁵⁰ Linda Billington, “BUDGET WOES BRING CHANGES TO KSKA STATION CUTS.”

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⁵⁴ Elizabeth Pulliam, “THE HOMEGROWN BLUES LOCAL PERFORMERS STRUGGLE TO,” *Anchorage Daily News*, May 15, 1988, F1.

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⁵⁷ Thomas B. Harrison, “RTBEAT DANCE THEATRE LEAVING GRANDVIEW FOR NEW,” *Anchorage Daily News*, August 1, 1993, G3.

⁵⁸ Mike Janssen, “NPR’s ‘Best of Car Talk’ Will End in September 2017,” *Current*, July 27, 2016, <https://current.org/2016/07/nprs-best-of-car-talk-will-end-in-september-2017/>.

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⁶⁹ "Alaska Ear, November 12, 1989," *Anchorage Daily News*, November 12, 1989, B3.

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⁷⁴ Linda Billington, "SURVIVAL RADIO."

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⁷⁶ Linda Billington, "PUBLIC RADIO STATION EXPECTS TO BREAK EVEN."

⁷⁷ Linda Billington, "PUBLIC RADIO STATION EXPECTS TO BREAK EVEN."

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⁷⁹ "ARTS BRIEFS, March 11, 1990," *Anchorage Daily News*, March 11, 1990, E2.

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⁸² Jay Blucher, "LAYOFFS REDUCE SIZE OF KAKM'S PRODUCTION TEAM," *Anchorage Daily News*, July 14, 1991, G1.

⁸³ Bruce Melzer, "KAKM LAYS OFF 3 TO COPE WITH BUDGET CUTS," *Anchorage Daily News*, July 4, 1991, D2.

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⁸⁶ Jay Blucher, "LAYOFFS REDUCE SIZE OF KAKM'S PRODUCTION TEAM."

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- ⁸⁹ "Opinion, August 29, 1991," *Anchorage Daily News*, August 29, 1991, B6.
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- ⁹² David Hulen, "KSKA, NETWORK MEDIATE DISPUTE," *Anchorage Daily News*, September 21, 1991, A1.
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- ⁹⁴ David Hulen, "KSKA AIRS DISSENSION WITH APRN STATION MANAGER."
- ⁹⁵ David Hulen, "KSKA AIRS DISSENSION WITH APRN STATION MANAGER."
- ⁹⁶ George Frost, "TRUCE KEEPS APRN PROGRAMS ON ANCHORAGE DIALS," *Anchorage Daily News*, August 30, 1991, A1.
- ⁹⁷ George Frost, "TRUCE KEEPS APRN PROGRAMS ON ANCHORAGE DIALS."
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- ⁹⁹ George Frost, "TRUCE KEEPS APRN PROGRAMS ON ANCHORAGE DIALS."
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¹¹⁸ Thomas B. Harrison, “MEMBERSHIPS OK KSKA, KAKM DEAL.”

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¹²⁹ Sheila Toomey, “KAKM MAKES ITS PITCH TAKEOVER PLAN HAS RURAL.”

¹³⁰ Sheila Toomey, “KAKM MAKES ITS PITCH TAKEOVER PLAN HAS RURAL.”

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¹³⁹ “Opinion, February 25, 1995,” *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1995, B6.

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¹⁴² Associated Press, "Public Broadcasting Deals with Fund Cuts," *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, May 23, 1995, 8.

¹⁴³ Shannon Haugland, "Raven Radio Staff Gets Word: Some Jobs Cut," *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, May 17, 1995, 1.

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¹⁴⁷ "Opinion, December 10, 1998," *Anchorage Daily News*, December 10, 1998, B8.

¹⁴⁸ "Opinion, July 17, 1996," *Anchorage Daily News*, July 17, 1996, B6.

¹⁴⁹ Ron McGee, "Public Radio TV Lays Off Five More," *Anchorage Daily News*, July 15, 1996, B1.

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¹⁵⁷ Associated Press, "Public Broadcasting Deals with Fund Cuts."

¹⁵⁸ The source material this portion of the narrative drew from said that the commissioners were white. However, it is unknown what efforts, if any, were taken by the

authors of the source materials took to determine the ethnicity of each commissioner. Each commissioner “looked” white.

¹⁵⁹ Associated Press, “Public Broadcasting Deals with Fund Cuts.”

¹⁶⁰ Tom Bell, “KSKA POLICY: NO RAP LISTENERS CALL BAN RACIST,” *Anchorage Daily News*, June 1, 1995, A1.

¹⁶¹ “ACROSS THE USA: NEWS IN EVERY STATE,” *USA Today*, June 2, 1995, 11A.

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¹⁶³ “Opinion, June 2, 1995,” *Anchorage Daily News*, June 2, 1995, B6.

¹⁶⁴ Josh Niva, “Musical Brothers - Funky Volunteers Live out Their DJ Dreams,” *Anchorage Daily News*, September 1, 2002.

Chapter 8

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the financial information for this chapter was compiled and aggregated from the sources listed from endnotes three through 16. Information pertaining to certain years, such as programming costs for fiscal year 2016, can be referenced from the financial statement of the same year (ex. *Financial Statements, Supplementary Information Years Ended June 30, 2017 and 2016* would contain information for fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017).

² The narrative contains fiscal information where basic math such as averaging and percentages were used to reveal trends and patterns not reflected in the source materials. The trends and patterns may not be reflected in the source material unless the reader performs the math for themselves.

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¹⁶ Alaska Public Media, Inc., *Financial Statements June 30, 2022 and 2021*, (Alaska Public Media, Inc., 2022).

¹⁷ CARES funding does not account for the discrepancy, as CARES funding was an entirely separate line item and not part of the noted CPB funding amount.

¹⁸ Page 4 for fiscal year 2020 and Page 5 for fiscal year 2021, respectively.

¹⁹ Page 25 for fiscal year 2020 and page 22 for fiscal year 2021, respectively.

²⁰ KUAC uses sustaining memberships as well.

²¹ Alaska Public Media, Inc., “FAQs - Alaska Public Media,” Alaska Public Media (2022), accessed January 25, 2022, <https://alaskapublic.org/support/faq/>.

²² This excludes in-kind donations.

²³ Peter Host (Director of Development for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

²⁴ Peter Host (Director of Development for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

²⁵ Peter Host (Director of Development for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

²⁶ Peter Host (Director of Development for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

²⁷ AKPM refers to underwriting revenue as “program sponsorships” in its financial records.

²⁸ Cheryl Austin (Director of Corporate Support for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

²⁹ Cheryl Austin (Director of Corporate Support for Alaska Public Media, Inc.), phone interview by Matthew D. Schroder, Eugene, Oregon, 2023.

³⁰ A few examples of “other” managerial expenses would be things like labor costs for receptionists or the purchasing of office materials (like paper and pencils).

³¹ The percentage is not a typo. 39572% represents the largest increase or decrease in expenses for any station under review in this project.

³² Engineering purchased services expenses in FISCAL YEAR 2019 for example.

Chapter 9

¹ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022, “Meeting September 27, 2022.” MP3 audio.

² Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

³ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

⁴ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

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⁷ KUAC FM/TELEVISION, “KUAC to Discontinue Five Channels,” KUAC FM/TELEVISION, August 5, 2020, <https://kuac.org/kuac-to-discontinue-five-channels/>.

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⁹ KUAC FM/TELEVISION, “KUAC to Discontinue Five Channels.”

¹⁰ KTOO “360 North TV channel,” *KTOO.org*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.ktoo.org/tv/>.

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¹² Evan Erickson, "With massive federal funding, Western Alaska fiber optic projects prepare for rollout," Alaska Public Media, February 29, 2024, <https://alaskapublic.org/2024/02/29/with-massive-federal-funding-western-alaska-fiber-optic-projects-prepare-for-rollout/>.

¹³ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

¹⁴ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

¹⁵ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

¹⁶ Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, 2022.

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