



# 2020 Strategic Plan



# INTRODUCTION

In 2020, VIA Public Media will mark its 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While a great deal has changed since 1966, our mission and commitment to Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Central Susquehanna Valley remain constant.

As the region's publicly owned and publicly oriented media organization, VIA serves all the residents of our 23-county region. VIA is a trusted service organization. VIA's services come in many forms from education to entertainment, from community outreach events to convening organizations to address the challenges in our communities. The VIA 2020 Strategic Plan balances those imperatives while responding to a media landscape that is shifting rapidly and radically.

Since VIA Public Media was established, we have seen the rise of cable and satellite distribution, the transformative impact of the internet, and significant demographic shifts in the region's population. The pace of change continues to accelerate, and this plan will help VIA evolve, remain relevant, and will continue to provide valuable and valued services to our audience.

This plan emerged from a rigorous and extended facilitated process that included the senior leadership team and entire staff. Members of the Board of Directors helped draft fresh statements of VIA's mission (what we do), vision (why we do it) and values (how we do it).

**"...today, we  
rededicate a part  
of the airwaves—  
which belong to  
all the people —  
and we dedicate  
them for the  
enlightenment of  
all the people."**

President Lyndon Johnson

1967



## MISSION

VIA Public Media educates, inspires, entertains and fosters citizenship, diverse cultures, and perspectives to nurture community.

## VISION

A joyful, engaged, well-informed, compassionate community via public media.

## VALUES

Our work is defined by organizational values that shape our content and guide our business and organizational practices.

Honesty and Integrity

Trust and Fairness

Accountability and Transparency

Diversity and Inclusiveness

Compassion and Empathy

Education and Inspiration

Quality and Authenticity

Collaboration and Teamwork

Creativity and Innovation

Stewardship and Gratitude

Responsibility

With a public service mission to serve community needs and interest, we must be a valuable and valued contributor to our region's quality of life through our programs and services. VIA will research, provide and evaluate our work in terms of public service and impact. We must be an effective and efficient organization, generating and administering resources effectively to support our mission and to leverage long term sustainability so we flourish for future generations.

The 2020 Plan is built upon four pillars: **Content, Culture, Sustainability, Technology**. These areas are intertwined: strengthening one reinforces all. Success in these areas will yield the organizational assets that will allow us to best fulfill our mission.

The 2020 Plan presents a set of goals that roll up under each pillar. These goals recognize and address the increasing complexity of our world and the need for VIA to serve its members across multiple platforms anytime, anywhere. The goals inform and influence the reality that with finite resources, we will make difficult choices every day.

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The 2020 Plan is organized around four pillars: Content, Culture, Sustainability and Technology. At the center of VIA's work are audiences and the communities we serve.



# OUR GOALS – SUMMARY

---



## **CONTENT: The bedrock of our mission, designed to best educate, inspire and entertain our 23-county service area**

1. Deliver fresh, relevant and differentiated local content in formats and on platforms that provide greatest value and access to audiences
  2. Expand our impact by achieving 15% audience growth over 2019 baseline, on all measurable platforms combined
  3. Strengthen the relationship between national content and local engagement to bring a local component to significant national programming
- 



## **CULTURE: Building an organization that attracts and retains high quality staff to fulfill our mission**

1. Achieve 20% improvement in staff satisfaction over 2019 baseline
  2. Increase professional & personal development opportunities for staff
  3. Achieve recognition among best places to work in PA
- 



## **ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: Generate and administer resources to create and deliver mission-based services.**

1. Create a culture of fundraising through the board, CEO, leadership team and staff
  2. Grow and diversify station revenue streams, including growing the VIA Endowment
  3. Invest to expand fundraising capacity, including new models and best practices with a emphasis on major donor cultivation
- 



## **TECHNOLOGY & PHYSICAL PLANT UPGRADES: Assuring that VIA has the technical infrastructure to meet current and emerging services.**

1. Increase digital awareness throughout daily operations
2. Remodel physical plant to increase staff productivity & expand community engagement
3. Prepare infrastructure and staff to be ATSC 3.0 ready

# OUR GOALS - DETAILS

## CONTENT



VIA Public Media will serve our audiences by offering unique, high- quality, non-commercial local content where and how they consume it. Our commitment to exceptional content, combined with daily presence within communities, is why VIA is regarded as a trusted institution.

In the media industry “Content is King,” although distribution platforms are also critical to success. VIA offers a blend of exceptional national programming from PBS and NPR along with locally produced content for our region and (increasingly) web and social media content available to a much wider audience. We will achieve at least 15% growth in total audience metrics, in part by developing a deliberative annual review process for current content and new initiatives. We will establish a process to assess content, maximize funding for local production and expand our organizational capacity. In addition to traditional broadcast content we’ll increase our focus on digital video and podcasts. We’ll work to extend the impact of key national programming with locally produced multi-platform content including community engagement events, enhancing collaboration with other non-profit organizations and media partners.

VIA Public Media faces increased competition for audiences as new players invest in original programming. VIA will grow and best serve our audiences by producing differentiated, quality local content.

### **1. Deliver fresh, relevant and differentiated local content weekly**

As the region’s demographics shift, it is essential to identify new voices and programming formats to maintain relevance with our audiences and local communities. Our diverse audiences must be able to see themselves in VIA programming. To achieve this goal, VIA will diversify its portfolio of programming to elevate new ideas and storytellers, explore new production models, and support national PBS and NPR programs by producing local stories; connecting national issues to local audiences.

### **2. Achieve 15% audience growth over 2019, on all platforms using local content**

VIA has had success in offering local content that is unavailable anywhere else. Using data as our guide, we aim to focus our production on content that resonates most with our audience. We will use all available 2019 metrics from our distribution platforms, including television, radio, Web, social media as a baseline to help guide the growth of our audiences by a minimum of 15% on all measurable platforms combined.

### **3. Strengthen the relationship between national content and local engagement**

VIA Public Media will leverage PBS/NPR content to engage our constituents by producing local content and community outreach events that connect to national issues. As PBS/NPR will acquire, commission, and develop programming that reflects the issues facing the country, VIA will engage our regional audiences through community conversations, screenings and other events to build a sense of place and pride.

## CONTENT: DISCOVERY & ENGAGEMENT

In a world of proliferating media choices, it is essential for VIA to reach audiences where they are. For VIA's commitment to high quality content to remain relevant it must first be discovered amidst the explosion of options.

While TV remains a dominant platform, there are vast differences in consumption patterns between age groups. Younger Americans are consuming more and more video content on mobile rather than on television. Social media has emerged as a critical channel, dominated by a few players (Facebook and Snapchat alone account for 18 billion video views daily). We must be fluid in our choices of content creation to fit the medium that the audience consumes on.

Like other media companies, VIA is investing heavily in the ability to collect, organize, and analyze demographic and behavioral data to enhance personalization, viewer retention, brand loyalty, and engagement.

1. **Drive discovery and awareness through data, technology, and media**

With so many options, VIA must rise above the noise and stand out as a beacon of quality and relevance. VIA will use data and emerging technologies to inform how we expand our presence and distribution on select platforms to ensure our content is discoverable. This will require investment in data and analytics, meta-data and social media.

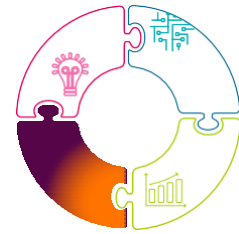
2. **Grow our local engagement through the delivery of content and services**

In order to leverage our reach and serve local audiences VIA will continue to work proactively to engage communities and market major national PBS and NPR programming events.

3. **Refresh and reinforce the VIA brand for the multi-platform landscape**

The VIA brand has tremendous trust and equity. In anticipation of PBS's 50th anniversary, VIA will complete a brand refresh to ensure our position in a dynamic, multi-platform environment

## CULTURE & ORGANIZATION



VIA's greatest strength is our people, and their commitment to the public media mission. To execute this ambitious VIA 2020 Strategic Plan, our team needs to be committed, inspired, and aligned with the pillars, plans and goals. We will leverage our people and passion in service of our mission. VIA will be rigorous about staff accountability and metrics to determine the plan's success. In the process we'll work to increase diversity within our quality staff.

It is vital to our continued growth that we support both staff satisfaction and staff development. Inherent components of staff success include; adequate compensation, performance assessment and feedback, a commitment to diverse and inclusive workplace and attention to professional advancement. This strategic plan articulates overall organizational goals that inform stated appropriate team goals. Each staff member will work with a supervisor to set individual goals aligned with the team and organizational goals, and regular performance reviews will focus on goals and accountability.

VIA will need to have a resilient culture and be resourceful in the face of change. One of the most important elements of the 2020 Plan is that it is built on an understanding that there will be hard choices required, at all levels, as challenges and opportunities arise. VIA will encourage experimentation and innovation and celebrate new ways of achieving our mission.

### **1. Achieve 20% improvement in staff satisfaction over 2019 baseline**

We will conduct a staff satisfaction survey in summer 2019 and work to address any issues in order to achieve improvement goals.

### **2. Increase professional & personal development opportunities for staff**

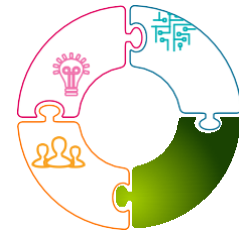
VIA's values define how we work internally and with the region we serve. In support of these values, VIA will prioritize fresh ideas, promote a diversity of perspectives, and support a learning-driven environment. VIA will supplement professional development opportunities by adding personal development options and implement more cross-training opportunities.

### **3. Achieve recognition among best places to work in PA**

The *Best Places to Work in PA* is a survey and awards program dedicated to identifying and recognizing the state's best employers and providing organizations with valuable employee feedback. The process is managed by Best Companies Group (BCG) and winners are published by the Central Penn Business Journal.



## ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY



VIA Public Media represents a strong and successful public-private partnership, leveraging critical federal support to raise revenue from individuals, corporations, and foundations. For every dollar of federal funds, the public media system raises approximately six additional dollars. However, the dynamics of individual small donations are migrating to new digital models, and foundations and major capital donors are increasingly focused on demonstrated impact. VIA Public Media needs to strengthen and diversify revenue streams and invest in emerging fundraising opportunities in order to provide new services.

A solid financial foundation is essential to the continuation and expansion of our non-profit public service mission, so VIA must invest and succeed with new fundraising efforts. The environment in which we work includes a challenging economy and changing demographics in our region. VIA is focused on establishing long term financial stability and growth even as we manage routine development programs and incorporate opportunities leveraged by income from our newly established endowment.

### **1. Create a culture of fundraising through the board, CEO, leadership team and staff**

We'll create more opportunities for volunteers to assist our small staff, create financial dashboard metrics and review benchmark against similar stations, all with the goal of building unrestricted reserves by achieving annual operational surpluses through growth in development revenue and careful stewardship of resources. We will establish process to meld the content & development teams for content production & distribution. The first year of our plan "2020 Vision" will be one of assessment to set the stage for subsequent change. VIA will be alert for opportunities to reallocate resources and invest to increase revenue. To help assure success, the CEO will reserve and commit 30% of his time to fund development including planning, working with staff and meeting with donors.

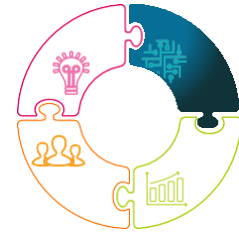
### **2. Grow and diversify station revenue streams, emphasizing major giving and the VIA Endowment**

Major and planned giving are potential growth areas on which we will focus resources and effort. The VIA Endowment, dedicated to the support of VIA's mission, will support the impact of VIA's initiatives.

### **3. Invest in new models of fundraising**

Data shows that revenue from the current on-air pledge model is vulnerable, while the ROI for digital fundraising is strengthening. VIA will evolve the model and calendar of on-air fundraising to reflect these trends. VIA will intensify efforts to engage audiences, help build relationships, and drive membership through mobile, social, web, over-the-top platforms and community engagement. Continued growth in PBS Passport, our membership-video-on-demand platform, is a critical step in this direction.

## TECHNOLOGY



Technological change is a fundamental driver across the media industry - from the democratization of content (e.g. 300 hours of new content uploaded to YouTube every minute), through the rise of on-demand platforms, to the emergence of new voice-activated devices. These changes will be material, continual and will require resources.

However, the digital divide remains a reality. Close to 20% of Americans do not have cable or satellite, and 60 million Americans lack access to broadband at home. For these households, public broadcasting is an essential lifeline.

The media industry, like everyday life in America, is challenged by rapid, radical change and a media organization must stay current in order to stay relevant. The entire television industry is anticipated to adopt an entirely new broadcast standard within a few years, and VIA needs to begin preparations for ATSC 3.0 (next generation of television).

All these changes in how audiences access our programming require reorienting the entire VIA staff to a “digital-forward” mindset, and the key step in implementing this culture is participation in the Digital Culture Accelerator (DCA) training program. VIA was accepted as one of a select group of stations to receive this year-long training, funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The DCA program is already underway at VIA, and we expect that what we learn this year will inform and guide our strategic planning for FY 2021 and 2022. For that reason, this strategic plan will focus on the first year, which we call our “2020 Vision.”

### **1. Implement an organizational digital culture into daily operations**

The pace of change in the media world continues to accelerate and VIA is committed to adopting new and innovative ways of working to reach and serve our communities through the development of sustainable business practices for the digital age. Implementing a *Digital First* strategy for content development and distribution will enable VIA to gather critical data to help us better understand and serve our audience and make good business decisions. Training the staff and their respective departments to increase overall digital proficiency will help us assess workflow and increase efficiency.

### **2. Remodel physical plant to increase staff productivity & expand community engagement**

VIA Public Media is raising capital to upgrade our physical plant and technology. The studio was built in 1973 and is configured for 1970’s broadcast operations. We must update our facility to meet the challenges of providing 21<sup>st</sup> century digital multiplatform distribution and community engagement services. We will create a more productive work environment for the staff, new community rooms for convening the public and receptions for community use.

### **3. Prepare infrastructure and staff to be ATSC 3.0 (third generation television standard) ready**

ATSC 3 technology will expand our broadcast capacity and the interactivity of our services. This new capacity offers an opportunity to provide new and innovative services to our communities, as well as to explore new revenue models. With our public service mission, VIA is particularly well suited to mine these advances available in ATSC 3. However, with all the excitement of new services, new highly efficient technologies, and new potential business models, VIA must approach ATSC 3 with a feasible business plan to minimize financial risk. As ATSC 3 is deployed and implemented across the U.S., it will be essential for staff to be trained to understand its technological potential.