

The Public Awareness Initiative is an investment in public radio and television stations which will increase recognition of public broadcasting as a valuable resource that informs, enlightens and enriches.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)—along with public television and radio stations and national partners such as the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR)—embarked on this initiative to start a conversation with their audiences about the benefits public broadcasting delivers to diverse communities, locally and nationwide. This dialogue will increase awareness of public broadcasting as a trusted source for relevant news, information and entertainment. Equally important, it will also showcase how public broadcasting stations create connections to, among and within communities through compelling public events, programs and outreach activities.

Confirming the Value of Public Broadcasting

Americans trust and value their public broadcasting stations and the overall public broadcasting system. Independent research has shown that they regard PBS as the most trusted institution among nationally known organizations.ⁱ Research, conducted for the Public Radio Program Directors Association, found that listeners associate public radio with a number of core values, including lifelong-learning, substance, curiosity, credibility, accuracy, honesty, purpose, authenticity, intimacy, and the importance of civil discourse.ⁱⁱ

What is less well known about public broadcasting stations is the vital role they play in their local communities. A recent study by SRI International revealed that more than 84 percent of public television stations are providing educational services directly to their communities.ⁱⁱⁱ Public broadcasting stations also connect with their communities through literacy programs, arts and music festivals, health and wellness programming, voter education drives and a range of other activities. Often public broadcasters convene diverse parties in their communities to forge partnership on pressing issues and to respond to critical events. The Public Awareness Initiative will give viewers, listeners, volunteers and other supporters—of all ages and backgrounds—an opportunity to speak out about important and relevant work of their public broadcasting stations in their communities.

Public Broadcasting Ambassadors

The Public Awareness Initiative relies on the authentic voices of viewers, listeners, users and supporters who have a real and relevant connection to public broadcasting. These ambassadors play a vital role in telling the story of public broadcasting, and their participation is crucial to telling the complete story of public television and radio.

Stations around the country are recruiting listeners, viewers and supporters to record testimonials on the importance of public broadcasting in their lives. Nationally, many famous faces are also speaking out on behalf of public broadcasting. Former President Jimmy Carter, former First Lady Barbara Bush, news anchor Jim Lehrer, actresses Julia Stiles and Kerry Washington, country singer Brad Paisley, entrepreneurs Steve and Elaine Wynn, as well as other well-known actors, musicians, and leaders have all agreed to serve as public broadcasting ambassadors.

The testimonials recorded locally and nationally will be shared online at MySourcefor.org and on the airwaves of public television and radio stations across the country. Visitors to MySourcefor.org and to local station websites will also be able to share their own public broadcasting stories through video, audio and photo submissions.

The collective power of these voices will tell a compelling story, raising awareness of the impact of public broadcasting on Americans' daily lives.

Spreading the Word: *My Source*

To achieve the Public Awareness Initiative's goal—increasing recognition of public broadcasting as a valuable resource that informs, enlightens and enriches public life—a national framework was developed to unify the work of local stations and national organizations: *My Source*. Through *My Source*, public broadcasting ambassadors will be able to tell their own unique and personal story about public television and radio. Each of these voices will become part of a collaborative national effort that illustrates how public broadcasting contributes to a civil, diverse and participatory society.

As an organizing framework, *My Source* enables public television and radio stations to demonstrate the variety and importance of the work they do in their local communities. *My Source* can help stations better communicate with their traditional audiences and also engage those who have only recently become aware of public broadcasting.

***My Source* in Action**

Nearly 30 public television and radio stations are testing *My Source* in their local markets. These stations are using *My Source* to strengthen community ties, build awareness, and promote annual membership drives. *My Source* will roll-out to the entire public broadcasting system in Spring 2008. Advertising featuring national public broadcasting ambassadors will also appear in key markets, online and on the airwaves of public television and radio stations across the country.

- i Results from a February 2007 survey commissioned by PBS. Roper Public Affairs & Media independently administered the annual telephone survey to 1,002 adults between the ages of 25 to 75 during February 1-25, 2007. To maintain objectivity throughout the survey, the questionnaire did not identify PBS as the sponsor, and wherever PBS and other media, organizations or services were evaluated together, a questioning randomization process was employed to ensure that both PBS and its competitors in a given category were treated equally in terms of positioning for any particular question. Moreover, any questions asked about PBS only were asked at the end of the survey, after the comparison questions were completed.
- ii Results from a 2004 PRPDA core values project. Studies were conducted over four years to explore the core values of public radio's most popular programs.
- iii Results from a July 2007 Education Services Survey with SRI International. The survey documents the services currently offered by public television stations and the services stations aspire to provide in coming years.