

WJFF-90.5FM
**RADIO
CATSKILL**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

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1. OUR STORY

35 YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

For thirty-five years, nonprofit radio station Radio Catskill (90.5FM WJFF) has been the trusted source for news, information and culture across the beautiful Upper Delaware River Valley. Our signal reaches from the Catskill Mountains to Anthracite coal country, serving diverse communities in New York and Pennsylvania.

LOCALLY PRODUCED, POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

Since the beginning, Radio Catskill has been locally-produced and volunteer-powered. Our first broadcast went out on February 12, 1990. The station's building in Jeffersonville was built by volunteers, and drew electricity from a small hydroelectric generator at nearby Lake Jeff. That gave the small startup instant bragging rights as North America's only hydro-powered broadcaster. In addition to NPR's flagship programs Morning Edition and All Things Considered, the early program schedule included radio dramas, classical music, jazz, and an hour of Grateful Dead on Saturday nights.



MOVE FROM JEFFERSONVILLE TO NEW STUDIOS IN LIBERTY

On June 26, 2022, Radio Catskill began broadcasting from its new studios in Liberty, NY. The former Catskill Harvest Market building on NY-52 was donated by long-time supporter Barbara Martinsons, and has been transformed into a modern broadcast facility with three digital studios, a community space, and offices for the growing staff, which consists of six full-time employees as of 2026.

NEW INVESTMENT IN LOCAL JOURNALISM & AWARD-WINNING REPORTING

The move to Liberty in 2022 coincided with a decision by the Trustees of Radio Catskill to grow the station's investment in high-quality local journalism. Over the years, our region has been in danger of becoming a "news desert," with fewer reporters providing accountability coverage of local governments, and little attention from major dailies located farther afield. In 2024, Radio Catskill won a prestigious Press Forward grant, helping to support the addition of two new media production positions. Our news offerings now include election guides, investigative series, and features delivered across many platforms, including radio, podcasts, online articles, and bite-sized video content. On air alone we offer 90 minutes of locally-produced news-talk every weekday, and have won multiple Excellence in Broadcasting Awards from the New York State Broadcasters Association (NYSBA) four years in a row.



2025 RECISSION OF FEDERAL FUNDING AND THE WAY FORWARD

That progress is now threatened. Congress' decision to rescind all funding for public broadcasting in July of 2025 meant about a quarter of our annual budget disappeared overnight. More than any other broadcaster in the state of New York, Radio Catskill relied on federal funding. But Radio Catskill contributors have stepped up to help in a major way. Or, as our Route 52 signboard put it: "DEFUNDED BUT NOT DEFEATED." We know we have the support of our community. But many challenges remain: federal funding is unlikely to return anytime soon. The business model for journalism and nonprofits is continually changing, and under strain. The crowded media environment and political polarization have fragmented

audiences. In our area, poverty is high, there are few large employers, and yet our aim remains the same: to provide high-quality, free-to-everyone programming across a vast territory. To accomplish this – and to continue growing in all the areas described in this plan – we are working to identify and pursue new revenue models while trimming overhead where possible.



2. MISSION & VALUES

With this strategic plan, we, the Trustees and Staff of Radio Catskill, are offering our vision to keep Radio Catskill not just operating but thriving for the next generation.

MISSION		
WJFF Radio Catskill is an independent community voice of the Catskills and Northeast Pennsylvania. We connect listeners through locally focused and globally aware programming to inform, entertain, inspire our communities, and promote understanding among people of diverse social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds.		
VALUES		
Compassion and Inclusivity	Curiosity and Creativity	Stewardship and Sustainability

3. PLANNING PROCESS

OUR APPROACH

Our 2026–2030 Strategic Plan was developed through a collaborative and inclusive planning process designed to reflect the perspectives of our listeners, community members, staff, and board, while recognizing the unprecedented circumstances that American public radio finds itself in today. We approached this process with an understanding that many of our assumed goals prior to our loss of federal funding needed to be reframed within our new primary objective: to continue serving our community.



> STRENGTHS–WEAKNESSES–OPPORTUNITIES–THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

With this in mind, we conducted a board and staff SWOT analysis in spring 2025 to identify internal strengths and challenges as well as external opportunities and threats. Over the summer of 2025, we engaged staff in a series of structured interviews to gather insights from those who run and manage the station’s daily operations.

Below is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges identified or affirmed through this process, as well as a summary of issues and strengths that became the basis for forming a path forward.

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loyal listener base ● Valued mix of local and national news coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-depth & substance of local reporting and journalism ○ A champion of “localness” in people-focused programs ● Diverse skillset on Board ● Dedicated staff ● Modern branding ● Community goodwill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aging listener base ● Low awareness and familiarity with breadth of Station programming ● Significant website and app improvements needed ● Small staff, stretched thin ● Ongoing need to achieve financial stability ● Need for succession planning at all levels
EXTERNAL CONTEXT	
OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make local news content accessible off-air, in new condensed formats, available on-demand ● Continue creative collaborations with trusted messengers/influencers ● Powerful craving for community and live local connection ● Need to engage new demographics and media consumption profiles ● Broaden diversity of voices & representation (e.g. youth engagement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loss of federal funding ● Changing news consumption habits, especially among younger demographics (under 50) ● Signal quality and reach in rural area ● Fragmented media landscape ● Politicization of news ● Vast geographic region to cover

> **COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

To ensure that our priorities reflect the voices and needs of those in our listening area across the Catskills and Northeast Pennsylvania, we also conducted a community survey in 2025 that received 655 responses from long-time listeners, newer listeners, and non-listeners alike, providing valuable feedback on programming, engagement, and opportunities for growth. Together, these inputs formed the foundation for identifying our strategic priorities for our new media landscape outlined in this plan.

<p>We are a trusted, reliable and unique source of local news to maintain and grow</p> <p>74% of existing listeners agree with the statement <i>"If Radio Catskill ceased to exist I would feel that I lost a source of news I can't find anywhere else"</i></p>	<p>We are a champion of "localness" (people, events, businesses)</p> <p><i>"Radio Catskill feels like having a next door neighbor that is well connected with the community and is up to date with the local information, news and events.."</i></p>
<p>Lack of program familiarity among non-listeners</p> <p><i>"Let the public know more about what you do and your programming as I'm unaware so I'm sure many people are!"</i></p>	<p>Opportunity to increase access to radio content through popular digital channels and on-demand formats</p> <p><i>"Do you have an app?" "More online presence? Social media? Podcasts?"</i></p>



PATH FORWARD: STRATEGIC GOALS

LOCAL NEWS & JOURNALISM

Expand newsroom to advance trusted, quality regional journalism

1. Deliver local news not found anywhere else and grow our reporting capacity.
 - a. Expand regional in-depth investigative and accountability reporting footprint by growing our local news team (2027).
2. Further develop a structured editorial process for content review, fact-checking, and publishing (2026).
3. Be an indispensable resource for local elections news and information in NY and PA by providing accessible voter resources and in-depth candidate interviews.
4. Expand collaboration with local influencers and trusted partners to develop content.

AUDIENCE REACH / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Branch Out, Deepen Our Roots in the Community

1. Expand our audience in key demographics; cultivate relationships and listenership with residents of Ulster, Delaware, Orange, Wayne, and Pike Counties.
2. Continue investing in audience research by conducting annual community needs assessments to track demographics, gauge listener satisfaction, and identify unmet needs.
3. Expand our physical presence through in-person events and programming across our diverse listening area that does not require excessive staff time.
4. Raise awareness of the content and services we provide to non-listeners via in-person community engagement and marketing campaigns.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Adapt to a changed fiscal landscape that no longer includes federal funding

1. Continue to annually review our investments to assess opportunities to improve the station's long-term financial health.
2. Identify and pursue new models of funding to help close the gap left by the loss of federal support.
3. Expand development capacity by strengthening relationships, systems, and practices that support long-term revenue growth and a culture of philanthropy.
 - a. Expand grant support by cultivating relationships with foundations and funding partners whose priorities align with our values and community impact.
 - b. Build internal fundraising capacity through increased staffing, staff development, board participation, shared learning, and improved systems that support a coordinated approach to development.

- c. Deepen business and community partnerships that connect local organizations and underwriters with our audiences in mutually beneficial ways.
- d. Strengthen our major gifts program by identifying, engaging, and sustaining donors who share our long-term vision and commitment.
- e. Build on successful revenue-generating events and merchandise sales.
- f. Explore strategic partnerships and regional collaborations that expand access to listeners, underwriters, and grant funding to amplify our impact across the region.

DIGITAL RESOURCES: DISCOVERABILITY & ENGAGEMENT

Meet Our Listeners Where They Are

1. Increase access to news reporting and program discoverability across popular digital platforms to reach and engage digital-first audiences.
 - a. Make on-air programming more accessible and easy to consume, search and share via digital formats.
 - b. Improve content strategy and user experience of key digital touchpoints: newsletter (2026), website (2026), and app (2026).
 - i. Conduct a user experience audit and end-user research sessions to provide design and development requirements (2026).
2. Make digital content and publishing workflows more efficient to improve delivery of news and community information.
3. Diversify revenue through digital channels.
 - a. Develop digital underwriting opportunities.
 - b. Integrate seamless donation experiences across platforms (2027).

CAPACITY BUILDING

Pursue physical campus improvements and invest in NPR membership

1. Continue renovations of adjacent Liberty Annex to expand office space and production facilities (2026).
2. Evaluate space usage in main studios and reorganize as needed to improve production capacity (2027).
3. Grow NPR relationship from affiliate to full membership status to speed development of cross-functional initiatives (2030).
 - a. Local News & Journalism - News sharing and content distribution; access to collaborative journalism initiatives and staff training.
 - b. Audience Reach - Improve findability as a local NPR station; leverage use of NPR and NPR Network brands and trademarks.

- c. Financial Stability – Fundraising materials and support, including lead generation and NPR talent participation.
- d. Digital Improvements – Improve website functionality, user Interface, and related workflows, including use of Grove Content Management System (CMS).

ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Sustain a Culture of Collaboration and Growth

1. Invest in staff and their professional development to promote retention.
 - a. Ensure regionally competitive compensation for our staff while remaining sustainable for long-term fiscal health.
 - b. Evaluate staffing responsibilities to ensure a balanced workload and an alignment with organizational priorities.
 - c. Support professional development to cultivate staff talent in journalistic excellence and practice, marketing, digital media, production and management.
2. Continue to recruit, train, and empower volunteers to play a vital role in the station's service to the community (2026).
 - a. Streamline volunteer recruitment, onboarding and engagement processes.
 - b. Update volunteer handbook to document standard staff and volunteer operating procedures.
 - c. Continue to support and expand volunteer involvement in events and community outreach, with a focus on engaging communities in all parts of the station's listening area.