

## **Public Radio Local Economic Impact**

The volatile economy will impact public radio stations across the country. Responses by 160 public radio station managers to a November USA survey describe the potential economic effects on their operations. The survey was sent to multiple listservs and reached all licensee types including community, university, college, school system, and state agencies. Here are the responses:

42% of station managers anticipate and/or already have received notification of cash support reductions from their university, college, school system, or state licensees. 58% of the stations said they have not received notification or this question was not applicable to their licensees.

Regarding reduction amounts, 28% said their cash support would be reduced by their licensee by up to \$49,999, and 10% said their anticipated cash support reduction would range from \$50,000 to \$199,999. Another 6% did not know what the reductions, if any, would be.

How would the economy affect programming and public service? 67% said they anticipated no changes in their programming or public service offerings. 20% said local programming services would be reduced or eliminated, 9% stated national programming services would be affected, and 4% said website services would have to be reduced or eliminated. Travel, memberships in organizations, phones, and various other reductions were also anticipated.

The following technical and equipment reductions or eliminations will probably occur as well: 17% for technical upgrades, 25% in equipment purchases, 6% on service area expansion, and 13% on planned HD upgrades.

In the area of personnel, 29% report staffing reductions with 22 stations eliminating one or two full-time-staff (FTE).

In regards to imposed service fees or administration overhead charges paid by the station to the licensee, 72% anticipate no change, 19% anticipate an increase and/or new charges, and about 8% are "waiting to see" what new charges may be imposed upon the station.

When managers were asked to project changes in audience support, business support, and/or foundation support, a variety of responses were given. For this question, multiple choices were allowed. 27% expected no changes. 33% anticipate less audience support. 49% anticipate reductions in business support, and 23% anticipate reductions in foundation support.

On the positive side of the projections, 18% of stations anticipate an increase in audience support, 11% anticipate an increase in business support, and 5% anticipate an increase in foundation support.

When asked to project changes in cash support excluding cash support from the CSG, university, college, school system, and/or state but including support from listeners, business and foundations, about 31% of station managers anticipate no change or an increase in support, 57% foresee a reduction of up to \$139,999, and eight stations or 3.9% expect a cash support reduction of over \$200,000. When asked for comments, here is a sampling of some of their responses. As one manager stated, "I am not sure about this area of support. It's too soon to tell." Another manager indicated, "Obviously, this is just a projection. We hope we are wrong." And one manager said, "Our station is self-supporting. The economic downturn will affect us in a very substantial way. Make no mistake ... this year will be difficult."

This survey will be repeated again in about six months. At that time, managers may have a clearer indication of the downturn in the economy. Thanks to all the stations that participated in this survey.

The University Station Alliance is a grassroots organization founded in 2001 to assist university-licensed stations with the challenges and opportunities associated with their licensees. University-licensed stations make-up 63-percent of the public radio system. More information about the USA can be found at [www.us-alliance.org](http://www.us-alliance.org).

Craig Beeby  
USA Executive Director  
[Craig.u-sa@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Craig.u-sa@sbcglobal.net)  
(405) 624-1192