

# Leadership in the Digital Century

## *The Campaign for WGBH*

For as long as there has been public media, there has been WGBH. And for as long as there has been WGBH, the standard for media in the public interest has been set extraordinarily high. Entire media genres and learning strategies have spun out from its orbit. Largely because of our public service mandate, no television program, no network, no media organization has successfully replicated WGBH's overall quality, programming audacity, or scrupulous integrity across such a range of subjects and platforms.

And yet, this legacy—and the future it promises—is at risk...

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“Together, we are shaping a future around what media in the digital century can be: mission driven, purpose built—for our families, our communities, our Commonwealth, and our nation.” —Jonathan C. Abbott, President and Chief Executive Officer

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## LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL CENTURY

At a moment of technological disruption in media delivery, when trust in news and information is under withering assault from all sides, WGBH stands at a crossroads. As we create and shape media in the public interest, we must embrace new platforms and reach new audiences or be swept aside. As a keeper of the public trust, we must lead the fight for media integrity.

In the universe of public media, WGBH is among our greatest national treasures, the pride of New England, and a north star of media’s potential to engage, enrich, and inform. What will empower us in this new era is what has driven our success from the beginning.

### *Innovation in the Public Interest*

How else to explain the decision by WGBH producers in 1963 to greenlight a program no one else could envision, in which a woman would stand in a makeshift TV studio kitchen and explain to American households, step by step, the intricacies of French cooking? According to Julia Child herself, “The odds were against us.” Of course, *The French Chef* went on to become a defining classic of television, introducing an entire programming category that today is a staple of broadcast and online media aimed at improving people’s lives. There is also the example of *This Old House*, another do-it-yourself show that updated Yankee ingenuity to the home renovation space, offering viewers an entertaining guide to restoring their homes while spawning an entire genre of media.

We could go on: *FRONTLINE*, the very definition of excellence in long-form investigative journalism programming; *American Experience*, televised history that, year after Emmy® award-winning year, places current American life in rich historical context; *NOVA*, which introduced in-depth science programming to American audiences and is today the highest-rated science program on television and in classrooms, reaching 50 million viewers, or one in six Americans, each year; *Masterpiece*, the longest-running prime-time drama series on American television, honored with every major broadcasting award including 83 Emmy® awards.

This pairing of innovation and excellence extends also into children’s programming and learning. WGBH’s *Arthur*, the nation’s longest-running fully-animated educational children’s daily and the top-rated PBS Kids program among children 6-11, has been bringing real-life issues into the homes of millions of American families of all backgrounds and means since 1996. Developed by WGBH in partnership with PBS and supported by public media stations nationwide, PBS

LearningMedia reaches some two million educators and learners at all levels with free content from America's number one educational media brand.

Driven to innovate and unencumbered by the competing needs and dictates of commercial advertisers, WGBH sets the bar high. America's most trusted name in media creation is positioning itself for new audiences, digital innovations, and a newly reinvigorated thirst for knowledge and truth in the public interest. Stepping with us through this open door into a brave new world of opportunity will be the visionary supporters of transformative public media.

### *Media for Citizens, not Consumers*

It is no coincidence that public media in general and WGBH in particular have always considered viewers and listeners as *citizens* instead of *consumers*. That fundamental distinction has driven spectacular success. In a single month, more than 65.5 million Americans view WGBH's national productions and presentations. Sixty-five percent of all PBS prime-time audiences watch WGBH's signature programming. Five WGBH-produced series—*NOVA*, *FRONTLINE*, *Masterpiece*, *American Experience*, and *Antiques Roadshow*—account for 30 percent of all visits to pbs.org. *FRONTLINE* alone accounts for 10 percent of the visits to pbs.org and 10 percent of the video views on the PBS Video Player. Produced at WGBH, *Antiques Roadshow* is the top-rated prime time series on PBS. WGBH-produced children's series account for close to 50 percent of all visits to pbskids.org.

What the world has come to know as WGBH's excellence has been the mainstay of New England public television, radio, and media for decades. In addition to broadcasting PBS programming and WGBH's own flagship productions, WGBH presents original television reporting of local interest on *Greater Boston*. A vital voice for the region, WGBH radio is expanding local news coverage across the city, providing in-depth civic and cultural programming and engaging and informing area listeners. Currently reaching more than half a million radio listeners every week, 89.7 WGBH was a founding member of the precursor to NPR some 50 years ago. Together, sister stations 99.5 WCRB and WCAI 90.1, 91.1, and 94.3 reach an additional 300,000 listeners each week.

On regional public television and radio stations and in projects and partnerships throughout Boston and across New England, including WGBY, our sister organization in western Massachusetts, WGBH provides a public media presence

that is the envy of public broadcasting everywhere. As we work to strengthen local in-depth journalism, collaborate with schools to expand access to our innovative educational offerings, provide a forum for political discourse, showcase New England's world-class performing arts, and broadcast local programming live from a new studio located in the heart of the Boston Public Library, the reach and significance of WGBH in Boston and all of New England has never been greater.

### *The Engine of Innovation*

What drives WGBH is a culture of innovation. Boston is, after all, a place of many firsts: the United States' first public school, the first subway system, the first free municipal library, and the first public park. In 1955, WGBH produced the first radio and TV simulcast, a concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra at MIT's Kresge Auditorium. Like the BSO and MIT, along with Harvard University, Mass General, and others, WGBH is uniquely New England. It is to media what Boston is to the American experiment. We must never allow this engine to go idle. The promise of media in the public interest—to engage, enrich, and inform—is at stake.

Like most visionary organizations, WGBH thrives on invention and risk taking. Yet, unlike in the corporate world, essential research and development is routinely underfunded, and it rarely comes from public funding sources. For example, *NOVA* required a full year of advance research to study how others abroad were programming science for general audiences. *American Experience*, the first ongoing documentary history series on television, debuted after an immersive period of research and exploration on how best to combine academic scholarship and the art of storytelling to bring history to life. *Downton Abbey* would never have been possible without years of experience working with the best of the British drama creative community. The funds responsible for this culture of invention come from WGBH's supporters and philanthropic partners.

To do what WGBH does in the public interest—and to carry that trajectory into the future—demands working capital. It is essential to our operations if we are to continue our success in the new century. Technology makes media available when, where, and how consumers want it, and yet trust in the media has never been such a rare or more precious commodity. In the face of this marketplace failure, if we do not reach new and younger audiences where they are with content they can trust, we risk losing the next generation.

## Funding Priorities and Ways of Giving

With a five-year working goal of \$175 million, the Campaign for WGBH is the largest capital campaign we have ever undertaken, and the funding priorities reflect the core of who we are and the crux of what we will become. Four principal areas have been defined. These are education and children’s media; history, culture, and drama; journalism; and science. Each priority plays a key role in the mission and overall strategic plan for WGBH.

The explosive pace of change in media technology requires us to act nimbly, greenlighting original ideas that support efforts to expand and diversify our audience as opportunities arise—not just after all production funds are in place. WGBH producers and editorial teams need access to capital to develop ideas and take risks. The master storytellers at the core of the excellence that defines WGBH need resources to explore, to innovate, and to do their best work, or they will go elsewhere. In other words, WGBH needs the flexibility to pursue new media opportunities wherever they arise and sustain and enhance our ambitions.

### *To Spur Innovation and Sustain Excellence*

The Campaign seeks to ensure WGBH’s ability to sustain, enhance, and build leading programs even as we continue to take risks on new ideas that encourage civic engagement and dialogue. Support—for innovation, experimentation with technology and media, basic R&D, and launch capital—is of primary concern, as is the ability to recruit and retain top talent. Philanthropy helps us maintain the high standards, independence, and vibrancy of WGBH programming as we move onto multiple media platforms.

The Campaign has established the Catalyst Fund to maximize donor flexibility *and* impact. Donors may designate a Catalyst Fund gift as entirely unrestricted, giving WGBH freedom to meet change where we find it. Or, donors may choose to designate a Catalyst Fund gift in support of one or more funding priorities—an unrestricted gift *within* a priority area. The flexibility of the Catalyst Fund allows donor gifts to directly impact WGBH’s strategic opportunities—some unforeseen—that require swift, decisive action wherever it is most needed. As always, donors have the freedom to direct gifts to specific projects.

The Campaign also seeks to broaden and diversify philanthropic support from the Ralph Lowell Society patron program, which provides a crucial source of discretionary funds, as well as the Great Blue Hill Society, a group of donors who have made WGBH part of their estate plan. The need for capacity building in these areas is critical to WGBH’s future, and the Campaign provides an opportunity to engage both the current and next generation of philanthropists.

## The Next WGBH

Ideas are flying at WGBH about how to leverage our leadership in new ways. Virtually all of our major productions already feature content-deep websites and digital access to episodes, teaching tools, and online spin-offs. Streaming video and audio podcasting, partnerships with leading digital platforms, more powerful and purposeful uses of social media, expanded online education resources—these will drive our success in the years ahead. Cross-pollination made possible by media integration, enhanced New England-area reporting and publishing, and much more are all in the pipeline—the next WGBH is literally waiting in the wings.

WGBH has always been inventing public media and exploring new ways to encourage community building through media. Now is the moment for us to reinvent the meaning and reach of media in the public interest yet again for a new era. With the same flexibility and confidence that has seen us through six decades of defining excellence, the next WGBH will champion trust and purpose in the digital media age. It is a new moment in media, and WGBH intends to make it momentous.

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### FUNDING PRIORITIES

- EDUCATION AND CHILDREN’S MEDIA
- HISTORY, CULTURE, AND DRAMA
- JOURNALISM
- SCIENCE

