



## Radio Bilingüe Develops Health Programming and Plans a Health Desk

Strategic plan for the creation of a health desk to develop and deliver comprehensive Spanish-language health messages to Latino communities

### SUMMARY

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), [Radio Bilingüe](#) produced a body of health programming and developed a strategic plan for creating a health desk to expand its health focus.

Radio Bilingüe is a nonprofit radio network based in Fresno, Calif., that distributes Spanish-language news and informational programming to six member stations in California and more than 120 affiliates in the United States and Mexico.

### Key Results

- Radio Bilingüe produced and broadcast a total of 465 health-related programs, reports and feature stories over a three-year grant period.
- Radio Bilingüe produced a pilot series comprising 95 productions on critical issues facing the Latino community across the nation.
- Working with consultants, project staff developed a *Strategic Health Desk Plan* to guide the network's efforts to coordinate and expand health-related programming.

### Funding

RWJF supported these projects with an *unsolicited* grant of \$498,000 from August 1998 to July 2001 (ID# 027958) for health programming and a *solicited* grant of \$100,000 from July 2006 to June 2007 (ID# 057320) for planning the health desk and developing the pilot series.

### THE PROBLEM

Radio Bilingüe is a Latino-owned community radio [network](#) comprising six member stations in California and more than 120 affiliates throughout the United States and

Mexico that regularly carry its offerings. In 2007, the nation's only Spanish-language radio network served some 525,000 listeners weekly in California, another 78,600 elsewhere in the United States and 9,000 who tuned in through the Internet. Programming includes news, information, talk shows, music and cultural reports.

## CONTEXT

In addition to the grants reported here, RWJF supported Radio Bilingüe's programming from 1992 to 1998 (see [Program Results Report](#) on ID# 021202). In 2002, it provided a one-year grant for programming focused on end-of-life care for Latinos (ID# 044457).

The network has also received assistance from *Sound Partners for Community Health*, an RWJF program managed by the [Benton Foundation](#). In its first phase, *Sound Partners* funded efforts by local public broadcasters and their community partners to increase public awareness of health issues and to facilitate citizens and policy-makers in taking a more informed and active role in health issues at the local level. See [Program Results Report](#) for more information on the program.

In the second phase of the program, Radio Bilingüe is being funded to recruit and train young producers and to develop health programming targeted at indigenous Mexican migrant women. Other funding for health programs has come from the California Endowment, the Wellness Foundation, First 5 California, the James Irvine Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The interest in health programming at Radio Bilingüe reflects the fact that Latinos, the country's fastest growing minority group, have less access to health care, receive less preventive care, have higher rates of obesity and suffer worse health outcomes than the general population.

Radio Bilingüe's audiences represent some of the vulnerable people RWJF most wants to help through its programming. Support for the network can help RWJF forge more direct connections with underserved Latino communities and build its capacity in understanding how to more effectively work with ethnic media.

## THE PROJECT

Radio Bilingüe produced and broadcast a substantial body of health programming with RWJF support from 1998–2001 (ID# 027958) and developed a strategic plan for creating a health desk to coordinate expanded health programming from 2006–07 (ID# 057320).

In conjunction with the development of the health desk plan, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting supported an array of marketing and communications activities to highlight Radio Bilingüe's health focus.

## RESULTS

- **Radio Bilingüe produced and broadcast a total of 465 health reports, roundtable discussions and feature stories during the three-year grant.** Most programming was built around breaking news in California, Texas and Chicago, with additional reporting on stories of interest to the Puerto Rican, Central American and Caribbean immigrant communities in the Northeast. Examples include:
  - Pesticide poisoning in central California.
  - Using a domestic violence hotline in Austin, Texas.
  - Health insurance for immigrants.
  - Breast cancer diagnoses among women who do not receive wellness services.
  - Viral infections among factory and farm workers.
  - Cross-border health initiatives with Mexico and El Salvador.
- **Radio Bilingüe produced a pilot series on critical health issues facing the Latino community across the nation.** Project staff created 60 productions with RWJF funds, and an additional 35 with the network's resources, in formats that included talk shows, roundtable discussions, news features and educational messages. For example, broadcasts covered:
  - Barriers faced by migrant workers in New Orleans trying to access the health safety net after Hurricanes Rita and Katrina.
  - How an obstetrician-gynecologist in Puerto Rico reduced the incidence of AIDS in newborns.
  - Barriers faced by farmworkers in accessing emergency benefits following a freeze in the citrus fields.
  - Access to health care for immigrants.
  - Efforts to control the diabetes epidemic in poor, Latino neighborhoods.
  - Best practices among health practitioners trying to make inroads to combat AIDS within the Puerto Rican population.
- **Working with consultants, project staff developed the *Strategic Health Desk Plan* to guide the network's efforts to coordinate health-related programming.** The intent of the health desk, according to the project director, was to provide "a critical mass of information to impact the behavior of our listeners and to have an impact, if possible, on the policy-making process."

The plan:

- Outlined strategies for a "campaign approach" to health coverage that went beyond news reporting to include educational messages, radio drama and other formats.
  - Suggested ways to broaden the network's reach through webcasts and podcasts, audio on demand, interactive content and program transcripts.
  - Identified prospective funders, strategic alliances and potential partners and affiliates.
- **Project staff collaborated with health advocacy community organizations, service providers and other Latino public radio broadcasters to strengthen Radio Bilingüe's health programming.** These collaborative efforts helped project staff identify topics, choose guests for on-air appearances, target appropriate audiences and involve other Latino radio broadcasters in program development.

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Emphasize and encourage staff development in fields with rapidly changing technology.** At the start of the grant period, many staff members were unfamiliar with technologies such as podcasting and blogging. Radio Bilingüe found that offering training in such areas was a key to expanding its programming. (Project Director/Orozco)
2. **Leaders must constantly adapt in order to adjust to a rapidly changing fundraising landscape.** The scarcity of resources to fund Spanish-language programming requires the executive team to be realistic and highly flexible. (Project Director/Orozco)

## AFTERWARD

Guided by its *Strategic Health Desk Plan*, Radio Bilingüe is building on its existing content to create a permanent identity in health coverage. Staff increased its use of new technologies and is developing a special [health section](#) on its website.

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