

90.9 wbur

BOSTON'S NPR NEWS STATION

2019 IN REVIEW



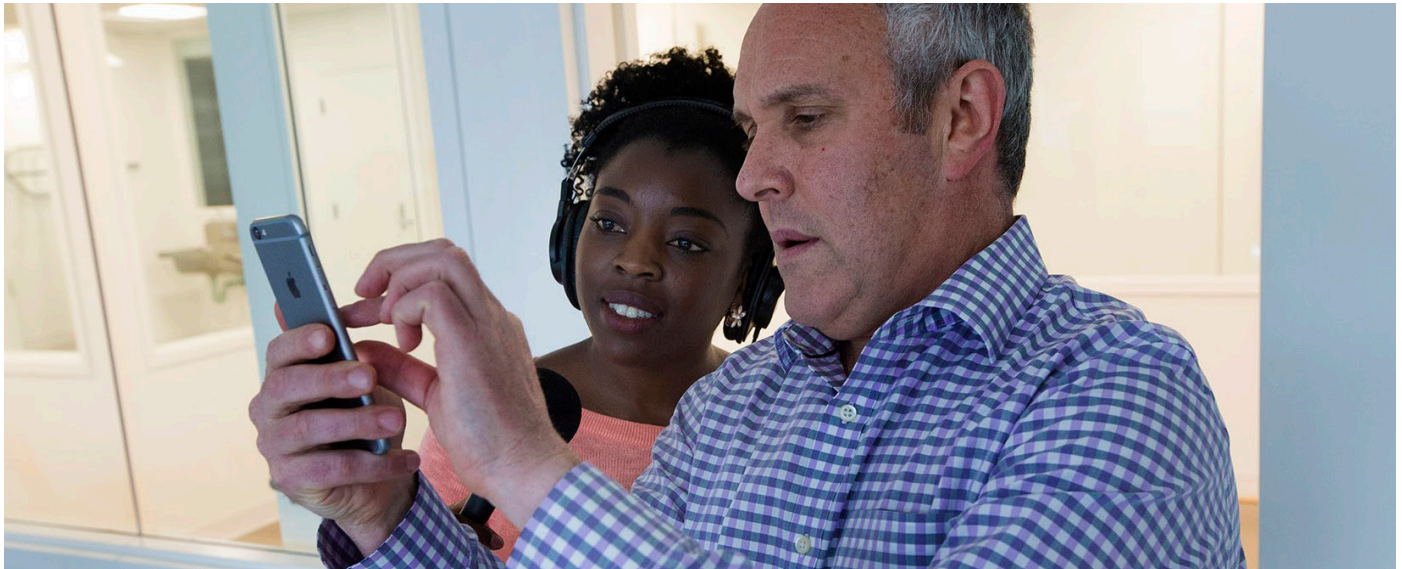
*A rare view, looking down at the Prudential Center, as a man operates a crane that sits above the City of Boston
(Jesse Costa/WBUR)*

2019 was full of challenges and opportunities, for our community and for WBUR. Over the past twelve months, WBUR seized opportunities to enhance and enrich its local journalism, develop innovative new programming and increase its engagement with the community through CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center. The station developed a more invested and nimble community-led governance structure and identified a dynamic new leader. We are doubling down on our mission of producing high-quality, fact-based journalism for the people of Boston and beyond.

None of this work would be possible without your support and dedication. Thank you. In the upcoming pages, we are grateful to share with you some highlights from this past year.

NEWS WITH IMPACT

Throughout the year, our journalists and staff report the news and develop programming that makes an impact in your life and in our community. Whether we are suspending on-air programming to stream live Congressional hearings, unpacking the role of nuclear energy in our society or exploring alternative solutions to public transit – WBUR works for you. Read on to revisit a few of our impactful pieces of 2019 journalism.



WBUR Bostonomix reporter Zeninjor Enwemeka conducts an interview. (WBUR)

WBUR broke the news earlier this year on the US government's decision to quietly end a federal program called "medical deferred action" thanks to reporter Shannon Dooling's intrepid reporting. This and Shannon's ongoing reporting led to Congressional action and ultimately the government's reversal of its position. For now, the humanitarian program has been restored. Shannon's reporting exemplified the work of our newsroom: shedding light on societal issues, holding those in power accountable and giving voice to the voiceless.



An emotional man is consoled by his 10-year-old daughter as he describes his experience in ICE detention. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

WBUR played a key role in the exoneration of Darrell Jones, who was found not guilty on June 11, 2019, after serving 32 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Through exhaustive research, WBUR reporter Bruce Gellerman discovered that Darrell had not received a fair trial for a murder conviction in 1986. In 2017, Darrell was awarded a new trial after extensive litigation by a new legal team; key evidence tracked down by Bruce played a pivotal role in the litigation effort. WBUR hosted an emotional conversation between Darrell and Bruce at CitySpace in July.



Darrell Jones with WBUR reporter Bruce Gellerman.

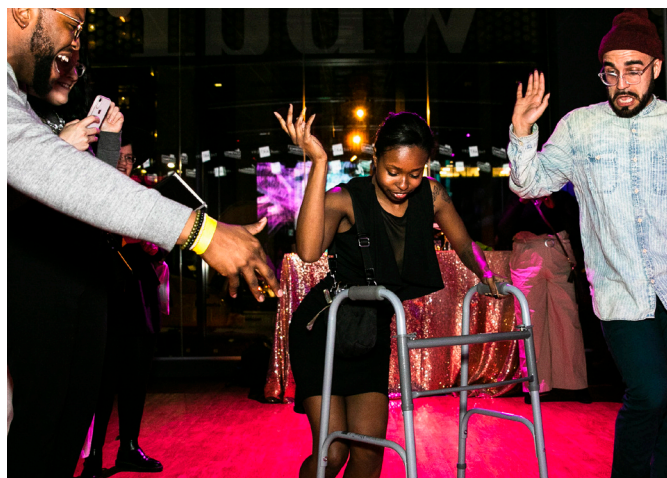
The ARTery 25, a series highlighting millennials of color making an impact

in the Boston arts scene, made its debut in March of 2019. This series was a first for WBUR, engaging local artists hungry for community connection. The ARTery 25 established the station's arts and culture vertical reporting unit, *The ARTery*, as a destination for arts and culture reporting and a critical voice on the scene. The series successfully combined digital assets with broadcast radio and a culminating live event, fulfilling WBUR's mission to serve the community on-air, online and on stage.

*"Artists... shift culture.
And culture shifts public attitudes,
which can shape policy."
— Maria Garcia, senior editor of The
ARTery*



The ARTery editor Maria Garcia welcomes guests to The ARTery 25 celebration. (Erin Clark for WBUR)



Guests and honored artists enjoy The ARTery 25 celebration at CitySpace. (Erin Clark for WBUR)

"Closing Pilgrim" focused on the closing of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth and its impact on the region and the local economy.

The multi-part series produced by *Earthwhile*, WBUR's environmental reporting team, successfully integrated both digital and broadcast reporting. The stories touched on the energy portfolio of Massachusetts and what that means to those of us who live here. It also illuminated the long-standing tension between nuclear energy and green energy.

The *Earthwhile* team engaged personally with readers and listeners like you as part of its coverage of this story, researching and answering additional questions on the topic directly on wbur.org. Many questions related to issues of environmental justice, a topic WBUR is determined to offer future extensive coverage.

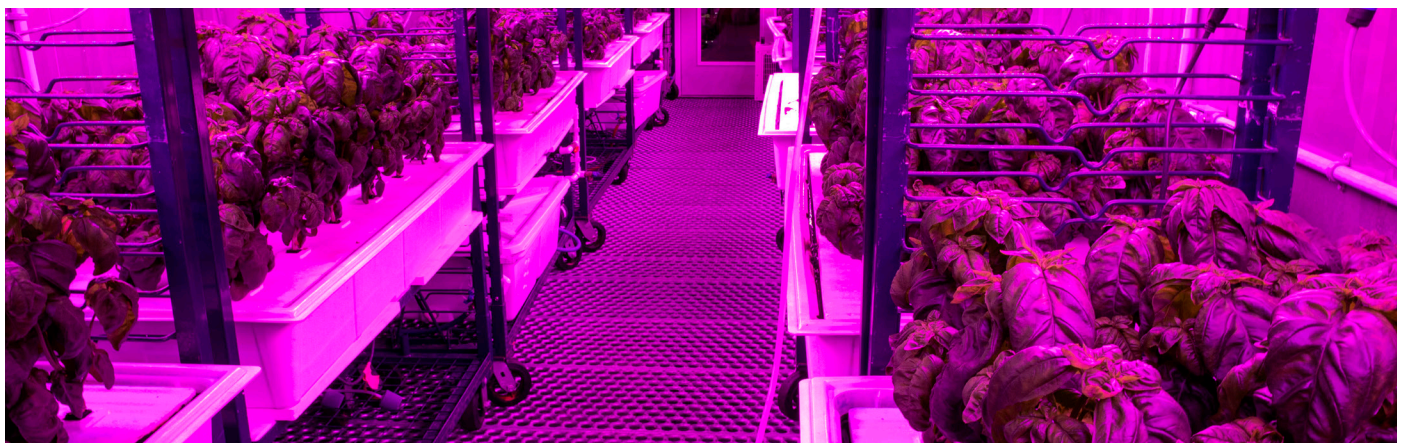
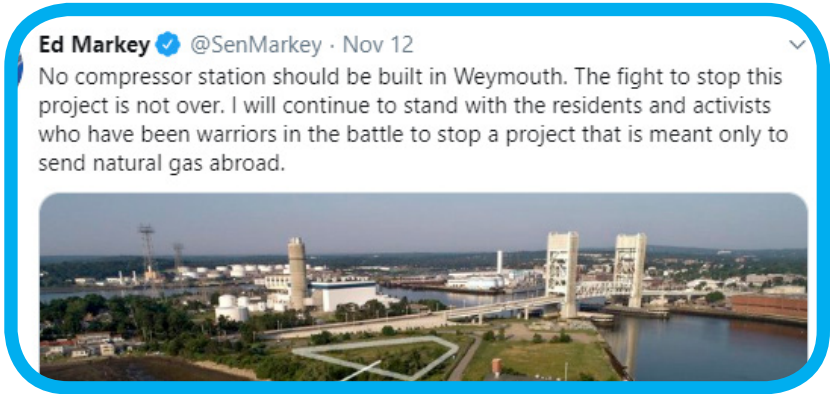


The Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth shut down its reactor forever. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)



A man looks over the restoration work in the Parker River Wildlife Refuge. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Earthwile influenced public conversation and policy around environmental topics, particularly through its **extensive coverage of the proposed natural gas compressor in Weymouth**. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey cited a June 2019 story by reporter Miriam Wasser in an October letter to the president & CEO of Enbridge Inc. protesting the compressor. In November, Senator Markey also retweeted an exclusive *Earthwile* story, “National Grid, Eversource Say They Can Meet Natural Gas Demand Without Weymouth Compressor.” This article and another from WBUR, “Shifting Demand Fuels Weymouth Compressor Debate,” were cited by Mayor Robert Hedlund of Weymouth in his appeal to the state.



Basil plants grow in one of the OpenAg team’s shipping containers, in this February 2019 photo. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

In October, *Edify*, WBUR’s reporting team dedicated to covering issues focused on education and learning, engaged in a joint investigation with ProPublica – WBUR’s first with the respected investigative news organization – **on improper chemical dumping by MIT’s “OpenAg” initiative**. The story was picked up nationally and resulted in the initiative at MIT being put on hold “pending completion of all ongoing assessments.”



A classroom in Pine Manor College in Brookline, MA; Pine Manor’s student population is made up overwhelmingly of low-income and first-generation students. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

“Small Colleges, Big Challenges” took an in-depth look at the pressures facing small private colleges in Massachusetts and how they are adapting to change. *Edify* looked into the future of these institutions and discussed how students and parents can think about making smart choices about higher education.

“The Price of Health,” a series exploring why drug prices are so high and what might be done about it, was a collaboration between WBUR *Bostonmix* reporters who focus on the intersection of business and technology, and WBUR *CommonHealth* reporters covering health, medicine and science. While newsroom collaboration occurs regularly, this series went deeper, taking advantage of Boston’s unique dual role as a bio-pharma and a tech/start-up capital. WBUR reporters analyzed how these industries overlap, looking into new and transformative drugs produced regularly and sold for astronomical prices. Our reports explored the question: “As a society, what is our ethical role in ensuring people have access to medication?”

“More than one in four people reported that because of costs, they had cut pills in half or skipped doses to make a prescription last longer.”
— WBUR poll of 600 listeners



(Jesse Costa/WBUR)

WBUR INNOVATION: NEWS DELIVERY

We continue to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital age, meeting you and other listeners wherever you are. This means acknowledging that you might be a reader of WBUR content as well as a listener. In 2019, WBUR enhanced our service to the public through thoughtful and strategic changes to our email newsletters.

- **We re-designed all of our editorial newsletters, including WBUR Today,** the station’s daily news email. The goal was to match the design and editorial standards of the news you consume on our website and hear on the air. WBUR Today shares the news Boston is talking about in a digestible way. The daily email is now a better reflection of our journalism and it sets the foundation for much of our work here at WBUR.
- **In addition, we launched a weekly political newsletter, *Boston to the Beltway*.** In January and February, we asked the kind of newsletters you wanted from WBUR and you overwhelmingly voted for politics. *Boston to the Beltway* is a new offering from WBUR: Instead of an email that summarizes and links to distinct articles on wbur.org, this email is meant to be read in your inbox. Political correspondent Kimberly Atkins, our first-ever Washington D.C.-based journalist, joined WBUR in February to provide us with updates and inside info direct from the Congressional floor. The pieces have a unique voice and angle, looking at national political developments through our local New England lens.

BOSTON → THE BELTWAY
with [Kimberly Atkins](#)

WBUR INNOVATION: PODCASTS

WBUR's iLab is the station's incubator for new projects and is a recognized leader in the production of innovative, high quality content by its public media peers. Our award-winning podcasts include collaborations with The New York Times, The Boston Globe and Reddit. The hosts of two of our popular podcasts, *Kind World* and *Endless Thread*, traveled farther afield to follow their stories this year.

- Producers and hosts of *Kind World*, Andrea Asuaje and Yasmin Amer, started off *Kind World's* third season this past fall with a special mini-series: "Lifelines: Stories of Compassion at the Southern Border." Andrea and Yasmin traveled to Brownsville, Texas — a town bordering Matamoros, Mexico — and followed a dedicated group of volunteers who are part of a network called Team Brownsville. For over a year, volunteers have been crossing the border twice a day, seven days a week to provide food and water to people forgotten by policymakers on both sides of the border. These stories and pieces from *Kind World's* new season aired on WBUR's *Morning Edition* last fall, and can be heard anytime at wbur.org/kindworld.



Team Brownsville volunteers serving food at the border of the U.S. and Mexico. (WBUR)

- WBUR released a special four-part series on vaccine innovation, hysteria and the spread of disinformation to kick off the third season of *Endless Thread*, our podcast collaboration with Reddit. "Infectious: The Strange Past and Surprising Present of Vaccines — and Anti-Vaxxers" explored the weird, winding story of scientific innovation, medical disasters and online virality. An early goal of the series was to offer more nuanced, in-depth storytelling on this complex topic: to explore the arguments of anti-vaxxers, while also staying true to the fact that science overwhelmingly supports vaccination. In July, the *Endless Thread* team presented a behind-the-scenes look at the series live at CitySpace.



Hosts of *Endless Thread*, Ben Brock Johnson and Amory Sivertson. (WBUR)

WBUR ON STAGE

CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center opened its doors to the public in March of 2019 and is successfully fulfilling its mission of providing a wide range of content to the public, collaborating with numerous community partners and reaching new and diverse audiences. With rich live programming, recorded and available for free on our website, we are expanding our reach and deepening WBUR's impact. We are leveraging our experience and our brand to bring people together, building stronger and deeper ties to the community.

CitySpace brings people from different communities together to explore key issues challenging our society; to learn from leaders from all sectors who are effecting change in politics, science and policy; and to discover rising artists in music, dance and comedy. Highlights from 2019 include the following events.

- **A series of seven conversations on public policy and politics.** Governor Charlie Baker and Attorney General Maura Healey joined us for a panel conversation on tackling gun violence in the State of Massachusetts; Mayor Marty Walsh shared his efforts to end homelessness in the City of Boston; and Gerald Chertavian, CEO and founder of Year Up, moderated a panel on the forces exacerbating income inequality.
- **A five-part series focused on the impact businesses can and should have on the environment** with respect to food and diet, transportation, politics and energy policy. This series was produced in partnership with Harvard Business School and Boston University Questrom School of Business.
- **Curated Cuisine, an ongoing monthly series featuring conversations with renowned chefs from across the country.** Visiting chefs, who demonstrate their cooking and provide an exclusive tasting opportunity, have included Irene Li, co-owner and operator of Mei Mei, a restaurant and food truck catering business serving up creative Chinese-American cuisine made from locally sourced and sustainable ingredients; New Orleans-based and James Beard Award-winning Israeli Chef Alon Shaya; and Tiffani Faison, chef and owner of Sweet Cheeks, Tiger Mama and Fool's Errand and, early in her career, runner-up in the very first season of Bravo's Top Chef.



A packed house enjoys a show at CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center. (WBUR).



Tania Anderson, Melina Nmli, Nahdra Ra and Reginald Chevalier discussed "Diversity on the Runway" and Boston designers of color. (WBUR)

Other programming included a conversation with LFOD Radio, a platform for independent hip hop artists, on the state of New England hip hop; intimate chamber concerts in partnership with the Boston Symphony Orchestra; a panel on the far-reaching effects of genocide in partnership with Facing History; a conversation with Samantha Power, 28th United States Ambassador to the United Nations, about her new book, "The Education of an Idealist;" and numerous comedy shows in partnership with The Wilbur Theater.



The ribbon cutting ceremony for CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center in January 2019. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

WBUR SIGNATURE SHOWS



Here & Now co-hosts Jeremy Hobson, Tonya Mosley and Robin Young. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

Here & Now

Here & Now reflects the fluid world of news as it's happening in the middle of the day, with timely, smart and in-depth interviews and conversation. In 2019, that work included up-to-the-minute insightful coverage of the Mueller Report and presidential impeachment hearings in the House of Representatives.

In August, Tonya Mosley joined the team as a co-host based on the West Coast. An Emmy and Murrow Award-winning television, radio and print journalist, Tonya is already adding valuable perspective to this nationally syndicated show.

On Point

Meghna Chakrabarti and David Folkenflik completed their first full year as the co-hosts of *On Point*, WBUR's weekday national news and talk program. One of the show's most-listened-to episodes of the year discussed life for immigrant children in the U.S. detention centers. In September, Meghna hosted a special four-part series exploring the achievement gap in American K-12 schools, what's causing it — and what's working to narrow it.

Only A Game

Sports journalism is about life both on and off the field. As NPR's only sports show, *Only A Game*, explores the human side of sports and competition through its narrative storytelling lens. *Esquire* magazine listed the show as one of its "Best Sports Podcasts of 2019."

Radio Boston

WBUR's local news and public affairs program features provocative stories and authentic voices, reflecting what is unique about our region. In the spring, *Radio Boston* reporters took an in-depth look at housing affordability around Boston and the intersection of public policy, tenant protections and the free market. Tiziana Dearing joined WBUR as the new host of *Radio Boston* in June, bringing experience from her work in academia, the nonprofit sector and the corporate sector to her role as host.



On Point hosts Meghna Chakrabarti and David Folkenflik. (Liz Linder for WBUR)



Tiziana Dearing, host of *Radio Boston*. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

HONORS & AWARDS

In 2019, WBUR and its journalists were grateful to be recognized by a number of renowned institutions. WBUR received 10 regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, six awards from the Public Media Journalists Association, and a number of digital journalism accolades, among other honors.

EDWARD R. MURROW REGIONAL AWARDS

Radio Television Digital News Association honors outstanding achievements in broadcast and digital journalism. The Murrow Awards recognize local and national news stories that demonstrate technical expertise and exemplify the importance and impact of journalism as a service to the community.

- **Overall Excellence:** WBUR-FM
- **Breaking News Coverage:** Merrimack Valley Gas Explosions, *Radio Boston*
- **Continuing Coverage:** Recreational Marijuana Coverage
- **Excellence in Innovation:** *Last Seen*
- **Excellence in Sound:** How a Sore Wrist and a Fondness for “Noise” Forever Changed the Way the Violin Is Played
- **Feature Reporting:** How Writing a Lullaby Helps Struggling Mothers-To-Be Bond With Their Babies
- **Hard News:** Calls to Reform Civil Commitments Increase
- **News Documentary:** Martin Luther King Loved This City: Remembering King’s Legacy in Boston
- **Newscast:** Merrimack Valley Gas Explosions
- **Sports Reporting:** Dreaming Big: Champion Wheelchair Racer Mentors Next Generation

PRNDI AWARDS

The 2019 PRNDI (Public Radio News Directors) Conference, hosted by the Public Media Journalists Association, honors the best work being done by local public radio stations.

- **Breaking News:** Merrimack Valley Gas Explosions
- **Nationally Edited Soft Feature:** My Dad’s Friendship With Charles Barkley
- **Soft Feature:** Nameless No More: Historian, Students Solve Cemetery Mystery
- **Sports Feature:** How Getting Shot Made the ‘Bullet Man’ a Better Runner
- **Soft Feature, Second Place:** Lullabies Help Mothers Bond With Their Unborn Babies
- **Podcast, Second Place:** *Last Seen*

ONLINE JOURNALISM AWARDS

The Online Journalism Awards are the only comprehensive set of journalism prizes honoring excellence in digital journalism around the world.

- **Excellence in Audio Digital Storytelling:** *Last Seen*
- **Excellence in Audio Digital Storytelling, Finalist:** Infectious: The Strange Past and Surprising Present of Vaccines and Anti-Vaxxers

WEBBY AWARDS

The Webby Awards is the leading international award honoring excellence on the internet.

- **Podcasts & Digital Audio – Arts & Culture:** *Last Seen*
- **Podcasts & Digital Audio – Best Mini Series:** Screamtime: Scary Stories from Reddit, *Endless Thread*

BEST OF BOSTON

Each year, Boston Magazine scours the Greater Boston area for the best of all things. In 2019, WBUR’s *Last Seen* was named the best within the ‘Best Podcasters’ category.

BROADCASTERS HALL OF FAME

Lisa Mullins, the voice of WBUR’s *All Things Considered*, was one of nine major figures in radio and television who was inducted into the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame on September 27, 2019.

FELLOWSHIPS

Each year, The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation selects 13 medical journalists from across the nation for their Health Coverage Fellowship. The fellowship is designed to help the media improve coverage of critical health care issues. WBUR’s **Shannon Dooling** joined the 2019 class of fellows and we can see the impact of her learning in her reporting.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

WBUR thoughtfully engages in a number of programming partnerships and collaborations, all of which amplify our community impact and strengthen the newsroom's reporting.

WBUR is an active member of the New England News Collaborative, an eight-station consortium of public media newsrooms. We also continue to nurture close partnerships with the State House News Service and the Dorchester Reporter, one of the largest community newspapers in Boston, to tell community-based stories of immediate interest to you and the rest of our audience.

Through CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center, we have partnered with more than 30 different organizations including local civic institutions, nonprofit organizations and cultural groups. The Pine Street Inn co-hosted a discussion on ways to end chronic homelessness; Oxfam America developed a panel about the challenges facing Central American refugees; and the Boston Lyric Opera brought author Margaret Atwood for a conversation and performance to a sold-out crowd. These partnerships have grown our audience, promoted WBUR's service throughout the city, and helped cement the reputation of CitySpace as a forum for public conversation and a venue for storytelling across sectors.

Each year, WBUR is a proud media sponsor of the Boston Book Festival and the Martha's Vineyard Book Festival. Our engagement with these events underscores our commitment to supporting public conversation and promoting cultural expression that enhances the vibrancy of Greater Boston.

WBUR GOVERNANCE

WBUR is owned and operated by the Trustees of Boston University. In 2019, BU President Dr. Robert Brown announced the creation of a new governance structure for WBUR. Previously, the WBUR general manager reported to a BU administrator and had the support of an advisory Board of Overseers. Now, the general manager reports to the Executive Committee of a WBUR Board of Directors. The Committee reports directly to Dr. Brown and has been delegated authority for the oversight of WBUR operations and finances, as well as the review and approval of strategic goals. The new governance model allows WBUR to harness the ideas and energy of talented community leaders whose thoughtful guidance will be nimble, strategic and fully invested in the station's best interests.

WBUR is thriving, as both an organization and a brand. Its financial position remains strong as it continues to generate operating surpluses, even with changing media and advertising landscapes. These surpluses are reinvested in WBUR and our community in the form of fair and objective journalism.

In December, the WBUR Board of Directors announced its hiring of Margaret Low as the new CEO and general manager of WBUR. She will join us in mid-January after six years as the president of AtlanticLIVE, the live events branch of The Atlantic media conglomerate. Prior to The Atlantic, Margaret was senior vice president for news at NPR and former producer of *All Things Considered*.

Dorchester Reporter
"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"
Volume 36 Issue 49 Thursday, December 5, 2019 50c

Codman Sq. residents hear what pot shop hopefuls have in mind
Proponents talk of 'educational programs' for users
By Kate Donoso
Residents of Codman Square, a neighborhood in South Boston, are currently in a public meeting held last month at the City Hall. About 50 people, some of whom were of their own accord, were in attendance to hear a presentation by representatives of the Green Group, which is supported by Councilor Richard and Stephen Studd. They were joined by Mike Row, the former Boston city councillor who represents them, and David Small, a consultant and attorney based in Dorchester, a former superintendent in the Boston Police Department. Charles Brinkman from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services facilitated the city-mandated session. Councilor, who has 51 percent of the votes in the ward, also hopes to improve the neighborhood. "I've got my eye on it, and I hope to see it in the next few months. I do see, as we've building movements in our community and throughout the state, the opportunity to be here and doing something."

Walsh signs on to City Council's cannabis equity push
By Kate Donoso
Mayor Matt Walsh signed a city ordinance last Tuesday that creates a Cannabis Equity Board. The board will be made up of representatives of the community and people of color. The legislation was approved by the City Council last week by a 12-1 margin, with Councilor Ben Chang of Healy as the lone dissenter. "The ordinance that I've been elected to lead for a year and a half, and I'm proud to see it passed. It's a big step for our community and for the city of Boston."

Dot Now's exhibition effects artists' keen sense of community
By David Robinson
A new exhibition at UMass Boston's University Hall Gallery titled "The Now" features art from a diverse group of artists who are working in a variety of media, including digital art, sculpture, and performance. The exhibition is a collaboration between artists in the area and UMass Boston, which is celebrating their work within the Greater Boston area. The show features a mix of international artists who are working in a variety of media, including digital art, sculpture, and performance.

The Dorchester Reporter.



Guests enjoy a discussion about the television show *The Good Place*. (WBUR)

BIZLAB: THE BUSINESS OF PUBLIC RADIO

WBUR BizLab conducts strategic, data-driven experiments to ensure public radio stays financially strong, vibrant and relevant. Operating as a lean startup, BizLab works with WBUR and other public radio stations to uncover new avenues for support, distinct from the traditional approaches that include on-air member fundraising and underwriting. Given the changing landscape of journalism, media consumption and digital advertising, there is an increasing urgency to test and measure the effectiveness of different funding models. This work is important for the future sustainability of WBUR and is critical for the public media system as a whole.

With generous support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the BizLab team spent the past year developing and implementing a six-station collaboration across the public radio system that included additional experimentation at WBUR. BizLab led each station through its chosen funding experiment, structuring it around the unique and individual needs of that station.



Participants in the first BizLab summit at WBUR CitySpace. (WBUR)



Representatives from WAMU, Louisville Public Media, Capital Public Radio and WBUR sit on a panel. (WBUR)

In order to realize BizLab's goal of sharing innovation with the entire public media landscape, the team has created a blog, launched a free webinar series and presented at a number of conferences. On December 10, 2019, BizLab hosted its first summit, convening over 100 individuals from public radio and other non-profit media organizations across the country to discuss sustainability and innovation in public radio.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR WBUR

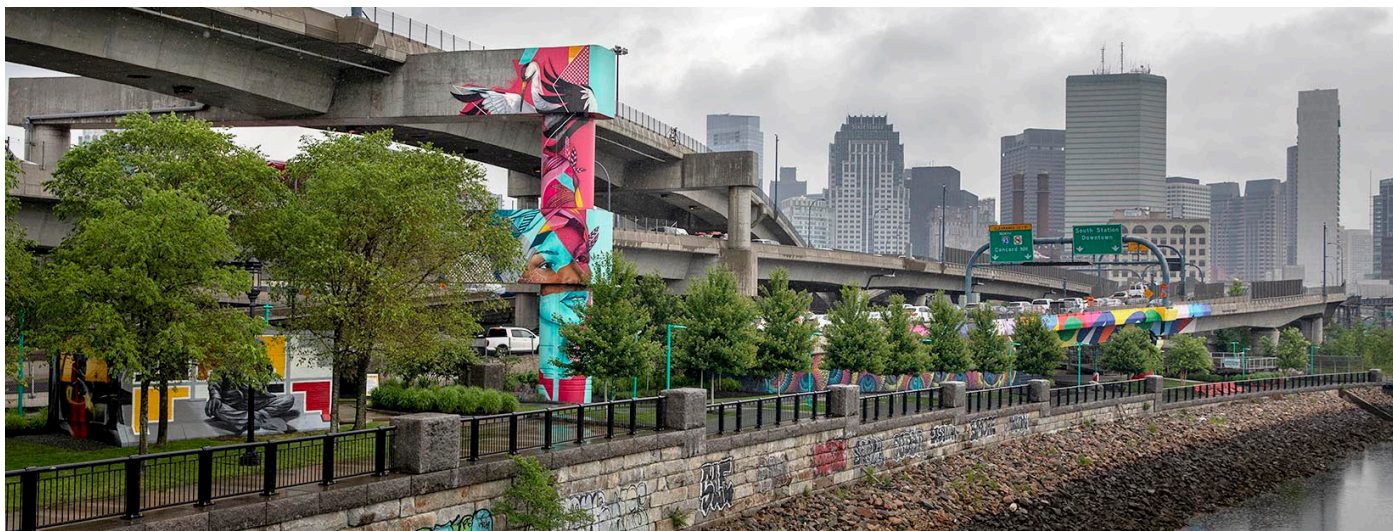
WBUR announced the public phase of its first-ever capital campaign in January 2019. While we continue to focus on high-quality journalism and nuanced reporting, we realized that we need to do more for you and for our community. We need to expand our local reporting as other institutions shrink these teams; we need to innovate and experiment to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital age; and we need to engage you, our listeners, in-person at our new live forum for public conversation.

With the support and generosity of donors like you, we have raised \$30M out of our \$40M goal. We still have work to do, but we have laid the groundwork for an impressive future. We hired three dedicated environmental reporters and launched *Earthwhile*, our new environmental reporting team, on Earth Day of this year. The team is the largest environmental reporting team in New England and has already established a reputation as the leading source in the region for this important coverage. In addition to this new team, we have also established a focused investigative reporting unit and hired two of the three desired reporters. They are already hard at work investigating injustices in our society and developing a culture of watchdog journalism in our newsroom.

THANK YOU

At WBUR, we don't just endlessly chase the next news cycle: we report the story with context. We talk to experts, advocates, analysts and people on the ground to moderate thoughtful discussions. WBUR helps you see and understand the nuance. The story behind the story. The insights that help you shape – or question – your own perspective.

WBUR is able to put such time, energy and effort into this work as a result of your support. Our 68,000 Members provide the foundation for the unbiased, independent journalism that proves to be especially vital during this historic time. Thanks to you, WBUR celebrates, examines and explores the stories of our time with some of the most extraordinary programming in public radio.



*Seen from the Traveler Street bridge over the Bass River, this mural is one of a series at Underground at Ink Block in South Boston.
(Robin Lubbock/WBUR)*