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Ideastream Public Media and WKSU Public Radio to Enter Into Public Service Operating Agreement, Building on Decades of Award-Winning Journalism From Two of Northeast Ohio's Leaders in News and Information

WKSU Will Be Operated by Ideastream Public Media Beginning October 1, 2021

CLEVELAND, Ohio (September 15, 2021) — Ideastream Public Media and WKSU public radio plan to enter into a public service operating agreement to create one of Northeast Ohio's largest news organizations, building on decades of award-winning journalism from two of the region's leaders in news and information. Today, Kent State University's board of trustees granted the university permission to pursue an agreement for the management and operations of the WKSU stations. The Ideastream Public Media board has also voted to move forward with the proposal for the public service operating agreement, which is expected to go into effect October 1, 2021. On that date, Ideastream Public Media will begin operating WKSU. Kent State University will retain FCC licensing for the WKSU stations.

This partnership will create an expanded and sustainable regional news service that delivers local, national and statewide news, and excels on all broadcast, digital and on-demand platforms. Under the new operating agreement, the population served by Ideastream Public Media's news and information programming will increase from 2.4 million to 3.6 million and serve 22 counties throughout Northeast Ohio.

In 2022, WKSU will become the sole NPR news and information station in Northeast Ohio and Ideastream Public Media will commit its 104.9 FM signal (currently WCLV) as a repeater station that extends the WKSU coverage. As part of these plans, Ideastream Public Media's classical service (WCLV) will move to 90.3 FM, making classical music available to a significantly larger listening area.

All members of WKSU's staff are being offered positions at Ideastream Public Media's expanded operation. The combined organization will employ approximately 150 employees, including more than 40 staff members in a new unified newsroom.

"We are pleased to be bringing two stellar media organizations together for the expansion of public news and information in Northeast Ohio," said Todd Diacon, President of Kent State University. "WKSU carries a long legacy of award-winning news coverage and, together with Ideastream, we can become the premier news and information source in the region. Most



importantly, our collaboration will result in even more learning and talent development opportunities for our students.”

“We are excited to be bringing together a group of talented, experienced professionals whose mission every day is to provide accurate, creative and localized reporting to the communities in which they live and serve,” said Kevin Martin, Ideastream Public Media President and CEO. “Simply put, our goal is to provide more programming, expand journalism for the entire region, and build on our established business models to become even more sustainable.”

Martin noted that with this operating agreement, the combined organizations will be able to expand on-air news coverage as well as digital and on-demand services. It will also pave the way for capital improvements to enhance service delivery and reach a broader audience, including currently underserved audiences across Northeast Ohio. The agreement will also build on the nationally recognized journalism program offered by Kent State University, using resources to focus especially on developing more diversified talent for the journalism profession.

Joining forces to create stronger public radio organizations is a concept that has been in practice for some time. Similar partnerships have been created between public news outlets in California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Washington.

The decision to pursue this agreement was reinforced by an analysis the two organizations conducted earlier this year with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. That analysis found Ideastream Public Media and WKSU could realize a number of efficiencies by working together, resulting in strong public service reporting in Northeast Ohio and other benefits to listeners throughout the region.

Under the agreement, a phased approach to transition will occur. Both WKSU and WCPN will continue to operate as separate NPR news and information stations for the time being, while staffs come together to develop plans for combining newsroom resources and operations to grow. The organizations will also seek input from the community to assess needs. Opportunities for community engagement will be shared as they become available.

Between January 1 and April 1, 2022, the following changes are expected to take place:

- WKSU will become the region’s NPR news and information station, with repeater stations in Ashland, Mansfield, New Philadelphia, Norwalk, Thompson and Wooster continuing to serve their local markets.
- Ideastream Public Media will reformat 104.9 FM to serve an additional repeater station for WKSU programming, bolstering coverage in the Cleveland area. The call letters associated with 104.9 FM will change from WCLV to WCPN.

- Those who have relied on WKSU and WCPN for in-depth news coverage will continue to have access to the full array of programming through WKSU at 89.7 FM and its six repeater stations, along with 104.9 FM. They will continue to hear “Morning Edition,” “All Things Considered,” “Here and Now,” “Marketplace,” “Fresh Air,” the “Akron Roundtable,” the “Sound of Ideas,” “OH Really” and the “City Club Forum,” as well as programming such as “Wait, Wait...Don’t Tell Me” and “Folk Alley.”
- Those who love the classical programming provided by WCLV at 104.9 FM will have access to that programming at the new WCLV at 90.3 FM. There, they can continue to enjoy locally hosted performances by local artists and ensembles, including The Cleveland Orchestra, Apollo’s Fire and Lés Delices, along with student and faculty ensembles from the Cleveland Institute of Music, Oberlin Conservatory, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory and Cleveland State University. Reflecting the intent to serve its new expanded coverage area, 90.3 FM programming will spotlight more performances by musicians in Akron and Kent as well.
- With this agreement, Kent State University and Ideastream Public Media will build on the nationally recognized journalism program offered by the university, using resources to focus especially on developing more diversified talent for the journalism profession.

More information about the public service operating agreement is available at ideastream.org/together.

About Ideastream Public Media

Ideastream Public Media serves the people of Northeast Ohio as a trusted and dynamic multimedia source for illuminating the world around us. Ideastream Public Media is the home of five public television stations (WVIZ, WVIZ OHIO, WVIZ WORLD, WVIZ CREATE and WVIZ KIDS); WCPN, Northeast Ohio’s NPR news and public affairs radio station; and WCLV, Northeast Ohio’s classical music radio station. Ideastream Public Media produces the award-winning children’s series “NewsDepth” and manages The Ohio Channel and the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau on behalf of all Ohio’s public broadcasting stations. Ideastream Public Media is indispensable and highly valued for its unique ability to strengthen our community. For more information about Ideastream Public Media’s rich legacy of innovation and credible content, visit ideastream.org.

About WKSU

WKSU is an award-winning NPR member station and service of Kent State University. Since 1950, WKSU has brought public radio to the Northeast Ohio community. Today, it is Ohio’s largest public radio service, broadcasting over its primary signal of 89.7. WKSU content can also be heard over WKRW 89.3 (Wooster), WKRJ 91.5 (Dover/New Philadelphia), WKSU 89.1 (Thompson), WNRK 90.7 (Norwalk), W239AZ 95.7 (Ashland) and W234CX 94.7 (Mansfield). WKSU content is also available online at www.wksu.org, through the mobile app and on smart speakers.

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