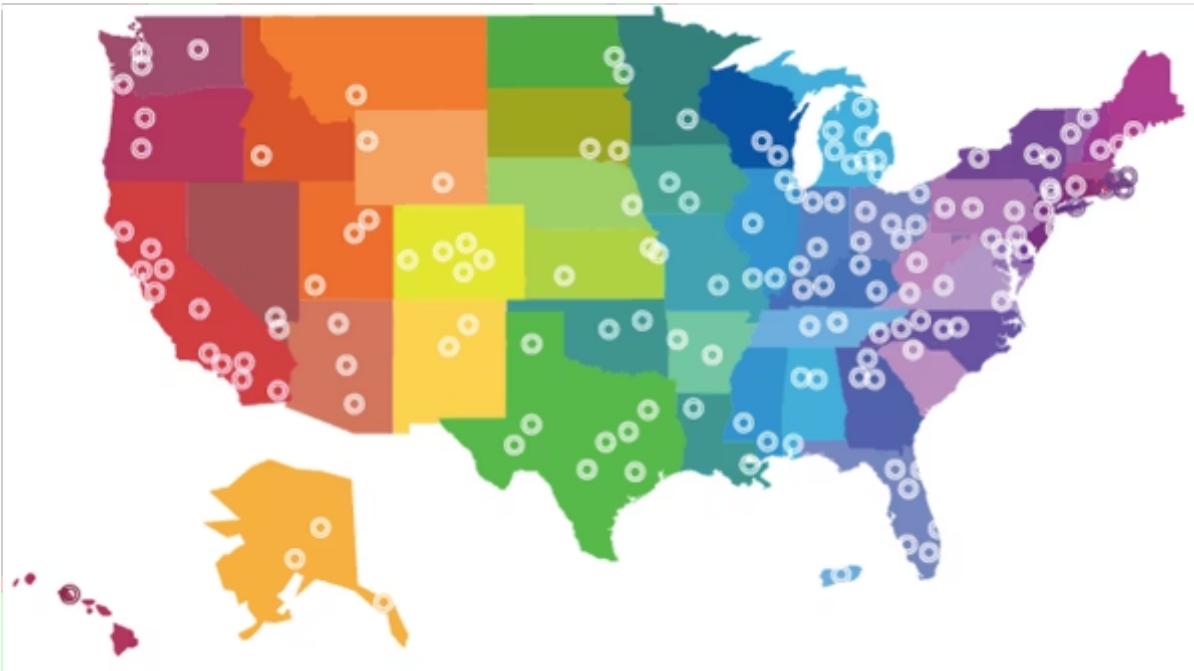


About Public Media Company



Public Media Company is a nonprofit consulting firm dedicated to serving public media. We leverage our business expertise to increase public media impact across the country.

For a quarter-century, Public Media Company has worked in partnership with organizations in urban and rural communities to find innovative solutions and build local impact. We have worked with more than 400 organizations in all 50 states, and we're currently coordinating the Public Media Bridge Fund to help stations hit hardest by defunding.



Welcome Back to Collaboration U!

Find the decks and recordings from this week's and last week's webinars at PublicMedia.co/collaboration-u
While you're there, **register for next week's webinar:**

WEDS., JULY 29 AT 2 P.M. EDT

Sharing 301

Tales from the Collaborative Front: A Panel Discussion

HOSTS

Gabrielle Jones & Rick Holter

Directors
Public Media Company

GUESTS



Vanessa de la Torre

Chief Content Officer
Connecticut Public



Tami Graham

Executive Director
KSUT Southwest Colorado



Nico Leone

President & CEO
KERA North Texas

ARCHIVED AT [PUBLICMEDIA.CO/COLLABORATION-U](https://PublicMedia.co/collaboration-u)

Sharing 101: How to Build a Collaborative

Collaboration U Reading List



Find tools, checklists and guides to collaboration at PMC's resource site, LocalNewsCatalyst.org



Station Strengthening Exercises

[A roadmap for station leaders](#) on clarifying strategy, building resilience, and financial benchmarking.



Funder Pitch Tool

[AI-powered help](#) for crafting the perfect grant narrative



Local Media Ecosystem Analysis

[Understand your community](#) with data tools, and map out where your station fits.



Collaboration Resources

Step-by-step guides to partnerships, from how to structure a collaboration to sample MOUs to a Public Media Mergers Playbook





Collaboration U

A Public Media Company Webinar Series

Sharing 201: The Secrets of Sharing

Findings from PMC's Shared Services Research

TODAY

Sharing 201

The Secrets of Sharing



HOST

Rick Holter

Director
Public Media Company

NEXT WEDS., JULY 29 AT 2 P.M. EDT

Sharing 301

Tales from the Collaborative Front: A Panel Discussion

HOSTS Gabrielle Jones & Rick Holter Directors, Public Media Company		GUESTS Vanessa de la Torre Chief Content Officer Connecticut Public	Tami Graham Executive Director KSUT Southwest Colorado	Nico Leone President & CEO KERA North Texas
---	--	---	---	--

ARCHIVED AT [PUBLICMEDIA.CO/COLLABORATION-U](https://publicmedia.co/collaboration-u)

Sharing 101: How to Build a Collaborative



The Context: Why This Work Matters More Than Ever

\$1.1B

Federal Funding Eliminated

When the President and Congress
defunded CPB

~\$40M

State Funding Cuts

At least 16 states have cut or eliminated
funding for public media stations

100+

Stations Threatened

Public radio and TV stations face an existential
crisis with cuts to operations, staff, and
programming

In this environment, shared services are no longer a cost-optimization exercise.

They are a survival strategy.

PMC has spent the past four years helping public media collaboratives answer a foundational question:

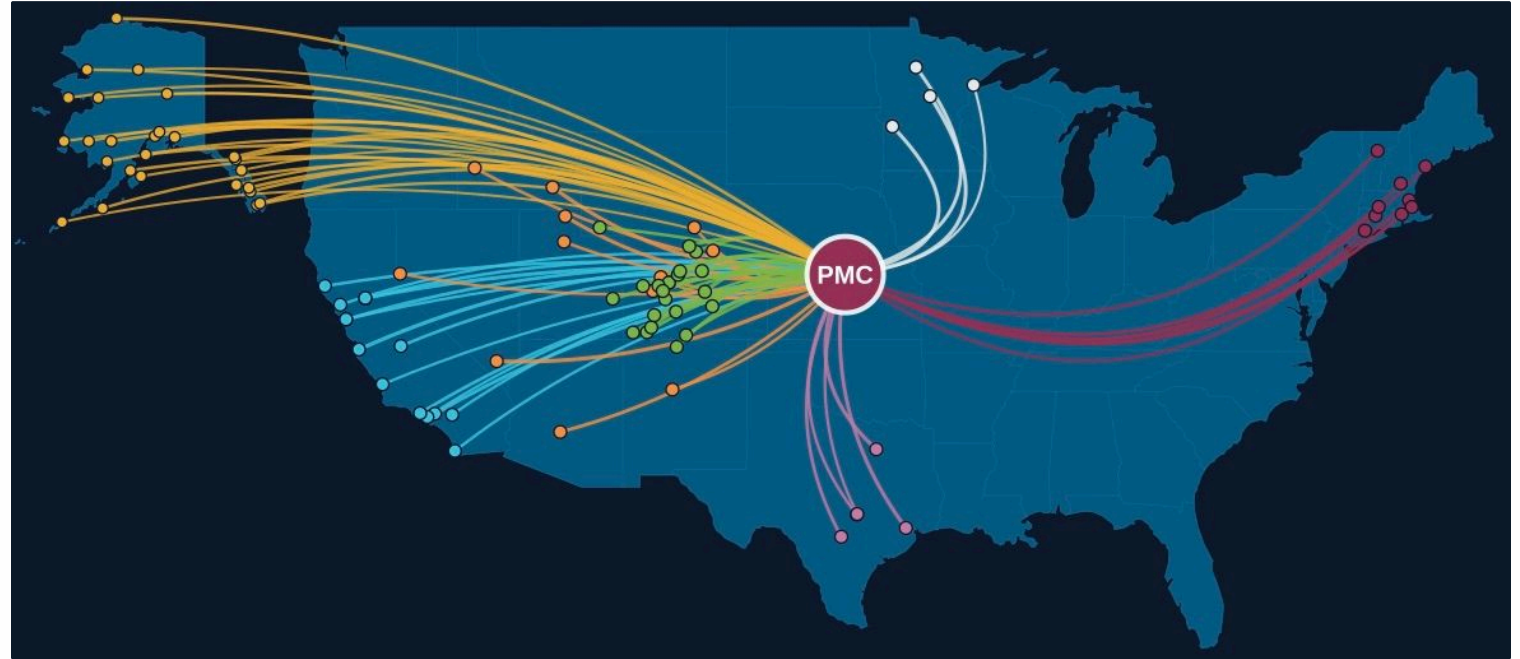
What can we do together that we can't do alone?



Seven Collaboratives. Four Years. 90+ Stations

PMC has deployed a series of surveys about potential shared services to **seven public media collaboratives** across the country, starting in 2023.

Five of them were built as content collaboratives, so the surveys generally focused on ways the partners could **share services *outside* content**.

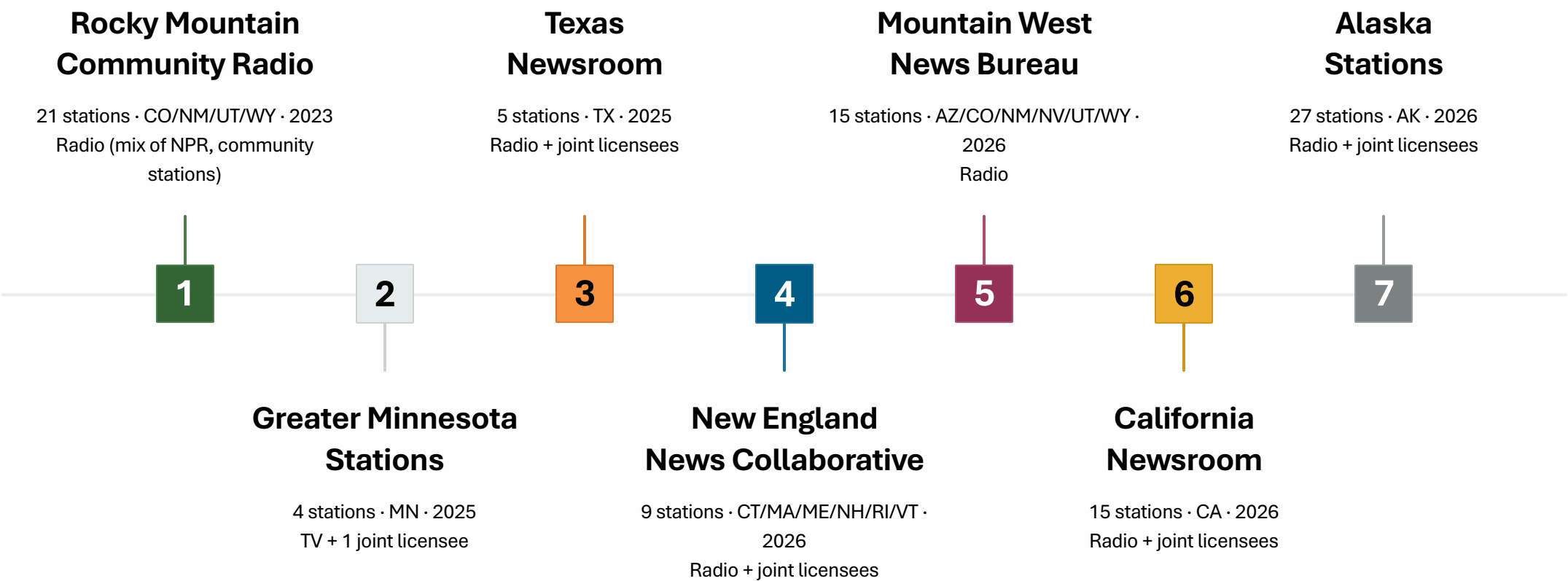


Important note

This is not a representative sample of the entire system. It includes mostly radio operations: About half of the stations surveyed are in NPR collaborative hubs. Most of the survey takers in those collabs are at larger joint licensees or radio-only stations.



Seven Collaboratives. Four Years. 90+ Stations



How the Surveys Took Shape

1 —
2 —

Rate + Rank Survey

Station leaders scored each potential Shared Service two ways:

- **Rating** on a 5-point scale of how promising each is as a Shared Service
- **Ranking** the options from most to least promising to gauge priorities

The dual measures surface both group consensus and pockets of strong interest that averages alone could obscure.



Open-Ended Questions

For every service, leaders explained why it would or wouldn't work at their station.

This qualitative data adds another level of insight — it tells us not just what stations want, but why, and what would have to be true for it to work.



Tech Audits

New England and Texas wanted to go deeper on the tech side, so PMC partnered with Inrush Broadcast Services on in-depth technology audits — inventorying platforms, identifying alignment and gaps, and assessing readiness for shared operations.



Cross-Collaborative Analysis

This body of work is unique: No other organization has conducted Shared Services research across this many public media collaboratives. That breadth allows us to distinguish what is universal from what is context-specific.

What Station Leaders Want

Across all seven collaboratives, station leaders say they're seeking the same things — efficiency, expanded capability, and financial sustainability — while fiercely protecting local identity.

More Capability

"Help us do things we can't do alone"

Shared audience research, grant writing, engineering expertise, marketing capacity

Efficiency

"Reduce duplication without losing quality"

Technology alignment, back-office consolidation, shared platforms

Local Control

"What is important locally can't be overshadowed or diminished by partnership."

The concern is consistent across every group: Shared services must add, not replace

Key Takeaway: Strategic Priorities Outweigh Cost Savings

Station leaders say they want to save money — but **the services they rate highest are rarely the biggest cost-savers**. They are the services that make stations better at their mission: reaching audiences, producing journalism, building revenue.



What Rises to the Top — Consistently

Six potential Shared Services generated significant interest across collaboratives.

Shared Service	Texas	New England	Mountain West	California	Minnesota	Alaska
Audience Research & Data	Top	Top	Top	Top	Strong	Low
Engineering	Top	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Top	Strong
CMS / Tech Alignment	Top	Top	Strong	Strong	Strong	Low
Grant Writing & Management	Strong	Mixed	Top	Top	Top	Top
Recruiting & Talent Development	Strong	Strong	Mixed	Top	N/A	Low
Underwriting	Top	Mixed	Strong	Strong	Strong	Top

Top Priority · Strong Interest · Mixed or Low Interest · Not asked

Note: The 2023 Rocky Mountain Community Radio survey was focused specifically on digital content areas, so is not included on this page.



What Usually Ranks Lowest — And Why

Major Giving

Donors give to people they know. Every collaborative rated this near the bottom — possibly because it's one of the most local, relationship-based program a station runs.

Local Live Event Production

Generally too local and contextual to centralize, though some smaller stations with few resources in this area expressed some interest.

CFO Services / Accounting

For many stations, this is already handled through licensees or parent organizations. The exceptions: Some smaller and rural stations rate these services much higher precisely because they don't have expertise on staff.

The same service that's irrelevant to a larger station can be transformative for a smaller one.



Friction Points That Show Up Regularly

These are not obstacles to overcome — they are design constraints to build with.



University & Institutional Licensees

Stations licensed through universities or parent organizations are already locked into HR, IT, payroll, and accounting systems — often without the ability to opt out. They're not resistant to sharing; they're structurally constrained. Any shared service model must design around them or explicitly exclude these functions.



Parent-Org Complications

Large stations already covered by substantial parent organizations have fewer obvious entry points into Shared Services — they already share through their licensee. But these stations are often the strongest potential providers of services to smaller partners.



Local Identity Concern

One thing is evident in every group, from the smallest to the largest: the fear that Shared Services will dilute what makes each station distinctive. The stations that overcome this concern share a common belief — that sharing back-office and infrastructure functions frees up capacity to invest more in local mission, not less.

How Station Size Matters

The same survey questions produce different answers, often depending on the size of who's answering. Large metro operations and small rural stations aren't disagreeing — they're solving different problems. Small stations do tend to be wary that Shared Services might address only large-station concerns.

Larger stations & joint licensees want capacity

- **Audience Research, Data, CMS, Recruiting** — services that sharpen an operation with resources. In some cases, back-office functions are already handled by a licensee or parent.

Smaller & rural stations want core infrastructure

- With few or no staff in **Finance, HR, or Engineering**, the services that top *their* lists are the ones that keep the lights on: **Underwriting, Grant Writing, Accounting, Payroll, IT, and Engineering.**

Alaska as proof

- 28 stations — mostly radio-only, with 5 joint licensees — the deepest read into small and rural stations among survey results.
- Alaska's ratings often invert the large-station results: **Audience Research, CMS, and Recruiting** fall to the bottom; **Accounting, Payroll, HR, Underwriting, and Grant Writing** rise to the top.
- Alaska already runs on shared infrastructure (CoastAlaska, Alaska Public Media engineering, statewide news, a shared health trust).

Don't try to design a one-size-fits-all Shared Service model. Design for the stations in front of you.

The Promise of Mini-Collabs

A prominent finding across every collaborative: **Smaller cohorts of 3 to 6 stations** can organize around a specific shared need. In every survey, several services earn top marks from a subset of stations even when the full-group average is middling. Those subsets are the starting point for mini-collaborations.

New England News Collaborative

Building two key "coalition of the willing" task forces

- **Engineering/Traffic**
- **Audience & Digital Innovation**

California Newsroom

Exploring **consolidation of existing products** (the California Report, etc.) under the California Newsroom umbrella, launching of new ones (**newsletters**, etc.), and a **statewide training program**.

Collaborating Across Collaboratives?

Two areas rank high across multiple collaboratives.

- **Grant Writing** generates the most enthusiasm among smaller stations. A shared grant writer serving smaller stations across multiple collaboratives could be the first true cross-collab mini-cohort — and potentially self-funding.
- **Engineering** has two collabs — Rocky Mountain Community Radio and the New England News Collaborative — exploring shared options. PMC has connected key personnel between the two, and others across the country are watching closely.



Proof of Concept: What's Working Now



Rocky Mountain Community Radio

- **1980s:** Born as a 5-station content collab, with programs distributed by cassette.
- **2020s:** Now 21 stations, a mix of NPR and true community stations, some staffed by volunteers.
- **2023:** PMC digital strategy project recommended a joint newsletter, training series, content-sharing infrastructure.
- **2025:** Press Forward awarded RMCR a **\$1M grant** to build shared engineering staff for 21 stations. That grant also funds equipment pool for emergencies and engineering apprentice program — and a **4WD vehicle** to climb to more than 70 towers across the Rockies.



Texas Newsroom

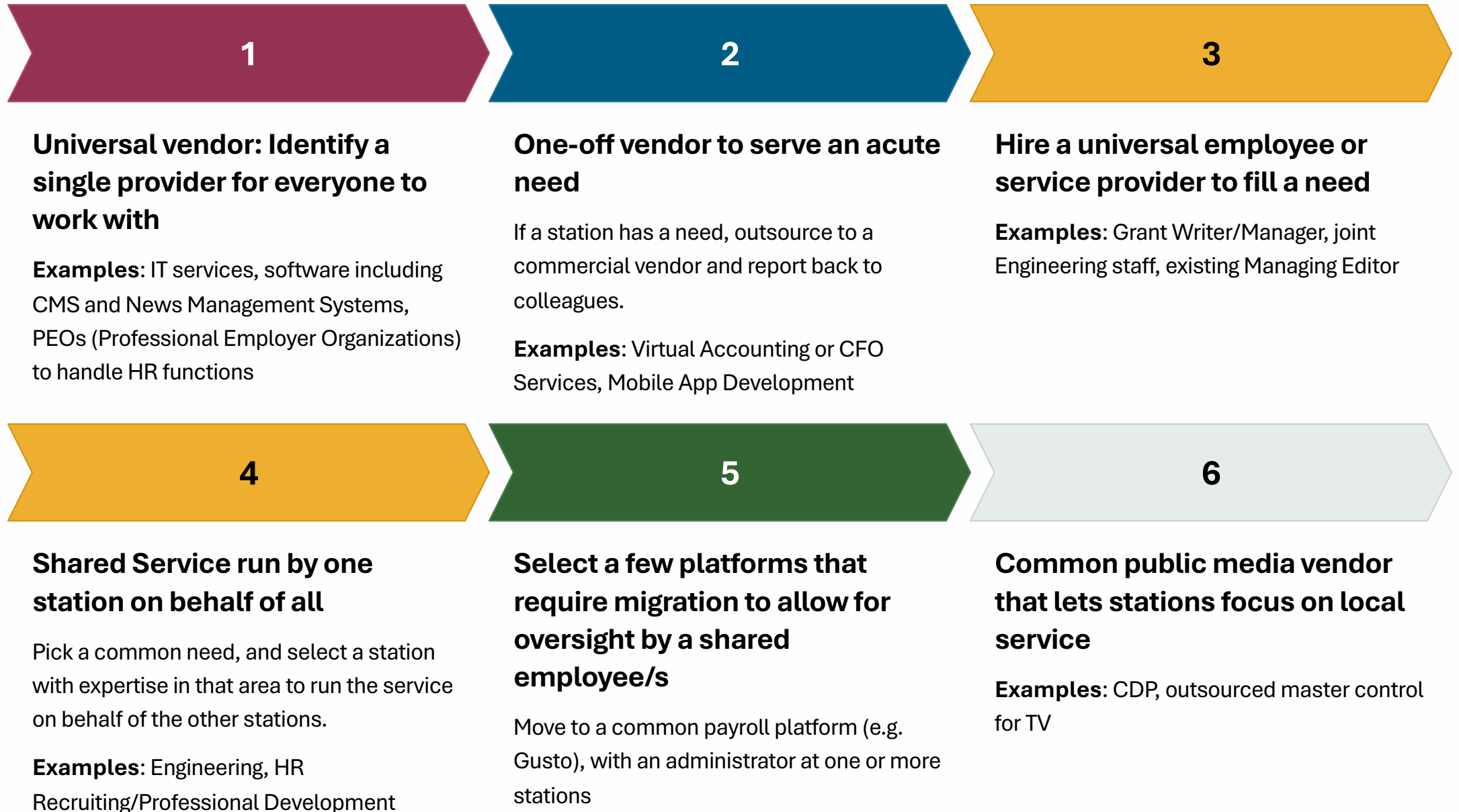
- **2015:** Statewide newsmagazine "Texas Standard" kicked off large-station collaboration.
- **2019:** The Texas Newsroom launched as NPR's first regional news "hub", producing weekday newscasts, joint editorial projects, and groundbreaking emergency coverage.
- **Today:** Shared underwriting (through Market Engineuity) has built sustainability for the statewide newscasts, "Texas Standard", and the collaborative as a whole.
 - KERA and KUT are teaming up on audience data & research.
 - Strong leadership alignment + dedicated business manager = implementation gets done
 - Built on a foundation of years of editorial collaboration — trust came first

Any collaboration rests on one foundational piece: trust.



Shared Service Options Matrix

Informally ranked from 1 to 6, with 1 the easiest and least complex — and the fastest to launch.



The Promise ... and Challenge ... of Tech Alignment

One of the survey topics, **Aligning Tech Stacks**, provoked the widest array of comments, from "I see this as the biggest opportunity for public radio" to "I don't see how this could work with so many unique tech stacks across the various stations." Here's how the stations in one collaborative — the California Newsroom — line up on various technology platforms (or don't).

	Most used	Others
AI Services	ChatGPT (5), Gemini (4), Claude (3)	Perplexity, Copilot, Google Notebook LM, Trint, Pinpoint, Otter AI
Automation Broadcast	ENCO (8), Wide Orbit (3)	Dalet, RCS
Audience Data	Nielsen (4), RRC (3), Google Analytics (4), NPR Studio (2)	Audigraphics, BigQuery, Blackbaud, Chartbeat, Congruity Works, Dash Social, DisplayR, Domo, DuckDB, Firebase, Hex, Hubspot, Looker Studio, Luminate, Parse.ly, Podtrac, Portable, Prefect + DBT, PRX (Dovetail), Python, Salesforce, SoundStack, Snowflake, vidIQ, various social network analytics tools
Content Management System Web	Grove (8, either standard or customized)	WordPress, Umbraco, Contentful, Memsys
News Management System Broadcast	Burli (2), Newsboss (2)	Dalet, Ross Inception, no NMS (8)
Planning/Internal Comms	Slack (8), Google Workspace/Docs (6), Airtable (3)	Outlook, Asana, Basecamp, SharePoint, Trello, Zoom
Traffic	Marketron (5), Wide Orbit (4), ProTrack (3)	Allegiance, Natural Log, Dalet; 1 moving to Aquira

The Most Promising Avenues Ahead

Audience Data & Research · Nearly Universal

There's an appetite across almost every collaborative. The clearest ROI: Better data leads to better programming, fundraising, and audience strategy. Most obvious place to start.

Engineering · Urgent

Urgent post-CPB. The talent shortage is real and accelerating — retirements seem to be outpacing new recruits to the field. RMCR's Press Forward grant is the model. Geography is the main challenge.

Grant Writing & Management · Self-funding

High demand among smaller stations (particularly in the Mountain West, California, Alaska, Minnesota). There's also potential for self-funding: A strong grant writer can pay for themselves many times over. Low barrier to start.

Talent Development & Recruiting · Emerging

This is a key priority — strongest signal in California, where small and large stations alike see value. Relatively easy lift with meaningful impact on pipeline and retention.

Tech Alignment · High Lift, High Reward

Lining up tech is tough, but can pay off. New England News Collaborative making headway here. One option: Start with group purchasing before full migration.



Q&A

Drop your questions into the chat, and we'll attempt to answer them!

Have follow-up questions?

Reach out to rick@publicmedia.co ... alison@publicmedia.co ... gabrielle@publicmedia.co

Congrats! You've Aced Your 2nd Course at Collaboration U

Find the decks and recordings from this week's and last week's webinars at PublicMedia.co/collaboration-u
While you're there, register for next week's webinar:

WEDS., JULY 29 AT 2 P.M. EDT Sharing 301 Tales from the Collaborative Front: A Panel Discussion HOSTS Gabrielle Jones & Rick Holter Directors Public Media Company	GUESTS  Vanessa de la Torre Chief Content Officer Connecticut Public	 Tami Graham Executive Director KSUT Southwest Colorado	 Nico Leone President & CEO KERA North Texas
--	---	--	---

ARCHIVED AT [PUBLICMEDIA.CO/COLLABORATION-U](https://PublicMedia.co/collaboration-u)

Sharing 101: How to Build a Collaborative



Collaboration U Reading List



Find tools, checklists and guides to collaboration at PMC's resource site, LocalNewsCatalyst.org



Station Strengthening Exercises

[A roadmap for station leaders](#) on clarifying strategy, building resilience, and financial benchmarking.



Funder Pitch Tool

[AI-powered help](#) for crafting the perfect grant narrative



Local Media Ecosystem Analysis

[Understand your community](#) with data tools, and map out where your station fits.



Collaboration Resources

Step-by-step guides to partnerships, from how to structure a collaboration to sample MOUs to a Public Media Mergers Playbook