



WTIP Strategic Framework 2024-2026

Since 1998, WTIP has served the broadcast communication needs of the North Shore and beyond. During our 2024 community listening process, this role was significantly reinforced. Stakeholders emphasized WTIP’s ability, and necessity, to constantly adapt to sustain its role as an essential and responsive community resource.

The purpose of this framework is to serve as a blueprint outlining paths along which WTIP can continue to sustain and strengthen its presence as an integral community resource. The framework is built on the recognized assets that have matured over the past 25 years. It also recognizes the challenges facing broadcast media nationally—demanding new solutions in today’s rapidly evolving media environment. WTIP must continue to innovate to remain a key contributor to the wellbeing of this unique and vital region.

Background

WTIP broadcasts at three locations: 90.7 FM in Grand Marais, 90.1 FM in Grand Portage, and 89.1 FM on the Gunflint Trail. From its studios in Grand Marais, the signal reaches along Lake Superior’s North Shore from Two Harbors to Thunder Bay, inland up the Gunflint Trail and across Lake Superior to northern Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The communities throughout this region rely on WTIP for public safety, local news and information, as a creative outlet, a source of entertainment, and as a trusted representative of the unique cultures and personalities of the region. Listeners comment on the “high journalistic standards,” the “professionalism,” as well as the “quirky local flavor” with “something for everyone.”

WTIP has expanded to reach beyond traditional on-air efforts. Today WTIP has notable live streaming and on-demand audiences, reaching throughout the US and Canada and beyond. For many, the services of WTIP are predominantly accessed via live streaming on mobile phones, reading the news via computer, or downloaded podcasts, etc. The future continues to demand rapid expansion into media far beyond the original “terrestrial broadcast” radio.

WTIP is proud to be an award-winning media service, with acclaim regionally and nationally for the quality of its journalism as well as its valued role in connecting, enlivening, and improving the wellbeing of the North Shore region. The awards include a regional Edward R Murrow Award for excellence in diversity, equity, and inclusion (*It Happens Here: The Roots of Racial Inequity on the North Shore*); *One Small Step, 2022*, one of six stations selected nationally as a hub for the StoryCorps’ initiative to strengthen community dialogue, one conversation at a time; and the 2021 MN AMPERS Station of the Year, “WTIP is a premier example of community radio not only statewide but nationwide” to name a few.

Identity

Mission

WTIP exists as a dynamic, local media resource that connects, reflects, and builds community on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Values

- ✓ Local voices
- ✓ Ethical journalism
- ✓ Inclusiveness, belonging
- ✓ Our natural environment
- ✓ Entertainment
- ✓ Diverse programming
- ✓ Unique, North Shore culture
- ✓ Community well-being

Vision

Our vision is to inspire dynamic community media for the future of the North Shore, by providing a forum for local perspectives that supports an informed public, is built on journalistic integrity, empowers storytelling, strengthens our democracy, and invests in the well-being of our community.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

WTIP North Shore Community Radio is located on the ancestral homelands of Ojibwe/Anishinaabe people. We honor the vital contributions of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, and gratefully acknowledge the history of the people, the legacy of this land, and recognize that Ojibwe people are still here, and are the original stewards of this land.

Strengths and Assets

Throughout the community listening process, it was reinforced that WTIP has matured as a core contributor to the health and vitality of the North Shore Community. WTIP plays a crucial role in the region within essential elements of a sustainable future:

- ✓ **Public safety, health, and wellbeing.** WTIP plays an essential public safety and emergency broadcast role, whenever urgent communication is required. In addition, WTIP offers reporting, podcasts, and routine programming around community conversations, and issues ranging from childcare to housing, to healthy lives such as *Bringing Out the Best of Ourselves*.
- ✓ **Cultural vitality.** Cultivating a sense of belonging, connecting people, Ideas, communities. Through a breadth of programming appealing to a variety of audiences, from Sidetracks to the Boomer Jam and Classic Country, as well as podcasts such as *The Elements of Craft*, WTIP offers the community events calendars, promotion of community happenings, and a celebration of a range of cultural opportunities. WTIP advances equity and inclusion especially through programming acknowledging and honoring Native roots and community.
- ✓ **Encouraging a viable local economy, empowering public discourse.** WTIP's newscasts, feature interviews, local government reporting, school news, and features such as North Shore Morning all highlight and encourage support of local services, build awareness around local needs, and encourage community conversation.
- ✓ **Giving Voice to our natural world.** Whether it's dogsled or cross-country ski events, treks into the Boundary Waters, or the night sky, WTIP offers a range of opportunities to uphold and give voice to the natural world that is the signature of the North Shore's identity. Recreation, resource protection, and awareness of future needs are featured on WTIP's regular programming, from Northern Gardening, to Going Green, to the Outdoors News podcast and Boundary Waters podcast, to name a few.

Challenges demanding new solutions

- ✓ **Developing future access.** As WTIP seeks to honor its mission to connect, reflect, and build community on the North Shore, it is imperative that WTIP place a higher priority on creating access for the next generations of our community—children, youth, young adults, and parents of small children.
- ✓ **Retooling for a digital age.** The imperative to retool for continuously changing communications technology is at the forefront of strategic imperative for all public media, from the largest national broadcast services to the smallest rural resources. WTIP has been evolving to meet this demand and recognizes that it must “ramp up” its commitments to provide access across a variety of platforms and formats to ensure its vitality and to survive into the future.
- ✓ **Building relationships.** WTIP has and is committed to honoring and sharing the importance of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, actively embracing its acknowledgement that WTIP is located on the ancestral homelands of Ojibwe/Anishinaabe people. WTIP recognizes the need to build stronger partnerships and relationships of trust, as well as programming and reporting that is produced of, by, and for Native people, providing listeners with opportunities to hear the Native voice.
- ✓ **Sustainability of station capacity and human resources.** It is imperative that WTIP establish as a priority and recognize the long term importance of workplace culture, communication and teambuilding. New systems, policies and procedures, and the opportunity for an excellent staff team to access professional development as desired toward staff retention.

Strategic Framework: Set the Stage for a Dynamic Future

Some have referred to this 3-year Framework as “The Big Shift”; continuing and yet markedly accelerating an evolution toward a new era in Broadcast Media. While this may be a ‘big shift’ on some levels, WTIP’s commitment to radio will not shift. A “quirky North Shore vibe” will not shift. A diversity of programming will not shift. This framework commits to three important shifts on behalf of the North Shore community:

- ✓ **MULTI-PLATFORM BROADCAST MEDIA.** Expansion of the tools of communication to become radio that is both rooted in its traditional means, but is also relevant to next generations and communications habits, through expansion of digital access points.
- ✓ **DEEPENED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.** Embracing broader community engagement; cultivating more interactive connections, more partnership, and deepened engagement across generations, cultures, and community groups.
- ✓ **CAPACITY.** The foundation anchoring this framework is a fundamental shift in the workplace culture of the organization toward one that prioritizes relationships, team development and learning.

The strategic priorities that follow reflect this “big shift” to set the stage for a dynamic future. They also are framed within the established Circle of Engagement model of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB).



Engagement: Enrich Community Relationships—Empower New Voices

Nurturing connection and building community is at the core of our mission. WTIP has a critical role to play in sustaining community and building a vibrant future for the North Shore. To serve this vital function, it is important that the station cultivates existing and new relationships that extend the reach beyond its local traditional radio members and listening audiences, profiled as mid- to older- adult, largely white. Throughout the listening processes and assessments conducted in the development of this plan, two community groups were identified as top priorities for development in the near future, listed here as two strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority	Measurable Strategic Outcomes
Expand focus to engage the next generation of media makers. Increase the number of youth participating in WTIP.	By the end of FY 2026 a program will be built with community partners that enables content created by youth to be available across various media platforms, and goes beyond terrestrial radio broadcast.
Sustain and strengthen community connections and multi-cultural perspectives.	By the end of FY 2024 communication channels will be in place to increase understanding of the needs and desires for relevant community media that is of, by and for the Grand Portage community.

Content: Expand Local Media Voices—Invite Dialogue and Change

The theme reverberating nationally through all levels of Public Radio is the dramatic shift away from “terrestrial radio” to digital media consumption. Consumers of all age groups are shifting their media habits – news and music – to digital, especially mobile platforms. It is imperative that WTIP continue, and accelerate, its path toward an organization that seamlessly provides its communications across all platforms, while maintaining and strengthening the station’s position as a trusted and reliable source of local news and information.

Strategic Priority	Measurable Strategic Outcomes
Develop as a multi-platform, multi-media organization.	By the end of FY 2026 WTIP will have successfully defined, planned, and built out broadcast media technology to enable access to WTIP from a variety of platforms.
Deepen role as the trusted and reliable source of local news and information.	By the end of FY 2026 WTIP will have in place a documented increase in live presence around the communities, including potential for equipment access for partners.

Capacity: Build up Infrastructure—Strengthen Team

The work of community radio and a multi-platform media organization is uniquely labor-intensive. Staff and volunteers are at the core of this work. WTIP is called upon to sustain a workplace with professionals who are instilled with pride—who find paths to advancement, fair compensation and professional development in ways that contribute to both personal and organizational wellbeing. For WTIP to continue to thrive as an essential public service, able to fulfill the vision, values and priorities articulated in this plan, the organization must support and inspire the staff and volunteers at all levels of the organization. This framework reflects the need to place an urgent importance on several aspects of human resource management as a top priority in 2024 and recognize the importance for the long term of workplace culture, communications, and teambuilding.

Strategic Priority	Measurable Strategic Outcomes
Recognize the long term importance of workplace culture, communications, and team building.	As an immediate 2024 priority WTIP will set in place new paths and processes to ensure a work environment in which each person experiences appreciation, wellbeing, opportunities for leadership, and the autonomy to do their best work. Staff will report on a quarterly basis.
Advance systems and opportunities for WTIP staff and volunteer development.	By the end of FY 2024 there will be programs and systems in place to ensure staff and volunteers are prepared for the evolution of multi-media, multi-platform journalism, and other individualized opportunities for professional development.
Articulate journalistic policies and practices for a multi-platform era.	By the end of FY 2024 all station professional journalism policies and practices will be reviewed and updated.
Articulate HR policies and practices, including role clarity, for a multi-platform era.	By the end of FY 2024 there will be in place a continuous process of systematic planning and management of employees, our most important assets.
Continue to build and sustain trust around WTIP brand identity as a new era unfolds.	WTIP will develop a plan in 2024 to ensure that community trust continues and a clear brand identity is recognized. WTIP is known as an anchor multi-platform media organization.
Give priority to board development.	WTIP Board of Directors will complete a board audit in 2024 that revisits its recruitment, onboarding, and terms of office practices as outlined in the Bylaws, as well as institute a committee structure to provide advisory support to key areas named in this plan.

Support: Diversify Avenues for Revenue Development

Revenue sources for WTIP include a healthy mix of membership, underwriting, significant reliance on two grant sources: The MN Arts and Culture Heritage Fund (Legacy), which will sunset in 2034 unless renewed by Minnesota voters, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Strategic Priority	Measurable Strategic Outcomes
Increase general operating support to fund strategic priorities.	Funds are secured to accomplish annual goals and allow for resilience in challenging times overall as well as to fund the strategic priorities adopted through this strategic framework.
Explore new, diversified sources for revenue to tap into the future.	By the end of 2024, a Development Plan is in place for increasing current and new sources of funds.
Ensure that long term capital needs are identified and explored.	The development committee will explore a framework and potentially a feasibility study for a potential capital campaign to fund identified future capital needs.