

Radio Show about the Local Environment

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Project Budget:

\$17,600

Abstract:

“Shenandoah Valley Ever Green” is an hour-long radio program that spearheads environmental education efforts in the Valley. The program, broadcast seasonally on public radio station WMRA-FM, can provide a journalistic outlet for JMU student reporters to explain the science of local environmental systems. Listeners can become better informed about their locality and are better equipped to conserve natural resources. Local teachers can participate in mini-grant funding and describe their projects on the show.

Project:

This proposal seeks funding for multiple episodes of an educational radio program that highlights the natural environment of the Shenandoah Valley and people’s interaction with local environmental systems. During 2022, this radio program—“Shenandoah Valley Ever Green”—had two episodes broadcast on WMRA-FM, the public radio affiliate in Harrisonburg, VA. Each hourlong episode features a handful of stories gathered primarily by JMU student correspondents. Listen by visiting <https://loom.ly/wtk5Vtg> or using this QR code:



The initial broadcast of “Shenandoah Valley Ever Green” was financed with a Community Engagement Grant from the JMU Faculty Senate. This grant provided funding for the first episode as well as the momentum to produce additional episodes. WMRA played the first two episodes in Summer and Winter 2022. WMRA provides no financial support for the show. This proposal requests funding to finance an episode for each season (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter) for two years (8 episodes).

JMU student correspondents are the main reporters who gather stories for each episode. Students gain authentic experience with radio journalism and research through their contributions to the show. Faculty members Alessi and Thomas work with students to develop their stories and encourage their growth as journalists. Beyond the on-air broadcast, the show also will steer listeners to the WMRA website for more information: photos, maps, and other links to program topics. Students will produce this content, employing their various skills in writing, audio production, environmental science, and instructional technology (IT).

The educational impact of each episode is straightforward. The program tells important stories that illuminate natural systems that are a part of listeners' everyday experience, but about which they may not possess deep knowledge. Ultimately, this program could be seen as a "user's manual" which describes ways to better understand and to sustain the health of the natural environment in our region. This program should hold broad appeal among the WMRA audience as it can satisfy listeners' curiosities about the types of natural phenomena that they encounter regularly (e.g., bird migration, blossoms and fruit, river height along the shoreline). The very first story on the premiere episode explained the archaeological evidence of Indigenous people in the Valley. Ultimately, the program will highlight vital topics such as food, weather, and a changing landscape in the Valley, topics relevant to the experience of listeners.

The program spotlights important voices. Each episode thus far has highlighted the work of female scholars from a variety of disciplines: geography, astronomy, physics, and archaeology. Senator Tim Kaine was a guest on the first episode, discussing legislation to preserve mountaintops on the boundary with West Virginia. The practitioners and scholars who have been featured on the program speak about the science and the historical records that inform their work.

The program emphasizes time-tested techniques as well as contemporary innovations to conserve the natural environment. Early episodes have told about seed savers in the Valley, planting native species on recovered landfill areas in Shenandoah County, and carbon sequestration efforts on a farm in Mt. Clinton, VA. This radio show provides listeners with ideas to guide their own actions within the biome. If nothing else, the creators intend for the stories to coax listeners to spend time outdoors to enjoy and conserve the local environment.

The proposed budget is being requested to fund the production of 8 episodes of "Shenandoah Valley Ever Green" for radio broadcast (4 episodes per year for 2 years). Each episode will provide funding to pay reporters and to reimburse travel required to collect local stories.

JMU students who function as correspondents for the show will receive payment for their journalistic efforts (research, interviews, scripts, web resources, etc.) associated with the show. Also, writers who will be gathering details and interviews for stories can receive reimbursement for miles traveled. This funding request also asks for monies to support professional development sessions twice per year for interested students. These sessions would be semi-annual occasions during which student correspondents could learn from professional journalists and environmentalists invited for instruction.

One additional facet of this proposal is a request for seed money to support local school projects for environmental education (EE). The Shenandoah Valley Environmental Education Alliance (SVEEA) is an affiliation of educators and experts who curate individual natural sites/causes in the region. Members of this group will be among local educators who will apply for mini-grants to fund (up to \$250; at least 8 projects awarded) school-based EE projects. K-12 teachers will submit proposals. The successful application for a school-based project will meet parameters which include the following:

- builds on learners' experiences
- extends classroom lessons
- invites conversation with other community stakeholders
- associates local action with another action from elsewhere on the globe
- is rooted in the school's location
- carries learners outdoors

Finally, funded projects will be featured on an episode of the radio show.

<u>Project Budget Amount:</u>	<u>\$17,600</u>
Personnel:	\$12,000
Travel:	\$1600
Speakers:	\$2000
Classroom Mini-Grants:	\$2000

Additional information to explain or expand on budgetary needs:

- Personnel: \$12,000 (\$1500 per episode) funds from which to pay students for collecting stories and for development of web materials for a webpage to accompany the program
- Travel: \$1600 total to fund any local travel, supporting student reporters gathering stories (approx. \$200 per episode)
- Speakers: \$2000 professional development, funds which can pay an honorarium for semi-annual sessions to an invited journalist or environmentalist. Interested students can interact with the present and hone their understanding about these fields
- Classroom Mini-Grants: \$2000 to fund a small grant to which teachers can apply for classroom projects that involve K-12 students in the local environment. The funds would provide 8 grants worth up to \$250 apiece.