

DIGITAL-FIRST PRODUCTIONS

MPM Studios: A Year in Review

What we built, what the data tells us, and what we need to do next

Prepared for Detroit PBS Leadership

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION

How should Detroit PBS formalize and prioritize digital-first content so it better represents Detroit, strengthens audience relationships, supports the subscriber model, and uses staff time intentionally?

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Move from an informal MPM Studios model to a formal **Digital-First Productions** function, with a defined workflow, capacity model, project tracking, production partnership, and clearer strategic role.

 A more focused purpose

 A shared editorial calendar

 Formal recognition

 A clearer success metric

What the First Year Tells Us



Fewer, more deliberate posts are producing substantially more value per post.

Average views per post increased 331.5% (554.7 → 2,394.0); average engagements per post increased 185.8% (101.7 → 290.8).



TikTok and Instagram are the strongest growth opportunities.

TikTok generated 133,776 views on 29 posts at an 11.6% engagement rate; Instagram improved across views, engagements, and engagement rate.



The strongest content shares a clear pattern: Detroit-specific identity, history, place, and community.

The Vernors video is the largest example, but other high performers reinforce the same direction.



The biggest strategic opportunity is not simply producing more content.

It is becoming a clearer bridge between national programming and Detroit: content that makes the community see itself in Detroit PBS.

How It Compares

Three windows: Pre-MPM (Aug 2023–Jul 2025), MPM Studios (Aug 2025–Aug 2026), and Non-MPM content posted in that same Aug 2025–Aug 2026 window.

MPM Studios posted 42 unique videos across platforms in this window; all figures reflect organic video shorts performance data.

PRE-MPM → MPM STUDIOS → NON-MPM (CONCURRENT WINDOW)

	PRE-MPM Aug 2023 – Jul 2025	MPM STUDIOS Aug 2025 – Aug 2026	NON-MPM same window, concurrent
Avg. views per post	554.7 Aug '23–Jul '25	2,394.0 +331.5% vs Pre-MPM	2,454.4 –0.3% vs MPM Studios
Avg. engagements per post	101.7 Aug '23–Jul '25	290.8 +185.8% vs Pre-MPM	218.6 –24.8% vs MPM Studios
Posts analyzed (raw)	2,730 ~24 months	138 –94.9% vs Pre-MPM	475 3.4× more posts

MPM Studios lifted per-post views and engagements far above the Pre-MPM baseline, and is roughly on par with Non-MPM on views per post, while posting 3.4× fewer videos in the same window.

How People Engaged and Where

TikTok is the clearest platform growth story. 60–120 second videos earned the highest engagement rates.

ENGAGEMENT BY PLATFORM, PRE → POST

Platform	Posts (Pre → Post)	Avg. Views per Post (Pre → Post)	Avg. Engagements per Post (Pre → Post)
Facebook	945 → 36	1,299.0 → 3,352.6	277.6 → 565.8
Instagram	671 → 47	263.6 → 1,305.3	9.3 → 77.2
YouTube	38 → 20	804.6 → 654.6	27.2 → 22.4
TikTok	N/A → 29	N/A → 4,613.0	N/A → 533.0

ENGAGEMENT & WATCH TIME BY VIDEO LENGTH

Length	Videos	Avg. Views	Avg. Engagements	Avg. Eng. Rate	Avg. Time Watched
Under 30s	7	1,172	114	6.4%	3.6s
30–60s	13	14,405	1,738	6.3%	9.1s
60–90s	16	2,102	415	9.5%	10.0s
90–120s	13	1,846	350	9.5%	9.5s
120s+	14	773	88	7.5%	11.0s

TikTok had no pre-MPM presence. Time watched: avg. 9.1s across all networks (89 of 138 posts report it).

What Resonated Most

The common thread across both rankings is Detroit-specific identity, history, and place.

Rank	Top by Views	Views	Top by Engagements	Engagements
1	Vernors is Ken Burns Approved	200,845	Vernors is Ken Burns Approved	23,460
2	Juneteenth History	17,691	Juneteenth History	4,656
3	#LibraryCardSignUpMonth	11,297	250 Quintessential Things About Detroit	2,187
4	Community Wishes Into Action (Giving Tuesday)	11,075	Community Wishes Into Action (Giving Tuesday)	1,465
5	Detroit's Role in MLK's Message	8,728	Detroit's Role in MLK's Message	1,078
6	250 Quintessential Things About Detroit	8,697	Channel 56's 70th Anniversary	561

The Audience We Are Building For

A Detroit-identified viewer who wants to see their city and community reflected back to them, not national-style content with a Detroit label added to it.

CORE	INNER RING	EXTENDED METRO
EXAMPLES Downtown, Midtown, Corktown, Detroit neighborhoods citywide CONNECTION TO DETROIT <i>Primary identity anchor; lives the city day to day.</i>	EXAMPLES Dearborn, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Ferndale, Grosse Pointe(s), Oak Park, Southfield CONNECTION TO DETROIT <i>Tightly connected to Detroit's daily life, culture, and news.</i>	EXAMPLES Royal Oak, Warren, Sterling Heights, Livonia, Troy, Novi, Rochester Hills CONNECTION TO DETROIT <i>May have grown up in or near Detroit or maintain strong ties.</i>

Four Things That Changed How We Think About This Work



Our role is upstream of the subscriber model

There is no single landing page or attribution chain from a social video to a membership form. Our job is creating reach, familiarity, and trust, not owning the funnel.



Views measure reach. Engagement measures relationship.

Views tell us we reached people. Engagement, a reaction, comment, or share, tells us the content gave them a reason to respond.



Detroit representation is the strategic opportunity

Digital-first production can respond quickly and represent specific communities in ways broadcast structurally cannot.



We built audience knowledge, not just content

A year of testing created a working understanding of what subjects, formats, and platforms produce results. It is a strategic asset for the whole organization.

Two Content Modes, One Team

PREMIERE / ELEVATED CONTENT

Higher-production video tied to national long-lead programming (1–2/month)

QUICK-TURN SOCIAL CONTENT

Lower-lift, platform-responsive content, ongoing and capacity-dependent

TEAM

Reyana
Working Group Lead, Production

Adam Fox-Long
GLN Content & Production

Jordan
Strategy, Data & Workflow

Aaliyah
Working Group Lead, Social

Mila
One Detroit, ABJ & Faith in Detroit

Tom
Administrative Support

Maddy
Content Curation, National Programs

Sam
MLC & Detroit PBS Kids

Production Reviewer
To be determined

Megan
PBS Books Content Lead

Eric
Marketing Content Reviewer

Interns
General content creation

How Work Gets Planned



*Progress on projects to be tracked on Teamwork

Editorial pipeline already mapped: local angles are identified through 2026–27: Ages of Ice, NOVA: Knowledge Keepers, Independent Lens: Seeds, the Caregiving Initiative, Craft in America, and more.

Open question: should there be a formal threshold for Digital-First Productions treatment vs. general social treatment?

Five Concrete Needs

Not primarily a request for more content. It is a request for enough structure to prioritize the work and understand its cost.



A production voice in approvals

A senior production staff member to participate in concept, script, and edit checkpoints.



A project code

So staff hours and true cost can finally be tracked. Today the team can only ballpark ≈ 10 hrs/month/person plus ~ 5 hrs/month in meetings.



Organizational clarity

A defined version of the function that Production, Eric, and Laura can explain and advocate for.



A path to external funding

Formalizing the work opens grant and marketing opportunities, such as the PBS Mystery Campaign Grant.



A capacity decision before fall locks

Sept–Nov already includes 2 Premiere videos/month, Faith in Detroit, the Caregiving launch, and ongoing social.

THE DECISION WE ARE ASKING LEADERSHIP TO MAKE

Continue and formalize the work but change the standard for success.

Digital-First Productions should not be measured primarily by how many social assets it produces. It should be measured by whether it helps Detroit PBS reach and understand its audience, represent Detroit more authentically, create stronger audience relationships, and make national programming more locally relevant.

Thank You

Questions and discussion