

Public Access Corporation of the District of Columbia

February 29, 2016 Submission
Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia
Performance Oversight Hearing

VI. Agency-Specific

24) How does the agency solicit feedback from customers? Please describe.

- **What has the agency learned from this feedback?**
- **How has the agency changed its practices as a result of such feedback?**

Community needs assessment

- The DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment will soon be reviewing and updating the most recent Community Needs Assessment. In 2011, DCTV assisted the DC Office of Cable Television (OCT) to conduct a community needs assessment with outreach to members and supporters. As a part of the required cable television franchise renewal process with Comcast, the Office of Cable Television conducted various interviews and public input forum meetings to determine the current and future cable-related and communications needs for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access operations in the District. The information obtained from the interviews is extremely important in helping shape the future of all Public, Government and Education channels, including DCTV. More than 50 DCTV members, partners and supporters provided testimony at the various forums - ensuring that DCTV obtains the necessary tools and boosts in capacity to remain a vibrant community network. Subsequently, DCTV participated in the remaining aspects of the Community Needs Assessment conducted by the Office of Cable Television, which will use the information obtained from that study to help determine how to most effectively meet the needs of DC's communities.
- DCTV utilized information obtained from the needs assessment to develop a plan for additional enhancements to the facility for FY12 through FY15, including enhancing streaming capacity and ways that members can help to curate the web site.
- DCTV will use any new information obtained through a Community Needs Assessment process as a basis for planning how DCTV can best meet needs and requirements of the public using DCTV's channels, facilities and services.

Surveys and Web Interaction

We are constantly communicating with our customers to assess their needs and use their feedback to inform and implement changes to better serve the community. We use a number of resources to gather input from our stakeholders with surveys and social media engagement being our most effective tools.

- We conduct surveys at the end of training courses, membership orientations and at most of events. DCTV uses this information to assess quality of training and to make improvements to services.
- DCTV staff talk to members and guests, and potential members to solicit feedback and suggestions; suggestions are addressed ongoing.
- DCTV also uses social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to get additional feedback from members and viewers.
- DCTV allows viewers to comment on programs via DCTV's website, or to contact producers.
- DCTV conducted surveys during and after the launch event for the 25th Anniversary, and use the data to inform marketing and outreach efforts.
- In FY15, the Compass volunteer team is conducted an extensive survey of current and past DCTV members, to be used by DCTV in updating our strategic vision and completing development of a strategic plan.

Participant responses encouraged to DCTV to provide the community with more resources to engage and learn. As a result:

- We launched a free program that offers access to our media production equipment and facilities to D.C. residents that are certified producers through our training program.
- We now host free, monthly educational and networking events that gives the community to the opportunity to interact with people that are independently creating media in D.C.
- We expanded our training course to include advanced classes, private training, and short-form, 2 day workshops that teach basic media production skills for any experience level.
- We launched a new website with a user-friendly interface so that visitors can get to information quickly and a place where our members can upload content from anywhere that has Internet access.
- As of October 2015, producers can now submit Program Submission Forms and Program Proposal Forms online.

- Also in October 2015, DCTV's FTP (File Transfer Protocol) site was launched. The FTP site allows producers to upload programs from off site to DCTV's server. To date, 187 programs have been uploaded via the FTP site.
- We expanded our social media presence as a platform to inform our followers about local news and events.
- We added capability to provide bulletins and a listing of the day's activities inside DCTV's facility via television monitors.
- To help our members stay relevant within the industry, we will start offering DSLR classes in April.

25) To the extent possible, please provide an update regarding the franchise renewal negotiations with Comcast and the effect it will have on PAC.

Besides offering outstanding services to DC residents, a very high priority for DCTV is the renewal of Comcast's franchise agreement. Payment for the use of the District's publicly owned right of ways is via franchise fees, funding, PEG (public educational and government) channels and other cable support (e.g. INet, cable services to schools, firehouses, police, etc.).

The Comcast franchise agreement expired in December 2012. The Office of Cable Television (OCT) has been working closely with us and other stakeholders to ensure a very effective process.

The Office of Cable Television has conducted—and will be updating—a Community Needs Assessment, including holding public hearings and conducting a technical review. DCTV participated throughout, and the Office of Cable Television has consistently maintained strong support and advocacy for DCTV's needs.

Because the franchise agreements provide for the structure, funding and cable channels that provide the core support of DCTV's mission, the importance of this long-term agreement between the city and Comcast cannot be understated. We respectfully restate our emphatic request that Chairman Orange, this Committee and the Council continue to ensure strong public, educational and government access as in the best interest of the city and its residents.

Very importantly—and we can't emphasize this enough—this new franchise with Comcast is the foundation of all three cable franchise agreements. That is, whatever is in the Comcast agreement—or absent from it—is reflected in the RCN and Verizon agreements. The Verizon agreement in particular, is written so that if Comcast reduces its level of support in this new agreement, then effective with the new Comcast agreement, Verizon immediately drops their cash support of the access channels from 3% of gross revenues, to 2%, or to whatever level of support is negotiated by Comcast. Similarly, the RCN agreement up for renewal after the Comcast agreement will substantially mirror the same terms contained in the Comcast agreement—for better or worse.

DCTV cannot afford to go backwards—and attempt to serve the increasing needs of District residents on shrunken resources.

A full report of DCTV's future needs was provided to the Council previously. As previously reported to the Council and Administration, DCTV's future needs include:

FUNDING

- Ensure DCTV's funding and resources does not decrease:
- Maintain the current 1% of gross revenues paid quarterly at the same time the franchise fees are due and paid, and the payment continues to be paid directly to DCTV.
- Ensure the definition of Gross Revenues does not have the effect of decreasing PEG funding or franchise fees.
- Ensure Comcast continues to provide the same level of support overall: 5% Franchise fee plus 2% for PEG Capital, including DCTV, and the equivalent of an additional 1% (e.g. INet and other resources. (If the same or better level of support is not achieved, DCTV's funding will decrease via the terms of the RCN and Verizon franchises.)
- CHANNELS & CHANNEL CAPABILITIES
 - Provide for 3 public access channels (increasing from the current 2 channels)
 - All public access channels transmitted in HD format
 - All channels continue to be available to all cable subscribers
 - Ensure full scheduling information is on cable channel guide
 - Ensure full functionality of channels (e.g. scheduling and recording DVR, Video on Demand capability, fully functional STB program guide for recording, advance programming and reminders)
 - Provide for Video on Demand capability accessible through Comcast's program scheduling guide
 - Re-align DCTV's channels to dial locations near DC government channels, and no further change to channel placements
- AD INSERTION SPOTS FOR MARKETING PEG CHANNELS
 - Ad Insertion Spots for all PEG channels to use to market programming and brand PEG channels
- OTHER
 - Other technical terms, such as no charge to provide and maintain transmission of PEG channels were provided to the Office of Cable Television
- These provisions are to provide for the potential:
 - increased funding for operations and capital,
 - DCTV is able to effectively serve DC residents,
 - DCTV is able to maintain state of the art technology,

- DCTV is able to expand services to youth and nonprofits, and very importantly,
- Ensure DCTV is able to develop and increase internships, advanced training and professional career training opportunities for DC residents

DCTV respectfully requests that Chairman Orange, this Committee and the Council continues their full support regarding the terms of the Comcast Cable Franchise Agreement in the upcoming renewal to come before the Council, to ensure strong public, educational and government access as in the best interest of the city and its residents.

We will continue to work closely with the Office of Cable Television, Film, Entertainment and Music and this Committee to address these issues, along with others that will support our continued vibrancy and growth, and expansion of community programming.

26) Please provide an update of the franchise agreements with Verizon and RCN.

Verizon

Issues with payments to the Public Access Corporation for prior year payments were resolved with outstanding assistance from the Office of Cable Television, Film, Entertainment and Music and its predecessor, including excellent assistance from current Director Angie Gates, and there have been no further issues.

Verizon is providing the channels, funding, signal quality and other terms of its franchise agreement as the agreement provides. In the event of signal disruption or failure, which is infrequent, Verizon responds quickly and effectively.

DCTV would like Verizon to include DCTV's programming lineup in the cable guide schedules, along with all the associated functionality, as do Comcast and RCN. DCTV is prepared and is capable of converting to HD format for transmitting its programming to cable subscribers.

The Verizon franchise agreement is a 15-year agreement that began in 2009. If the city approves a Comcast agreement with lower compensation for right of ways than was in place through 2012, the Verizon agreement allows Verizon to reduce its compensation as well. This directly affects support for public, educational and government channels, and could potentially reduce the amount of funding for DCTV.

This effect is evident now. Since 2013, Verizon pays 2% of its gross revenues instead of 3%. As a result, instead of DCTV receiving 1 2/3 percent of gross revenues, DCTV receives 1 1/3 percent. This is based on changes in what Comcast is providing while the new agreement is being negotiated. It is a significant loss to DCTV and impacts our offerings to the community.

RCN

RCN has always strongly supported public, educational and government access and DCTV, and is providing the channels, signal quality, funding and other terms of its franchise agreement as the agreement provides. In the event of signal disruption or failure, which is infrequent, RCN responds quickly and effectively. DCTV is prepared and is capable of converting to HD format for transmitting its programming to cable subscribers.

The RCN agreement was a five year agreement effective in 2005 and extended to terminate after negotiations that will be conducted when the Comcast agreement has been finalized, so that the terms negotiated with Comcast may be used as the basis to determine the terms of the new RCN agreement. We believe RCN will continue its previous commitment to the PEG channels and its support of DCTV.

27) Please explain your current funding streams and what they are used for during FY15 and FY16 to date.

DCTV annual revenue for FY15 & FY16 consists of funds received from the following sources:

- Direct support in the amount of 1% of gross revenues was received from the cable operators (Comcast, RCN and Verizon).
- Membership Dues
- Production Services (includes equipment fees and Creative Services)
- Training Fees
- Sales of Recording Media Stock, T-Shirts and Pins, etc.
- Interest Income

The funds were used to support DCTV operations for FY15 and FY16, to date.

In addition, DCTV received a share of PEG funds paid to the District by Comcast, RCN and Verizon (and distributed to DCTV by the Office of Cable Television, Film, Entertainment and Music) which were used for equipment replacement, technical refreshment and other capital projects.

28) What are your current funding goals?

DCTV needs to retain at a minimum, the current level of cable funding, and similar annual increases from cable revenues, both for operating and for capital.

DCTV is seeking a 99-year lease at \$1 per year to remain in Brooks Mansion, plus forgiveness of the remaining 5 years on the current lease or a capital grant to repair the earthquake damage to the foundation of Brooks Mansion as part of protecting and preserving this valuable National Landmark building. Under the terms of the current lease, DCTV would be able to return an additional \$85-100,000 in services to District residents and organizations.

DCTV is developing a five-year plan to diversify its revenue and increase the amount of non-cable revenue to a larger part of its budget annually. As part of this, DCTV is developing a plan to work with businesses to underwrite community programming created by DCTV. The amount of potential funding to support underwritten programming and potentially other activities will be developed as part of the plan.

29) What are your current plans for enhancing Channel functionality?

DCTV has completed the implementation of the new automated telecasting system that upgrades the look and capabilities of all the public access channels, with similar features as the local

broadcast affiliates (e.g. RSS feeds, alerts showing upcoming programming, closings and updates, other viewer engagement capabilities)

- RSS feeds provide local news announcements and updates via scheduled crawls across the bottom of the screen during programming,
- “See It Again” graphics that inform viewers the name of the program just shown and the time it will be broadcast again; and
- “Coming Up Next” which shows the name of the upcoming program.

DCTV is seeking to be transmitted by all cable operators on all channels in HD format (or the current highest standard used for local broadcasters), to ensure engagement of viewers

By upgrading our Automation System, DCTV has the capabilities to broadcast ALL channels in HD. Once all cable operators begin transmitting DCTV channels in HD, this will enhance the quality of the picture and programming functionality.

DCTV is seeking to have Video On Demand capability (via franchise agreements) for some of its programming provided by the cable operators through the cable channel guides, so viewers can access community programming in the same way they access programming on broadcast and other cable channels

DCTV is seeking to have all cable operators commit to (via franchise agreements) and provide full functionality for all PEG channels, including DVR scheduling and recording, program alerts, favorite markers and any other functionality being provided to the top tier of cable channels to ensure viewers can fully access and utilize community programming according to their usual scheduling and viewing habits.

Producers and viewers can access the website to see a full schedule of the dates and times programs will air.

Viewers are able to share their “favorites” in the program schedule via various social media venues.

As of October 2015 DCTV has redesigned DCTV has redesigned its website. Once the second phase of upgrades is activated, the website will increase the focus on viewers and viewer engagement with DCTV and the public access channels and programming; a strong focus on viewer engagement is part of DCTV’s strategic goals.

30) Please outline the benefits and services provided to the local community.

Local programming by for and about DC

DCTV is the *only* venue on television that allows producers to speak in their own voice and present their messaging—cultural, educational, informational, spiritual, entertaining— from their own perspectives for the communities of the city.

In FY15 and FY16 to Date, includes 120 public services announcements (PSA) by local nonprofit organizations, which played 7,593 times

Programming by local nonprofits (e.g. Catholic Charities, Housing Counseling Services, Humanities Council of DC, YWCA, UPO, Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) and religious organizations)

Providing programming about candidates for elected offices in every Special, Primary and General Election, including the Mayoral and Attorney General Elections

Access by individuals and organizations to scheduling programs for the community on cable channels 24 hours per day, 365 days per year on the basic tier of every cable system serving DC, reaching all cable subscribers (over 450,000 viewers) and streamed via DCTV's website:

Comcast channels 95 and 96

RCN Channels 10 and 11

Verizon FiOS Channels 10, 11 and 28

Access to state-of-the Art HD studios (including virtual sets), DSLR cameras and other professional field equipment, Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro editing systems and other facilities for production and training.

In FY15, and continuing in FY16, DCTV implemented a pilot program is to assess the effect on producers' ability to create community programming, by providing all equipment free to District residents and organizations that are producing programming as volunteers. The initial pilot program was a success and resulted in extension of the pilot and an increase in programs produced:

Feb 1, 2015 – June 30, 2015	58 Programs	Equipment Hours 634
July , 2015 —Oct 31, 2015	38 Programs	Equipment Hours 435

The Board approved the benefit to continue indefinitely for certified producers who are DC residents, creating programs with all-volunteer crews.

Experiential, hands-on training in producing, production, post production, and advanced workshops; for beginners with a message or a story, and for developing career skills. DCTV subsidizes over 70% of the cost of the training for DC residents.

Creative Services, for low-cost, affordable professional services to produce programming

Youth opportunities to explore careers in media, learn workplace skills and learn production skills

31) If your annual funding was increased to a larger revenue stream, how could you further enhance and expand the impact of the community benefits?

DCTV would be able to expand local programming by and for DC, expand training opportunities for DC residents, and increase the range of opportunities for DC residents to participate in local programming.

Expand Training:

- Workforce Development training for DC residents: Career Training for high school graduates and adults (who have computer skills) to allow District residents to gain the

training and hands-on experience required for media jobs in DC, a top-ten media market and one of the cities with the largest media base in the world. Such training should include collaboration with private companies for apprenticeships. The program could support job preparation for corporations, production and film industry, and the substantial press and media presence.

- Youth Media Network: Expanded opportunities for youth to explore careers in media, learn workplace skills and learn production skills.
- Increase the types of media hands-on training and skills offered.

Expanded Opportunities for Participation in Programming:

- Develop the availability of streamlined opportunities for individuals, organizations, schools, sports teams, and others to contribute high quality programming and engage DC communities through television programming (e.g. contribute to local sports wrap-ups; creative images of DC neighborhoods; positive stories about people making an impact in their communities)

Expand High Quality Local DC Programming

- Develop local programming that is important and valuable, but not necessarily covered by DCTV members (e.g. oral histories of DC Centenarians, profiling District residents 100 years and older)

32) Are there any pending federal funding streams that would be available for your agency?

Not that we know of at this time.

33) How much investment dollars has your agency invested in the building and grounds for physical maintenance and renovations since you first moved in to Brooks Mansion?

The total investment to-date is \$3,449,498.

34) In the past fiscal year, how many students have you trained through your programs?

In FY15, 255 registrants received 41,414 hours of instruction, who received 144 certifications in Producing, Videography, Studio Technician, and Editing. (Please note that not all courses result in certification.)

35) What relationship do you have with the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Department of Employment Services to train its students?

DCPS

DCTV has no official arrangement with the DCPS. However, DCTV has worked with individual public and charter schools over the years, including Roosevelt High School, Anacostia High School, Ballou High School, School Without Walls, and has provided tours to elementary schools.

In FY15, DCTV developed a programming block entitled “Youth Voices”. It features programming produced by youth organizations. Richard Wright Public Charter School is first to air its programs in Youth Voices.

Annually and including in FY15, DCTV works with Cesar Chavez High School as part of their fellowship program; this will continue in FY16.

Every year DCTV works with various charter schools to provide information via PSAs.

DOES

Each year, DCTV participates in the Department of Employment Services' Summer Youth Employment Program, creating opportunities for DC youth to learn new media technologies, create content for DCTV's channels and social media networks, and to learn workplace skills.

In partnership with the DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment, DCTV has received approval from the DC Apprenticeship Council to be the sole provider of a training curricula and services for the forthcoming Creative Economy Career Access Program. The implementation date is TBD by the DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment.

36) Approximately how many Community Organizations currently utilize the on-air opportunities with your agency?

Approximately 235 organizations used DCTV for programming during FY15 and approximately 160 to date in FY16.

DCTV's member producers also regularly invite non-profit organization, associations and businesses to be guests on programs; we currently do not have a count of such organizations.

37) Please provide additional information, feedback, or requests to the Committee that DCTV deems necessary.

We seek the Committee's support for the Office of Cable Television, Film, Entertainment and Music to have Verizon include all of the District's PEG programming—including DCTV's programming lineup—in the cable guide schedules, along with all the associated functionality, as do Comcast and RCN. DCTV is prepared to provide the data in whatever format is needed by Verizon, and is capable of providing programming in HD format for transmitting programming to cable subscribers.

We appreciate the Committee's continuing commitment to and hard work on behalf of DCTV and the public, educational and government media centers in the District, that provide invaluable resources and programming to District residents. Due to the consistent commitment and excellent public policy, the District's public and government centers are in the top tier of all PEG media centers in the nation, including that DCTV was benchmarked in the top five centers by the Compass business volunteers. This would not be possible without the work of the Council and the Administration over the years, including by the Office of Cable Television, Film, Entertainment and Music and its predecessor.