

## Attachment II

### Request for Information/Comments Responses:

- 1) San Francisco Community Television Corporation
- 2) South of Market Cultural Center (SomArts)
- 3) Brendan Conley, Board Chair, The Global Report

**The San Francisco Community Television Corporation (SFCTC), RFI/C Responses may be found in the [attached PDF file](#).**

## **South of Market Cultural Center (SomArts) RFI/C Response**

**The City and County of San Francisco  
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT (RFI/C)  
San Francisco's Public Access TV:  
Funding and Operating Models for the Future**

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**Response Date: 4 August 2008**

### **Questions for Interested Parties, Including Prospective Channel Operators**

1. San Francisco is committed to encouraging free speech, the right to express alternative viewpoints, localism and community activism. Democracy works best when a wide variety of voices and opinions can be seen and heard. How should the City redefine the role and scope of public access in San Francisco to best meet these goals? Are there any alternative operating models available that would continue to meet the City's public access goals at a reduced cost compared to the current arrangement? If so, please describe these models in detail, including estimated cost savings. If innovative models have been successfully implemented in other cities, please provide references.

To continue to provide media access, whether in old or new technology terms, is the responsibility of the City of San Francisco to its citizens. To that end, cable access is the simplest medium for the public to inform and entertain each other, and this ease of use should be replicated online; there should be a single website to bring together the wealth of public access content provided by San Franciscans.

The evolving digitalization of video production would appear to call into question the necessity of providing the current levels of production equipment, studio facility, training programs, and staffing to provide media access for the people of San Francisco. We hold that despite the recent evolution in consumer electronics and software, these advances do not equal the programs' ability to create high quality, engaging content, which is essential to the ongoing success of the public access program. Whether defined in terms of utilizing 'old' media or new technologies, the relevancy of SF cable stations demands the inclusion of new technologies into its existing model and facilities.

Without the level of production quality that the training, equipment and facilities provide, the public's content is not presented in a manner that most people would consider acceptable.

Funding for public access ensures that the City's investment in its arts programs and cultural centers has more opportunity to reach larger audiences, indeed worldwide access. SomArts: The South of Market Cultural Center, and all the San Francisco Cultural Centers, is able to provide excellent entertainment, education, and information. The key point is that through a high quality public access program, the city's investment in community arts and culture is maximized. Perhaps, the most important point of all is that the last link is missing – the end point of distribution. There are only video clips fragmented by being hosted on either commercial websites or limited bandwidth websites. Currently, there is not a single open-access Internet operating channel for the citizens of San Francisco.

Evolving the current cable access stations onto the Internet would engage a broader range of the population, and more specifically, younger participants. Inclusion of the cable access station in its traditional role as a provider and asset to the city of San Francisco Open Access and Tech Connect fiber optic plans is essential.

2. What potential collaborative partnerships may be developed between the public access channel operator and other community organizations, nonprofit organizations and local business entities? Do models exist in which multiple entities provide public access services in partnership arrangements? What would be the disadvantages to a multiple operator model? Again, if such models have been successfully implemented in other cities, please provide references

SomArts and other cultural centers currently play (and should continue to play) a central role in consolidating, curate and structuring content for public access. There is currently much effective collaboration between cultural organizations (that desire to maximize their effectiveness via wider distribution of the content that they create) and Access SF. The collaboration between SomArts and Access SF's for On-Site Mobile Access Training Studio is a model not only for media training; moreover, as a new media content provider. SomArts provides workshop space, and stipends, to participants and performances thereby providing content, while Access SF provides high-end equipment, professional producers as teachers, resulting in broadcast opportunity for this content.

The model of the On-Site Mobile Access Training Studio translates well to the digital world. For example, one-way video feeds from designated CCSF PEG Access Programming points whether from City College, the War Memorial building, or McAteer School of the Arts Theater can be utilized to provide raw content, live streams, or content to be edited at the cable station facilities.

By example, the creative media production program for at-risk youth, just THINK, has their summer program housed at SomArts. In addition to their cutting-edge curricula and innovative programs, some of the youth participated in the SF Access collaboration to gain more experience. Further, their summer program culminated in a screening festival at SomArts, including work with other youth groups, such as World Savvy and an exhibition of work from the United Nation's "Refugees, Children and Images."

Live performance, reading, plays, interviews and other programs that provide content already operate in the SomArts' facility ranging from the Queer Cultural Month or the American Indian Movement to the Asian American experience. Over 85 digital videos and webcasts are

archived and ready to be distributed to the public, with an Internet viewing platform between events and video production these videos and more could be viewed on demand.

3. State and Federal deregulation of cable television services threatens to eliminate the current sources of financial support for public access channel operations. Please identify the most likely and realistic alternative sources for public access funding. What would be the expected amount and duration of each alternative funding source described? Would alternative funding become available only in annual cycles (which would require reapplying for each cycle), or are long-term funding sources available? -----
4. What types of fundraising activities might be employed to generate revenue for public access? Would sponsorship, underwriting and advertising campaigns be viable means of generating alternative funding? If so, what would be the cost to administer the programs? Conservatively, how much revenue might such programs generate after their costs are recovered? -----
5. If budget constraints require a reduction in public access service levels, which services should be identified as minimum or "core" services that are essential to continued channel operation? What financial resources are required to meet minimum service levels? What operational guidelines or strategies can be employed to ensure that these core services remain available? Would any of these approaches require changes in the management or governance of facilities or programming time? -----
6. Please identify any innovations in video production/distribution equipment, techniques or processes that, if implemented, might lead to a reduction in operating costs. What would be the expected scope of cost savings achieved? What video production equipment and facilities should be provided by the public access facility?

Today, anyone with a camera cell phone can produce video content and upload to video sharing sites and reach a diverse worldwide audience on demand. Despite this new technological capability and immediacy, there still remains a need for equipment, training, and facilities to help connect noncommercial content providers to effectively reach their audiences.

There is a need to have the already existing public access model and core services enhanced to include modern distribution methods. In order to implement that, four things are required: a content-oriented website; wider publicized training workshops; better access to equipment; and more low-cost equipment, (rather than less high-cost equipment). Overall, faster, cheaper, better.

In an intermediate stage, by utilizing hosting and bandwidth video sharing sites, much of the operating costs of running a content driven website would be eliminated. A digital divide exists, even in San Francisco: Access to equipment and software, training, and a viewing platform is warranted. All that Access SF currently has developed should eventually be transitioned into new media technology.

7. Please describe the level of training that should be provided at the public access facility. What alternative video training opportunities are available in San Francisco? Can these alternatives adequately replace public access training services? Why or why not?

Video creation and production training is available to many diverse constituencies in San Francisco, in facilities and contexts that are customized to these constituencies. Although there are currently a multitude of video training options from BAVC, BAYCAT, 9<sup>th</sup> street independent video center, just THINK, and the Sixth Street Photography Workshop, there is no equivalent to the on-site, hands-on training, content-producing program that is successfully offered to every constituency by Access SF. This program has served, and should continue to serve, as a clearinghouse and access point where many different constituencies can come together in the final stages before distributing their content.

Creating and maintaining quality standards and distribution channels for other organizations and individuals to contribute to does not negate the need for a facility and training with set standards and a location. What's important is that the end result, i.e. content production and training, is optimized by collaborations.

8. Recently, outlets for expression have evolved beyond traditional television, radio and cable TV. What should be the role of traditional public access facilities with the emergence of "new media" such as Internet streaming video, social networking sites, video on demand, podcasting and other developments?

As video is the primary output of the cultural and educational initiatives, and the best way to reach audiences, and one of the current "killer apps" of the internet, at a minimum the next phase of public access needs to have video at its center and be set up to deliver video very effectively. The other Web 2.0 possibilities should be considered as well, but the driver of content is video.

San Francisco should look to replicate the model of digital development in high-definition sites. Providing a program and platform for content, and investing in getting it online with greater ease can only benefit everyone while saving costs. If the cable stations are closed, there is no current replacement.

It cannot be emphasized enough that to load a 45 second file to YouTube is not the same as broadcasting an edited half-hour production, or a live studio production, or a multi-camera on-site filming. Whether utilizing existing equipment or implementing new technologies, San Francisco's content still needs a platform. Fragmented delivery of content, hosted on multiple sites, with commercial terms, conditions and advertising, does not meet the City's access goals.

9. What are the most effective means of raising awareness of public access channel services to potential producers? How can channel operators best inform producers about the availability of existing or new public access services or tools? Please identify and provide references for any marketing efforts that have been successful in other cities or for other channels. -----

10. What are the most effective means of promoting the channels and scheduled programs to potential viewers? How do viewers decide what television programs to watch, and how can public access operators use this information to effectively promote public access programming? How may alternative distribution channels, such as Internet web casting or video on demand services, be promoted to potential viewers? Again, please identify and provide references for any marketing efforts that have been successful in other cities or for other channels.

Since there is no other existing example of a city digital channel, a few conventional suggestions for increasing visibility (online outreach to email lists, spending a bit on selective, targeted advertising, and getting some local celebrity participation will lead to increased awareness of and participation in the program) Festivals of video work and launch parties are highly successful venues to bring together producers, participants, and audiences.

The force is the sheer development of an open access digital channel with multiple San Francisco Cultural and Education and Government high-definition video available online on demand, for such there is no doubt such a site would be a success and example worldwide.

11. What should be the long-term goals for public access in the Internet age?

The immediate goal is to better utilize currently available resources to focus on training and facilities relevant to current technologies. The long-term goal is to reformat the cable stations to a high definition clearinghouse of information and entertainment: To create the equivalent of the current cables stations to a San Francisco digital channel.

TO: San Francisco Department of Telecommunications and Information Services  
FROM: **Brendan Conley, Board Chair, The Global Report**  
DATE: July 31, 2008  
RE: Request for Information and Comment, Public Access Television

**Public access television is essential to San Francisco's civil society. Our city's traditions of vibrant free speech and participatory democracy depend on the public's continued access to the resources necessary to produce and broadcast through the medium of television. Therefore, now that funding for operating expenses is no longer available from other sources, these expenses must be absorbed into the city budget.**

I am Board Chair of the nonprofit organization that produces The Global Report, a weekly independent news program produced at the Access SF facilities. The program is broadcast locally on channels 29 and 76, nationally on other public access channels around the country, and to millions of homes through the Free Speech TV satellite channel. Our organization has produced and distributed independent news and information since 1999. Each week, we provide citizens and organizations with news that is underreported by the mainstream media, to support movements for social justice.

Our viewers in San Francisco and across the country depend on our weekly program for vital information about the world we live in. Our organization in turn depends on San Francisco's public access television facilities. Without the main studio facilities, video editing suites, and staff of facilitators provided by Access SF, we would not be able to produce our program. The public would miss out on the news we provide, as well as the community information, exchange of opinions, and cultural expression provided by the other excellent programs produced at the public access studio.

You have requested comment on new technology and Internet-based distribution channels, and whether they may serve as a less costly alternative to traditional public access services. No doubt they are less costly, but they are no alternative to public access. Public access television as it currently exists in San Francisco provides two essential services to the public: the resources to produce programs, and a channel to deliver programs to the public. The Internet is an excellent way to distribute information of all kinds, including video, and thus serves as a valuable supplement to our public access channels. However, cheap new video technology and Internet distribution channels contribute nothing toward the other important service that public access provides: the resources necessary to produce professional-quality programming. These resources include the main studio, the video editing suites, and the facilitators who maintain the equipment and assist producers. These resources are financially out of reach for the ordinary citizens and small organizations that produce the varied programming found on public access, so our producers and the public depend on these services being provided by our public access facility.

You have requested comment on current and expected future usage levels of public access services. The experience of our own organization has been that there is high demand for the services provided, particularly use of the main studio. Our own program is produced each week, and we would like to increase the frequency of programming in the future. I am aware of other producers who would like to use the main studio more often, but are not able to because of high demand. The facility would benefit from expanded hours.

You have requested comment on the availability of alternative funding sources. I believe the only viable alternative for the level of funding public access requires is to absorb the operating costs into the city budget. Although the city budget has been cut recently, new revenue measures are being considered. The city must make funding public access television -- production and distribution -- a budget priority. The vitality of our democracy depends on the free exchange of information and ideas, and public access TV makes that possible.

Brendan Conley, Board Chair

The Global Report  
1230 Market St. #254  
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**Attachment III**  
**Summary of Public Meeting Comments**  
**July 14 and August 12, 2008**

## Public Meeting #1 – July 14, 2008

### In Attendance:

- 15 total
- 3 SFCTC Staff
- 5 Producers
- 1 Nonprofit Partner (SomArts)
- 1 Comcast Rep.
- 4 did not identify themselves

### Selected Comments:

- All speakers were generally supportive of public access and expressed support for continuing the channels and finding alternative funding.
- At least two of the five producers registered criticism of the current management and board of directors.
- Several comments were critical of the RFI/C process: Why is the City taking money away? Online survey has no questions about the staff and management performance or satisfaction/dissatisfaction; The questions are skewed toward new technology alternatives; DTIS is in charge, they should do something about this.
- You can have all the money in the world, but if the facility is not being run right, what good is it?
- Only five producers (in attendance) out of 134 is not starting out in the right direction.
- Who is the SFCTC Board accountable to? When do they meet who are they? We don't know; Board Meetings are not open to producers who have been suspended.
- There is a big investment sunk in the facility, we need to put more money into operating it.
- Training and equipment is most important.
- Quality of YouTube video is inferior and only works for 3-4 minute clips; not a good alternative to AccesSF; Even YouTube service requires staff to run the operation; and it's not available to the digital have-nots.
- Comcast should be required to enhance the equipment at AccesSF.
- Nonprofit partnerships are important; nonprofits derive a big benefit from AccesSF services; 50 nonprofit members get benefits.
- Some people at AccesSF are treated differently.
- How many complaints does AccesSF get?
- How about a "report card" from producers and viewers?
- I have a learning disability and without AccesSF's help, I could not put my show on the air

## Public Meeting #2 – August 12, 2008

### In attendance:

- Approximately 45 total
- 8 SFCTC Staff, BOD, Interns
- 18 Producers
- 19 did not speak

### Selected Comments:

- All speakers were generally supportive of public access and registered support for continuing the channels and finding alternative funding.
- A significant portion of the producers (at least 7) registered criticism of the current management and board of directors.
- AccesSF is a rare opportunity for the community.
- Some staff need training in customer relations.
- Board is ineffective; needs to have producer representation.
- SFCTC is not a representative organization; needs to be converted to a member organization; producers need representation on the Board or need to elect the Board.
- Technical problems; no audio on cablecasts; need a full time engineer.
- Need survey forms to fill out for equipment problems.
- Rules and appeals process is flawed.
- City needs to assume operation (municipal operation).
- We don't blame staff for these problems.
- Staff needs more money; is tired of dealing with hostile and homophobic producers.
- Staff resources are stretched too thin.
- What happened to the Telecommunications Commission?

Attachment IV  
Case Study: Denver Open Media

## CASE STUDY: DENVER OPEN MEDIA

The City and County of Denver, Colorado is similarly positioned to San Francisco with respect to public access channel history and resources. Since 1984, Denver has provided public access services through the franchise agreement with various cable operators, most recently Comcast. In mid-1989, Denver issued its first Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Public Access Management Corporation. The contract was issued to Denver Community Television, Inc., a non-profit joint venture. Funding of approximately \$500,000 per year was provided under the cable franchise to operate three public access channels, including training and access to studios and production equipment. The franchise agreement also has provided adequate funding for capital equipment and facilities.

The cable franchise was renewed by voter approval in December 1999, but with many changes to public access funding. Denver was able to secure five years of full operational funding (\$500,000 per year) from Comcast to allow the current public access provider adequate time to develop and implement a successful fundraising/endowment plan. However, Denver Community Television did not raise the alternate funding, and the operational monies from Comcast lapsed in 2004. In that year, Denver issued a second RFP, with the specific requirement that any respondent would have to provide its own operational funding.

The RFP's scope of work provided:

The Public Access Cable TV subsystem must offer adequate support to the Community, with specific attention to community producers, and community viewers. Services the City seeks from a provider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Outreach to and recruitment of community organizations and individuals.
2. Preventive and corrective maintenance of facilities and equipment provided for use by community producers.
3. Check-out/in of equipment and reservation of facilities used by community producers.
4. Scheduling of programs produced by community producers.
5. Promotion of the programming on access channels.
6. Retention of certified community producers, and assistance in producing initial and subsequent Public Access Programming.

Denver received two proposals in response to this RFP, one from a producer and one from the nonprofit group, Denver Open Media (DOM). Denver eventually selected DOM, due to its demonstrated ability to fundraise and sound budget and financial plan.

Since 2006, DOM has successfully operated the public access channels without receiving any operations funding from the City. In addition, DOM has implemented several innovative tools to enhance the channels, including an on-line reservation and scheduling system and a voting tool that allows the channels to be programmed according to the popularity of the program. Voting may take place via interactive web pages, by phone or by text messaging. DOM has offered to allow San Francisco access to these tools as a "beta-test" jurisdiction at no charge to the public access operator or the City.

DOM's budget information is included below. The access center in Denver can serve as a valuable model for San Francisco to guide the next public access grant agreement.

