

# Access San Francisco Response to "Summary of Public Access Channel Request for Information/Comments"

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The San Francisco Community Television Corporation (CTC) dba Access SF appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Department of Technology (DT) "Summary of Public Access Channel Request for Information/Comments" report. We were alarmed by the incomplete picture of the CTC presented by the DT staff in its report, and would like to set the record straight by presenting a fuller picture and correcting the errors and omissions.

The CTC's mission is to strengthen the fabric of community life by enabling open communication through public access television and other forms of electronic media. For 20 years the CTC has been dedicated to the improvement and expansion of public access facilities, programming and opportunities. The CTC has successfully accomplished the goals set out for the organization in 1988 and we are actively working toward our vision for the future:

## *Access San Francisco is...*

1. **The voice of San Francisco**, featuring **unique local content** on cable and the web including politics, culture, the arts, and a broad range of social issues.
2. **A network of community organizations** empowered to make strategic use of electronic media tools to reach and communicate with their constituencies.
3. **A community of producers and volunteers** working to showcase and connect San Francisco's diverse communities through media.
4. **A hub for noncommercial media production** with facilities, equipment and training that is **accessible and affordable** to all San Franciscans.
5. **An advocate for freedom of expression and diversity of voice** within the public media system.

The CTC appreciates the DT acknowledgement of the CTC's "achieving a number of significant milestones during the Grant term." A complete list of CTC activities and accomplishments are contained in its Annual Reports (see *Attachments IA-IF Annual Reports 2001-2007*).

Although the DT report states that the CTC has met or exceeded many of the requirements established in the Grant and Grant Plan it calls out several "notable exceptions." The CTC would like to correct the record on DT's characterization of several of these "notable exceptions." In particular, the DT report gives an incomplete or incorrect picture of the CTC's revenue generation and planning activities, outreach and training utilization, producer certification including the flash studio, programming and playback requirements, and producer/programming diversity. In the area of programming

and volunteer hours, the CTC has identified historic reporting inconsistencies on our part that have contributed to an incorrect picture.

Additional comments on each of these report findings follow.

### **Administration Minimum Requirements**

The report gives an incomplete picture of CTC's efforts in stating that the "SFCTC has failed to meet the following administrative requirements: 1) developing and conducting revenue-generating activities, including grant writing, development of underwriting support and other activities; and 2) developing and implementing a five year plan designed to provide the equivalent of 15% of the operating budget from alternative revenue sources..."

The CTC has developed and conducted significant revenue-generating activities not mentioned in the report. Between September 1999 and December 2008 the CTC has raised \$331,827 in non-cable and non-City provided funding, most of which was raised between 2002 and 2008. The CTC has taken the following actions to raise additional revenues:

- Hired Development Coordinators
- Developed a City-required individual paid membership program
- Created a paid membership program for nonprofit groups
- Developed an underwriting and sponsorship rate card which was not successful mainly due to the lack of funding to develop a sales force
- Sponsored a fund raising event at Café Du Nord
- Hosted a 12-hour telethon that raised funding for 17 nonprofit members as well as Access SF
- Hosted a live cablecast of "A Night of Blues" as a fund raiser
- Solicited and received numerous private donations
- Beta testing an Internet video-on-demand platform with revenue generating potential
- Developed a production services rate card, and services including paid productions projects for:
  1. The Department of Public Health
  2. The Department of Aging and Adult Services member organizations
  3. Project Inform
  4. The Rose Resnick Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired
  5. The League of Women Voters
  6. The Youth Summer Camp
  7. The Art Institute of California
  8. The Booker T. Washington Community Center
  9. The Arc of San Francisco
  10. The Family Service Agency
  11. Out and Equal
  12. Robert Michael Educational Institute
  13. The University of La Verne

The CTC board determined several years ago that grant writing per se was not a reliable option for raising operational funding for public access. Grants are generally tied to specific programs and typically cannot be used to fund operations. Instead of relying on grant funding, the board and staff focused on production services, which have been successful in raising additional unrestricted operational funding. Nevertheless the CTC was successful last year and this year in raising not \$12,000 as the DT report states but \$17,000 in two grants from J-Lab to stimulate citizen journalism. The bulk of these monies went to fund the grant program, not the operations of public access.

Few public access centers raise significant funds from non-cable operator sources which are the traditional funding sources for public access operations. In 2002, DT staff placed a provision in the public access management Grant Agreement to have the nonprofit attempt to raise up to 15% of its operations budget from non-cable operator sources. The 15% was intended as a goal, not a firm requirement. The DT staff, Brian Wilson (now deceased) and Denise Brady (retired), as well as the CTC staff, knew such a requirement could prove to be unrealistic, and that has indeed turned out to be the case despite significant efforts by CTC. The CTC is committed to raising additional funding for public access and initiatives like production services, and is just beginning to show significant results. Also, the development of a revenue generating Video On Demand website has potential.

The report states that the CTC failed to develop a five-year plan to raise additional revenues. The CTC did develop a comprehensive business plan in 2002 which was submitted to the Yale School of Management -- The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures, National Business Plan Competition for Nonprofit Organizations (see *Attachment 2 -- Yale Business School Grant*). The plan made it into the second round of the competition, but did not survive into the third and final round. Winning the competition would have resulted in Yale Business School mentoring for the CTC. Although the plan did not win the competition it did stimulate strategic thinking in fund raising and did result in CTC's implementation of production services, underwriting, sponsorship rate cards and other initiatives.

In addition, the CTC in 2007 participated in the Stanford Graduate School of Business Board Fellows program which resulted in two Stanford Business School graduate students completing an analysis on the prospects of monetizing the CTC's website. (see *Attachment 3 -- Internet Monetization Study*).

### **Outreach Minimum Requirements and Training Minimum Requirements**

The report states that the "SFCTC generally has met the minimum requirement for outreach. However, declining demand for Access SF training and production services (which we assume means production studios and not production services) suggests that these outreach efforts have not been effective."

Interest in public access has remained constant based on the attendance at monthly orientation meetings for new users. The numbers have been fairly consistent from with approximately 20 to 30 people attending per monthly meeting. Over 7,000 people have visited the facility from January 16, 2008 through November 22, 2008 including producers, volunteers, guests and community organizations.

There are numerous reasons for a decline in training attendance and facility usage. One of the biggest declines in workshops occurred in 03-04 when CTC increased workshop fees in order to raise more revenue. Although no one was turned away because they couldn't afford the fees there was an increase in waivers thus a decrease in revenues. In addition, public access centers across the country have experience a decline in some facility usage due to the increased use of the Internet, the availability of consumer grade production equipment.

The report calls out a decline in edit systems usage over the past five years. One of the reasons for this decline was that fewer people were interested in linear editing systems. Many people acquired their own non-linear systems and were editing at home. In 2007 the CTC acquired Final Cut Pro non linear editing systems on Apple G5 computers and began teaching both Final Cut Pro and iMovie editing. We have seen an upswing in interest in the new editing systems.

### **Production Workshop Certifications**

To address these issues we have attached a comprehensive review of workshops and certifications (see *Attachment 4 -- Workshop Analysis*).

To summarize, CTC has continually updated and refined its workshops based on technological change, workshop evaluation feedback, and community needs. For example: To ensure an adequate hands-on experience for workshop participants, field and editing workshops have been limited to four people, and due to demand for linear rather than non-linear editing, CTC launched a new editing curriculum in 2007. Although CTC's current records indicate an that workshop attendance is on the rise, workshop attendance has decreased at some points in the past due to factors such as increased workshop fees and shifting equipment use patterns.

CTC's experience with the Flash Studio provides another example of how we have evolved public access training and services based on feedback and community needs:

The DT report states, "No Flash Studio usage reported in 2002-03". The reason there was no flash studio usage during this period was that the room was not finished at the time the facility was opened in April 2002 and it took many months for CTC to acquire the specialized equipment necessary to operate the room.

Initially when individuals were trained for the flash studio many did not return to use the equipment due to the complexity of running all components at once for a complete show,

and the limited flexibility with the overall look of the environment. In early 2007, in response to the low interest with the flash studio (and the introduction of a second access channel), staff produced a specific live call-in format named "SF Live". Since the inception of the "SF Live" shows, the use of the flash studio has been extensive.

In the course of a year, 50 individuals successfully completed training for the flash studio to host a regular timeslot for "SF Live."

Current Flash Studio Live Programming Usage (November 2008):

- "SF Live" (hosted by Local Producers):
  - 7.33 hours/week from 15 producers
- "SF Live" (hosted by Access SF volunteers featuring a nonprofit focus):
  - 44 minutes/week from 2 producers
- Flash Studio Live shows on the first access channel:
  - Average of 1.5 hours a week from 3 producers from April '07-Present
- Total Live Flash Programming on the first channel April '07-Present:
  - 114 hours
- Total Hours in Use for Regular Live Programming Per Week:
  - 9.58 hours

Estimated Total SF Live Hours Since Inception (April 2007):

- Producer Sponsored Shows:
  - 2007 98 hours (8 shows per week from April-December)
  - 2008 200 hours (average of 11 shows per week January-November)
- Total Producer Sponsored Shows:
  - 298 hours
- Total Nonprofit Shows:
  - 31.6 Hours
- Total "SF Live" Flash Studio Usage Since April '07:
  - 329.6 hours
- Total Live Flash Studio Usage April '07-November '08:
  - 443.6 hours

### **Programming/Playback Minimum Requirements**

The DT report states, “The SFCTC has generally met the minimum qualifications for this category. Again, however, demand for most services has declined in recent years. In particular, original programming, producer attendance at meetings (Time Slot Selection Meetings) and volunteer participation has declined significantly”.

Although there has been a decline in demand for some public access services, this is not due to CTC’s failure to provide these services. Rather it represents a pattern in public access centers around the nation based on factors such as the growth of the Internet as a platform for motion media, and the increasing use of home-based technology and media production systems. Furthermore, CTC has seen growth in some areas, including the number of specials in 2005-06, and the number of series in 2006-07 over the previous year.

### **Programming and Volunteers**

After reviewing our statics from 02 through 07 we believe that the Programming Coordinators, of which there have been three, were inconsistent in their methods of counting original programming hours. The significant decline matches with the end of one coordinator’s tenure and the start of another. The report calls out, “No volunteer hours reported in 2004-05”. This was simply an oversight since CTC’s records indicate there were 151 volunteers contributing 2827 hours total.

### **Demographics and Diversity**

In an attempt to collect some demographic information about users the CTC has asked producers to voluntarily fill out a demographic survey. These surveys only capture a snapshot of user demographics and diversity. Using this information the DT report made the assumption that “Non-English speaking populations are nearly non-existent”. This statement is incorrect.

The channels currently carry series and special programming in Mandarin, Spanish and Russian. Recently as part of Access SF’s outreach to the Asian community Access SF trained a SFSU intern Lu Ai-Yun to use the flash studio to produce a bi-weekly Asian Focus program which has resulted thus far in 10 shows primarily in Mandarin featuring the following:

- Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. This is San Francisco’s de-facto Taiwanese “Consulate.”
- Asians for Humans, Animal, & Nature. This non-profit organization is dedicated to educating the public on animal and environmental welfare.
- Taiwanese American Federation of Northern California (TAFNC). This organization’s focus is on promoting Taiwanese and American cultural exchange.

- Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. Tzu Chi's mission focus is on giving material aid and inspiring love and humanity in both the givers and receivers.
- North American Taiwanese Medical Association. This Association was founded to promote cultural and educational exchange of Taiwanese American Medical and Dental professionals.

In addition, there are 18 hours per month of programming by other Asian producers including:

- A Day in the Neighborhood (Myrna Lim) 30 minutes, twice monthly
- Analog Rhythms Revisited (Leon Low) 60 minutes, twice monthly
- Chai with Manjula (Ankur Gupta) 30 minutes, twice monthly
- Chinese TV (Weber Lau) 30 minutes, weekly
- Hollywood Showtimes (Zee Lo) 30 minutes, weekly
- Looking Unto Jesus (Joshua Manongdo) 30 minutes, weekly
- Music Video 8 (Alex Yeung) 30 minutes, weekly
- Outlook Video (Raymond Hong) 30 minutes, monthly
- Spotlight on Taiwan (Fenman Wu) 30 minutes, weekly
- Supreme Master Ching Hai (Khoa Luong) 30 minutes, weekly

Also, there are 10 hours per month of programming produced by Hispanic producers including:

- Cipre's Really Real TV (Eloy Najera) - 60 minutes, monthly
- Clamor in El Barrio (Juana Polonski) 30 minutes, weekly
- Ethics and Animals (Christine Garcia) 60 minutes, twice monthly
- Latinoamerica Querida (Juan Carlos Cuellar) 30 minutes, twice monthly
- Salsa La Raza (Ron Bermudez) 30 minutes, weekly
- Streetside Stories (Pedro Reyes) 30 minutes, weekly

The CTC has also outreached to the disability community with Edana Contreras using the flash studio to host a bi-weekly show focused on issues of concern to the disability community. Her guests have included:

- Tim Hornbecker, ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens).
- C.A.S.E (Community Alliance for Special Education) Interview for Joe Feildmen.
- Lisa Rosene, Chief of Social Work Services, GGRC (Golden Gate Regional Center).
- Creativity Explored Interview - Amy Taub.
- Elizabeth Zirker, PAI (Protection and Advocacy, Inc.).
- Patrick Sayers, Janet Pomeroy Center.
- Judy Finelli, Circus Center.
- Bill Bruckner, advocate for the disabled community.
- Kevin Jefferson, Independent Living Resource Center.
- Paoli Lacey, Clown Therapy.
- Bryon MacDonald, WID (World Institute on Disability).

- Alexandra Levine, Best Buddies.

### **Correspondence from Producers**

The report states, “DT has received several letters and other communications from producers with concerns about the operations and governance of the facility. Several recent letters are included in Attachment I as samples of this feedback.”

The letters included in the DT report are from three producers and one community organization. Two of the producers had serious disciplinary issues concerning violations of the facilities Code of Conduct and were suspended from entering the facility. The community organization’s letter was prompted by a producer who had a history of conflicts with staff and unfounded complaints. In a fourth letter a former producer complained that one of her shows did not play as scheduled. This was due to a technical error, and this fact was conveyed to the producer with CTC’s apologies. CTC did experience a number of playback errors during this time, which were ultimately corrected with a significant playback systems upgrade.

The CTC’s letters concerning these individuals as well as an email from the Executive Director concerning playback issues are attached (see *Attachment 5 -- Letters Referencing Producers*).

CTC values its relationships with producers, which is demonstrated by our track record over many years. We have worked cooperatively with hundreds of producers and received numerous complimentary letters from individuals and organizations (see *Attachment 6 -- Sample of Letters of Appreciation*).

### **Part Two: Summary of Public Access Producer Survey Results**

The DT survey resulted in comments from 37 respondents who categorized themselves as producers; 10 respondents who attended workshop, 17 employee or volunteers, 21 viewers and 6 respondents with no experience with access as a producer, volunteer or viewer. This is a very small sampling of the 2,800 people who received the notice of the survey.

The DT report states, “Surprisingly, a slight majority of respondents indicated that they watched video over the Internet than via cable service. This majority was more pronounced among producers.” This does not seem surprising to the CTC since the majority of public access users are between the ages of 26 and 34, an age group very accustomed to using the internet for the bulk of their video consumption and the fact that many producers don’t subscribe to cable mainly because they can’t afford it.

However, these findings should not lead the City or others to assume that public access on cable TV is irrelevant. A recent Pew Project study on the use, repair, and complexity

of new technology notes that about half of the adults who use cell phones and the Internet usually need technical support to set-up and make use of new technology. Other studies point out that as many as 40% of American homes do not possess or make use of Internet based technologies.

As Ron Cooper of the Western Region of the Alliance for Community Media states, “This makes the point as to the value of PEG access & community media organizations and our services to the public -- bridging the generations with technology training and support services. Simply having the option of watching short videos on You-Tube does not address the huge technology knowledge gap that still exists in most American homes. We are the friendly folks in each town, eager to try and help address this huge knowledge gap.” Furthermore, the Internet is not an option for many people with disabilities.

Also, according to a November 24, 2008 Nielsen report Americans are watching television more hours than they are using than the Internet. The report states, “The Nielsen Company announced today in its second “A2/M2 Three Screen Report” that U.S. usage of TV, Internet and Mobile – the Three Screens – continues to increase. As of third quarter 2008, the average person in the U.S. watched approximately 142 hours of TV in one month. In addition, people who used the Internet were online 27 hours a month, and people who used a mobile phone spent 3 hours a month watching mobile.

Furthermore, the average time a U.S. home used a TV set during the 2007-08 television season was up to 8 hours and 18 minutes per day, a record high since Nielsen started measuring television in the 1950’s”.

The CTC has made significant strides with integrating the Internet along with cable as part of the public access delivery system. We believe the coming era is a “both / and” not an “either / or” era for cable and the Internet. The CTC has an essential role in assisting our diverse San Francisco community in effectively utilizing media tools, developing and accessing diverse content, and working across cable and Internet platforms.

### **Open Ended Responses**

The DT report states, “Responses were generally supportive of continuing/expanding current services and opposed to scale-back of operations” which is also CTC’s position. Many of the comments were useful and the CTC is open to constructive comments and suggestions. Many of the comments simply affirmed CTC’s current practices and evolving directions, particularly utilization of social networking tools such as YouTube, Blip and Veoh; VOD and Internet video, which CTC is currently beta testing as means of revenue generation; extensive partnerships with nonprofits and other public media outlets; and developing more Internet-directed media production opportunities for the San Francisco community—including a citizen journalism initiative.