

Briefing - Community Media Center

Overview

Denver Marketing and Media Services [DMMS] is responding to dramatic and irreversible changes in the video production and distribution marketplace by shaping a sustainable future for public engagement and participation in media creation, education, and workforce development.

Specifically, DMMS seeks to develop a new Community Media Center, which will be a shared facility with Rocky Mountain Public Media and Public, Educational, and Government (PEG) media organizations. The media center will be a convergence of resources designed to empower individuals and nonprofit organizations to create video and media projects that speak to the local community, facilitate community partnerships, and diversify the media landscape.

A RFP seeking a Community Media Access Coordinator [CMAC] is the first step in activating this new model. The position will facilitate and coordinate programming of the existing public access television channel; develop media training and workforce development programs and partnerships; and oversee marketing efforts for community media access.

Present State

- a) The interest in and use of video as a primary means of communication is at an all-time high and growing exponentially. The vast proliferation of video creation tools and social media networks that distribute video content fosters public expression more than ever before. Older models of media training and content distribution need contemporizing to remain relevant and vital to the community.
- b) New video services [Netflix, Amazon Prime, Facebook Live, and Hulu, among others] are successfully challenging the cable TV video delivery model. As more people “cut the cord,” this equates to declining cable franchise fees, and shrinking funds for PEG facilities and equipment.
- c) The current contract to manage public access has come to its natural end, having been issued in 2005 with several renewals since then. Executive Order 8 requires a new RFP be issued to reexamine scope of work and service delivery needs, and provide for new opportunities to meet current needs.
- d) Federal telecommunications law further limits usage of PEG fees and recent FCC rulings stiffen regulations and decrease flexibility in how funds are distributed.
- e) Denver’s dynamic growth is generating opportunities for the Office of Economic Development [OED] to support redevelopment efforts in neighborhoods of change, including an investment in the move of Rocky Mountain Public Media [RMPM] from its 11th and Bannock St. home to a brand-new facility at Arapahoe Square in downtown Denver. DMMS, RMPM and OED are solidifying a partnership that will create a Community Media Center footprint within the expanded facility, leveraging funding and setting a framework for operational and workforce development successes.

Vision and Future state

As Denver continues to grow and the cable industry evolves, it has become evident that the city must adapt in conjunction and explore new models for Community Media Access. A more sustainable approach will leverage the limited funds at a central location that also shares a singularly-focused endeavor – to provide more opportunities for collaboration, networking, and career development around video production and media education.

- a) This new model will provide an opportunity for increased partnerships with a variety of organizations such as Rocky Mountain Public Media and educational and workforce development institutions. This model will also leverage the educational partners in the local PEG universe, including Denver Public Schools [DPS], Emily Griffith Technical College [EGTC], and Auraria Higher Education Center [AHEC].
- b) To stay ahead of the potential loss of television channels in future franchise agreements, a successful partnership with RMPM could also result in a new broadcast channel just for PEG programming. This channel would be available to all “over the air” with a simple antenna, rather than just for those paying for cable TV or Internet services without buying an Internet connection.
- c) The new Media Center will also serve as an aggregator of community-driven video content, able to collect and curate original programming that give voice to the varied constituencies across Denver’s myriad neighborhoods, as well as produce interesting, quality programs that have a sharp topical focus on issues of broad community interest.
- d) Along with well-established partners such as EGTC or AHEC, a robust educational component would focus on media education as an essential part of contemporary literacy necessary for full participation in democratic society.
- e) The combination of partners, classroom and technical spaces will provide the best environment for developing job skills and workforce development.

Next steps

DMMS will provide a robust transition plan to the community and our partners as we move forward in solidifying the new community access model. The contracted CMAC position will have workspace in the DMMS offices to operate the public/community access channel and will continue to accept programming from the community. The CMAC will immediately begin outreach to community media and training organizations engaged in like-minded services to build educational and programmatic partnerships.

The CMAC will be authorized to act in the interest of the community and remain an independent contractor; it will not be a City of Denver employee and won’t be working on behalf of the government (or “G”) PEG entity. The position will serve as a steward of open expression and free speech media; will create policies to accept and plan for the use of all media content; will establish processes and procedures that do not create barriers to media access; and will create strong ties across communities to ensure all Denver residents can participate in this collaborative and creative opportunity.