



What do **YOU** want  
for San Francisco's  
new cable contract?

## **San Francisco Media Advocates FAQ - Community Media & Public Access TV**

For more information: [www.mediasf.org](http://www.mediasf.org)

### **What is public access television in San Francisco?**

Public access cable is a television production and training facility located at 1720 Market Street and a cable channel (29). The production facility and channel are known as Access SF and is managed by a 501 c 3 nonprofit organization, the San Francisco Community Television Corporation. The facility and channel were created as a free speech forum for San Francisco residents and community organizations to use to produce programming about themselves, their issues and concerns.

### **How is it funded?**

The Federal Cable and Telecommunications Acts of 1984, 1992 and 1996 permit and encourage local governments to require local cable operators to provide equipment, facilities, and channel space for public, educational and government access cable channels (known as PEG) on local cable systems as compensation for the cable companies' use of local rights-of-way (laying their cable through publicly-owned city streets).

Most often, the two primary funding sources for access services come from the cable company and the City. This is provided through a combination of City-negotiated cable franchise-required cable company support, in the form of grants and cable fee pass-throughs, as well as City support through franchise fees revenue or general fund monies. Also, Access SF seeks foundation grants and other donations.

### **Does public access run commercials?**

No. However, Access SF, individual producers and community organization may seek PBS style underwriting and sponsorships. This is especially critical for Access SF since the City and County of San Francisco requires Access SF to raise 15% of its operational funding from non-cable operator sources. Securing underwriting and sponsorships is considered a best practices model for access centers across the country.

### **Does public access give preference to local producers only?**

No. The City and County of San Francisco requires Access SF to treat all producers on an equal basis whether they use the Access SF production facilities, their home production facilities or simply bring in programming from other cities that have been provided to a San Francisco residents for cablecasting on the channel.

### **Is public access open 24/7?**

No. The production facility at 1720 Market is open 5 days per week. Access SF would like to operate on a 24/7 basis, but due to limited funding the facility is only able to be open Tuesdays through Saturdays. Expanded funding possible through the franchise renewal could provide the funding necessary to expand hours of operation.

### **Is public access streamed on the Internet?**

Not at the present time. However, this is an important goal of Access SF. Additional equipment funding is necessary to accomplish streaming. This is on the "wish list" for the cable franchise renewal.

### **What is a cable franchise?**

The San Francisco Cable Franchise is the contract between the cable operator (Comcast Cable) and the City and County of San Francisco. It spells out the terms and conditions that allow the cable operator to do business in San Francisco. It also set the cable operators obligations for support of the public, education and government (PEG) cable access channels.

### **Why is the cable franchise renewal important for public access and community media?**

During the past the 40 years public access television has either not been funded or funded in a limited way through the existing cable franchise. While other cities have been able to renegotiate their cable franchises and provide sustainable funding for their PEG channels, San Francisco has not had this opportunity until now. It is only through the renewal of a cable franchise that the level of PEG channel support can be determined and set for the next 10 to 15 years. The majority of capital and operations funding for public access will be provided in the renewed cable franchise.