

Introduction

In November 2006, Riedel Communications, Inc.,¹ was engaged by Worcester Community Cable Access Television (WCCA TV 13) to perform a community needs assessment/ascertainment to provide information to the City of Worcester as it prepared for a cable franchise renewal with Charter Communications.² As principal of the corporation, Bunnie Riedel, President, performed the needs assessment.

The following methodology was used in the performance of the needs assessment:

1) Review of all documents pertaining to the current franchise agreement. This included a review of:

The Renewal Cable Television License granted to Greater Worcester Cablevision on January 7, 1997 and later transferred to Charter Communications in 1998.

2) Review of the Agreement between the City of Worcester and Worcester Community Cable Access, Inc.

Review of Amendment No. 1 to Agreement for Public Access Services, December 18, 1997 (Contract between WCCA TV 13 and the City).

3) Review of current Public access television station operations.³ This included the following:

- A pre-site visit questionnaire was provided to staff at WCCA TV 13 that included questions relating to organization, staff, channels, programming, training, facility and operations, and equipment.⁴
- An on-site visit to the WCCA TV 13 facilities.
- An in depth interview with WCCA TV 13 staff was conducted using the questionnaire as a guide and more information was gathered through this in-person interview.

4) Conduct of a Focus Group. The Focus Group included:

- A wide variety of community stakeholders who spent four hours reviewing current and emerging technologies, engaging in small and large group discussion and completing the Focus Group Worksheet.⁵

¹ Riedel Communications, Inc. is a close corporation incorporated in the state of Maryland.

² As provided for in SEC. 626 (a)(1) of the Cable Act [47 U.S.C. 546].

³ WCCA TV 13

⁴ See Attachment A

⁵ See Attachment B

5) A community mail survey. The mail survey included:

- A five-hundred piece mailing of the survey to Worcester residents randomly selected from the City's property tax list.⁶
- Questions to determine cable usage, television viewing, satisfaction with service and demographic information.
- Opportunities for quantitative as well as narrative response to gain quality data.

The comprehensiveness of this needs assessment process provided Riedel Communications with the information it required to formulate conclusions and make recommendations to WCCA TV 13 and hopefully provide useful information to the City of Worcester as it negotiates its cable franchise renewal with Charter.

Further, Riedel Communications conclusions and recommendations include knowledge of best practices in Public access television and analysis of WCCA TV 13 as a unique Public access entity comparative to other Public access operations across the country.

⁶ See Attachment C

WCCA TV 13 Review

In November 2006, Riedel Communications conducted an assessment of WCCA TV 13 using a comprehensive survey and an onsite visit to its facility. Through interviews with WCCA staff and physical inspection of its facilities, Riedel Communications was able to determine current operating capabilities and future needs of WCCA TV 13 that can be addressed in the franchise with Charter. Below are the findings of this review.

Background

WCCA TV 13 began operations in 1986. It's most current contract with the City to provide Public access services was passed as the "Agreement Between the City of Worcester and Worcester Community Cable Access, Inc." effective January 7, 1997 and amended by "Amendment No. 1 to the Agreement for Public Access Services" on December 18, 1997.

A channel had been reserved for Public access in the "Renewal Cable Television License" granted to Greater Worcester Cablevision, Inc. on January 7, 1997 and later transferred to Charter Cable in 1998. In addition, a second channel is reserved for Public access in the franchise agreement when certain conditions of programming have been met.⁷ Section 6.2 (page 40) of the franchise agreement provides the purpose of the "Public Access Corporation" as well as conditions for its management.

WCCA reports directly to the City Council, the Mayor, the City Manager and the Cable Advisory Committee. All policies and procedures for the channel are established by the eleven-member Board of Directors within the parameters of the cable franchise agreement (Section 6.2) and the contract with the City. The budget for WCCA TV 13 is based on a proportional amount of the licensing fee collected by the City less "General Administrative Costs" and, more recently, a "7% Funding for License Renewal Related Expenses."

WCCA TV 13 is housed at 415 Main Street in downtown Worcester with 10,000 square feet of space in a condominium office building.⁸ WCCA TV 13 pays almost \$3,500 per month for shared condominium expenses such as electrical, heating, cooling and exterior maintenance. Operating hours for the WCCA TV 13 facility are:

General Public	Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Member Hours	Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ⁹

WCCA staff produce an average of two hours of new programming each week.¹⁰ This programming includes *Soapbox*, *Video Jam* and *Community Vision*. Volunteers produce an

⁷ We will discuss this in more depth later in this report.

⁸ Offices, classrooms and studios are divided between three floors.

⁹ WCCA will open to the "General Public" on Saturday if they have a volunteer receptionist available.

¹⁰ Staff production of only two hours of programming per week is a good thing. The goal of Public access is to have the community producing not the staff.

average of eighty hours of run-time programming a week and independent producers (those not using WCCA TV's equipment) produce an average of twenty-three hours of run-time programming per week. A bulletin board is operated sporadically during the day and in the overnight hours, offering community groups an opportunity to display their messages about services or upcoming events. Imported programming includes Democracy Now, GED-TV, Army NewsWatch and Air Force News.

There are seven full-time staff, including the Executive Director, and two part-time staff (including a production facilitator and a web developer.) Over the years, WCCA TV has had almost ten thousand members and currently it has two-hundred and fifty "active" volunteers, either producing or assisting in production. An average of one-hundred and thirty people are trained each year to use the equipment and facilities, among those are sixty KidsNet/Youth Channel trainees ranging from thirteen to eighteen years old and fifty interns. Six government agencies and eleven educational institutions are served by WCCA TV 13 as well as over one hundred nonprofit organizations.

The total yearly budget for WCCA TV 13 is just over \$640,000 with \$35,000 being spent on average per year for capital and equipment (over a ten year period). Salaries and benefits account for fifty-seven percent of WCCA TV 13's yearly budget while only ten percent is spent on general operations.¹¹ The budget for WCCA TV 13 is based on the franchise fee paid by the cable operator (allocated by contract with the City) and some earned income.

General Issues

Facilities¹²

WCCA TV 13 is located in a condominium building at 415 Main Street in Worcester. It occupies 10,000 square feet of space or roughly sixty percent of the entire building. WCCA uses two floors and a basement for its studios, training and general office space. The condominium that houses WCCA TV 13 was paid for through a five year loan and WCCA owns this property outright. However, the maintenance fees (including heat and cooling) are substantial at almost \$3,500 per month or forty-two thousand per year.

The maintenance fees include care and repair of the exterior of the building but not the interior space. The "care and repair" is simply maintenance and would not include upgrades or renovations to the exterior. Additionally, because maintenance or renovation of the interior is the responsibility of WCCA TV, there have been instances when renovation or repair was postponed due to budget constraints. For instance, the basement was renovated by volunteers to house the KidsNet/Youth Channel training and could use further repair and upgrading. The electrical supply in the building frequently surges and equipment and computers have ceased to operate, probably because of "brown out" conditions. Staff believes there are electrical upgrades that need to be made. The heating, ventilating and air conditioning unit (HVAC) is noisy and causes problems with adequate sound proofing during production. Staff estimates there are

¹¹ See Attachment D Statement of Financial Activities (most recent audited statement, June 30, 2006)

¹² See Attachment E, photographs of facility, studios, equipment.

approximately \$40,000 in immediate repairs to the interior and the renovation the façade needs to keep the property in good condition.

There are three studios, Studio A which is 1,575 square feet, Studio B which is 750 square feet and the KidsNet/Youth Channel studio which is in the basement. Studio A and B have dedicated, separate control rooms. The KidsNet/Youth Channel studio also serves as the training classroom for the youth program. Staff reports that they could use an additional twenty-five hundred square feet, perhaps in a satellite location, to comfortably accommodate staff and access users.

Classes and training are conducted in the studios depending on the schedule and use of the studios by access users. While this is not unusual, it would be optimal for there to be a separate classroom facility so that production does not have to shut down to accommodate training. This is more of an issue during the evening hours when most production is done and when training is typically given to accommodate working adults' schedules. Given the robust amount of programming produced by volunteers, separate training space would eliminate any conflicts in the schedule and free up the studios for more production.

WCCA's operating hours are as follows.

General Public	Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Member Hours	Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WCCA does not open to the "General Public" on Saturdays unless it has a volunteer receptionist available. This is problematic since a good deal of the population works during the weekday. This schedule discourages use of WCCA facilities by that population. Since WCCA maintains a computer lab and internet access in the lobby, this schedule discourages general public use of that resource.

We noted that there was not an adequate amount of separated storage space in the building for the typical sets and equipment access centers employ.

While the building's location offers excellent public transportation options for access users and the general public, there is no free off-street parking. Parking meters are free after six p.m. but parking garages in the area charge an average of five dollars per visit and staff parking costs WCCA approximately \$6,000 per year. The building is accessible for persons with disabilities, however the parking situation can make it difficult for persons with disabilities to access the building if they have to park a block or two away. Additionally, WCCA has many senior producers and parking can be an issue for this population.

Facility Recommendations

It is commendable that WCCA purchased their building and have paid off the loan in only five years, this provides WCCA with a great deal of stability. Very few access centers around the country own their buildings (they either lease or have mortgages). There are issues with the facility that challenge WCCA, we recommend the following:

- Provide WCCA TV 13 with additional funding that will adequately address ongoing maintenance and repairs. Additional capital funds should be acquired to address the electrical problems, the HVAC problems, renovation of the KidsNet/Youth Channel space and renovation of the façade of the building. A capital grant must be sufficient enough to address anticipated building repairs over a ten year period.
- Given there is a need for an additional twenty-five hundred square feet to adequately meet staff and producer need, identify additional space for a “satellite facility.” Frequently, municipalities have surplus buildings which they give to access centers. Work with the City to arrange for surplus property to be acquired as a satellite access center. Access centers typically seek to establish a satellite facility in an area of the city that is not being served by the central facility. Again, a capital grant is usually needed for preparing the satellite facility for production. A satellite facility could also take the pressure off the competition for training and production space at WCCA, since producers who live in the vicinity could use the satellite facility for production. Also with enough pre-planning the satellite facility could house storage space and a shop for building sets.
- Provide adequate funding so WCCA can be open to the “General Public” on Saturday to accommodate working adults’ schedules.
- Secure handicap parking spaces around the facility, with perhaps two on-street spaces being reserved strictly for handicap parking permits. This would assist the senior producers at WCCA (some of whom we met at the Focus Group Session) who have to use walkers. Make sure that the sidewalks cuts are adequate to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers.

Channels

Currently the only channel available to WCCA TV is channel 13.

WCCA TV 13 currently airs one-hundred and twenty-three hours of video programming per week or six-thousand two-hundred and ninety-six hours per year. The programming is supplemented by bulletin board messages for nonprofit and community groups. The channel is analog.

WCCA has very little repeated programming, less than twenty-five hours per week, or twenty-one percent. This is highly unusual for an access center and speaks volumes for WCCA’s work in the community and with community producers. Additionally, very few programs are produced by staff, only two hours per week, again, highly unusual. The bulletin board runs only an hour or so during the day and then during the overnight hours for a total of forty-five hours per week or twenty-six percent of total air-time. When we did a comparison of WCCA against other access channels of roughly the same budget serving roughly the same

number of subscribers, we found a range of twenty-three hours per week to as high as eighty-five hours per week of bulletin board programming on those channels.¹³

WCCA has requested an additional channel as per the franchise agreement:

SECTION 6.1—PEG ACCESS CHANNELS

“An additional channel shall be made available for public access when, over a period of six (6) consecutive months sixty percent (60%) of the prime time (7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. each evening) is fully occupied with first run local programming created by local producers on each existing public access channel, such availability to be provided within ninety (90) days of the Issuing Authority’s certification of such use and request for additional channel.”

The request for the additional channel was made in August 2005. It is our understanding that the City (Issuing Authority) did certify that WCCA had met the requirement to trigger the additional channel but that Charter has declined to honor the City’s request. The small amount of time WCCA is able to devote to bulletin board service during the day on channel 13 is problematic for the nonprofits or other community groups who need bulletin board notices to inform the community.¹⁴ Also, WCCA has enjoyed a 52% growth in its membership over the last ten years and increased its total cablecast hours by 153%. At that rate, one channel will not be able to accommodate community demand as it continues to grow.

The ability to compress digital voice, video and data into smaller packets would seem to intuitively suggest that “less” space will be needed once the system is completely digital. However that is simply not the case. As technology and community capabilities increase and the access channels become fully interactive and applications become richer, more space will be needed not less. Looking into the future it does not make sense to require a certain number of channels as the definition of how much spectrum equals one channel will continue to change through compression technology. Instead the growing trend around the country is to require a percentage of channel capacity. The trend for a percentage of channel capacity is 10%. This percentage of digital capacity will allow the access channel(s) to grow as the technology grows.

WCCA does have live capability and has programmed live from various remote drop points in the community in the past. Live programming such as from the Performing Arts School or the Columbus Day Parade is highly valuable to community involvement and participation in events. Recently when WCCA tried to cover a gubernatorial rally at the DCU Center, they were informed that they needed two weeks notice from Charter to connect to the drop and there needed to be a Charter technician present for the live cable cast. There was concern expressed by the City that WCCA’s use of the drop could cause the Institutional Network to crash. While we have never heard of this happening in other cities where access channels use Institutional Networks, this is an issue that should be addressed so that WCCA can provide live programming of events and without jeopardizing the Institutional Network. In many cities, a dedicated strand is supplied for live video playback, separate from the city’s capacity. In addition, WCCA is discouraged from doing more remote live programming because it is unclear where the drops are in the City.

¹³ Based on Public access channels in Santa Rosa, California; Oceanside, California; and Plainville, Connecticut.

¹⁴ See Focus Group Report

The channel has enjoyed its location on 13 for the past twenty years. This is positive since “branding” is as important to a local access channel as it is to network channels. There has been a tendency by cable operators to move access channels on a regular basis. There have also been horror stories from access centers that were “channel slammed” and received no advance notice, sometimes finding out the channel has been moved through viewers calling in.¹⁵

WCCA TV 13 has an established reputation throughout the City of Worcester. Moving WCCA from its channel location will cause it irreparable harm. It is important that the new franchise agreement contain a provision that will not allow WCCA TV 13 to be moved by the cable operator.¹⁶ It should also include a provision for other acquired channels that limits how often they can be moved and requires compensation for the move. Compensation for moving the channel includes real costs for logo re-design, printed materials, graphic generation, signage, etc. and should include not only actual dollars but also a number of free “avails” and advance notice to the community through bill stuffers.

Channel Recommendations

- Require compliance from Charter to release a second channel to WCCA as per the current franchise agreement.
- Acquire future channels based on a percentage of capacity v. current definitions of spectrum.
- Facilitate “live” and remote programming by addressing concerns regarding INet capacity and usage. Identify drops around the city and arrange for WCCA TV to have access to those drops as needed. If a technician is needed to be present, ensure that Charter assumes the cost of the technician.
- Include a provision in the franchise agreement that will prohibit WCCA TV 13 from being moved from its current location, unless pre-empted by Federal must-carry rules.
- Provide for compensation and advanced notice of any channel changes, either for WCCA TV 13 or subsequent channels.

Programming

As mentioned above, WCCA TV 13 currently airs one-hundred and twenty-three hours of programming per week or six-thousand two-hundred and ninety six hours per year.¹⁷

The types of programming and percentages are as follows:

News/Informational	33%
Religious	27%
Entertainment	13%
Self-Help	8%

¹⁵ “Channel Slamming” is when cable operators move access channels to the high end of the allocation, such as the 80’s or 90’s. Even in today’s digital environment, low digit allocation is preferable.

¹⁶ Unless required under Federal “must carry” guidelines for broadcast carriage.

¹⁷ See Attachment G, program schedule.

Ethnic	6%
Youth	5%
Cooking	4%
Sports	4%

Six government agencies and eleven educational institutions are served by WCCA as well as over one hundred nonprofit organizations. The following is a list of “users” of WCCA TV 13. These users have in some fashion used the services of WCCA, either through its bulletin board, producing programming or by being featured in programming.

Abby’s House	Grace Community Church
Alzheimer’s Association	Harford Bible Students
American Cancer Society	Harvard Medical School
American Legion Tatnuck Post 288	Hessed Foundation
American Red Cross	Holden Christian Academy
Amherst Montessori School	Holiday Inn
Apostolate Office	Hospice Education Institute
Apostolate of the Silent Soul	House Faith Ministry
Armenian Church of the Martyrs	Iglesias Jesuscristo
Ballet Arts Worcester	In City Times
Becker College	Italian American Cultural Center
Before Closure Corp.	Jewish Family Services
John Binienda, State Representative	Kelly Funeral Home
Burncoat Baptist Church	King Jesus Chapel Church
Catholic Charities	Korean War Memorial
Center for Living and Working	LAOH
Central Mass Housing Alliance	Legal Assistance of Mass.
Central Mass. Independent Physician	Leicester Lions Club
Children’s Friend	Mass Audubon at Broad Meadow Brook
City of Worcester	Mass Justice Project
Mayor’s Office	Mass School of Pharmacy
City Mgr.’s Office	Mass Veteran’s Inc.
Clark University	Metrowest Humane Society
Commerce High Class Reunion Committee	Millenium Friendship Club
Compassion Pregnancy	Morning Star Church
Compassionate Friends	Narcotics Anonymous
Cornerstone Academy	New England Ghanian SDA Church
Daughters of the American Revolution	New England Native American Institute
Dudley Lions Club	Notre Dame Academy
Eckankar Church	Odd Fellows Rest Home
Epworth United Methodist Church	Old Sturbridge Village
Fleet Boston	Operation ABLE
Forgeworks Farm	Our Lady of the Angels
Friends of Newton Hill	Our Lady of Loreto
Girls Inc.	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
Goddard Memorial Association	Our Lady of Perpetual Help

PAL Worcester	VNA Care Hospice
Parents and Children's Services	Worcester Animal Rescue League
Performing Arts School of Worcester	Worcester Christian Singles
Planned Parenthood	Worcester Columbus Day Parade Committee
Pleasant Street Seventh Day Adventist Church	Worcester Common Ground
Problem Pregnancy	Worcester Community Action Council
Project Bread	Worcester Community Housing Resources Inc.
Quinsigamond Community College	Worcester Computer Society
Rape Crisis Center	Worcester County Food Bank
Rural Housing Imp. Inc.	Worcester County Sheriff's Office
Russian Orthodox Church	Worcester Cultural Coalition
Saint Francis and Therese Catholic Worker	Worcester Dept. of Public Works
Saint Joseph's Church	Worcester Firefighters Memorial 6K
Saint Michaels on the Heights	Worcester Interfaith
Saint Joseph's Rectory	Worcester Medical Center
Saint Patrick's Parade Committee	Worcester Police Officers
Saint Paul's Cathedral	Worcester Public School
Salvation Army	Worcester Public Library
Second Church of Christ	Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Seventh Day Adventist	Worcester Senior Center Campus
Supreme Master Chiang Hai International	Worcester State College
Sutton Garden Club	Yellow Submarine, the Band
That's Entertainment	You Inc.
Trinity Lutheran Church	YWCA
True Holiness Church	
University Commons Nursing Care Center	

Second language and ethnic programming includes: Spanish, Greek, Albanian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Arabic and Italian.

These nonprofit and community organizations receive tremendous benefit through WCCA. Their communications efforts are typically limited to a newspaper article or newsletter or perhaps a mention on the local radio station.¹⁸ Being able to put information on WCCA TV 13's bulletin board is of great value to these groups and when they are featured in WCCA programs, the publicity contributes to their ability to deliver services.

WCCA currently has one-hundred and twenty-three hours of video programming (both live and playback) per week, of this one-hundred and four hours is generated by the community. This programming cost the users nothing as WCCA is provided to the users without charge. If the users had to purchase this programming time it would cost them \$1,081,600 per year (combined cost).¹⁹ This \$1,081,600 is only for actual air-time and does not include the cost of production that would be incurred, such as studio, equipment rental and staff assistance. The

¹⁸ See Focus Group Report

¹⁹ Based on averaged leased access rates of \$100.00 per thirty minutes.

bulletin board service also has a real dollar value in that bulletin board users receive “low cost advertising” for their events and notices.²⁰

Given that Worcester is served by network affiliates in Boston and not by local network affiliates, WCCA’s role in the community is that much more important as a source for local information and news.

Staff did indicate that they would like to pursue more educational programming and perhaps some distance learning courses in partnership with educational institutions.

Programming Recommendations

- WCCA TV 13 is doing a good job of having a wide variety of programming and engagement of community groups. When we compare the variety of programming on WCCA against other access centers around the country, we believe that WCCA has achieved an excellent balance and stands out as an example.
- With the level of programming currently being created, additional resources will be necessary to program a second channel and to pursue a partnership for distance learning programming.

Training

WCCA conducts five workshops per year and each workshop is eight weeks long. Workshops take place Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Additional training is provided during weekday evening hours as needed. WCCA also conducts HTML training each quarter with an average attendance of three students at each training. WCCA trains twenty-five community producers, fifty interns and sixty youth each year video production as follows:

- Introduction field production, including camera and basic SVHS and mini DV camera use and tripod set-up.
- In Studio production basics including: training in studios A&B, introduction to studio cameras, audio, Trinity Digital switching, lighting applications, floor director, teleprompter, technical director, production design considerations and director's duties
- KidsNet/Youth Channel media literacy and career skills in communications
- Computer applications : character generator, HTML, vlogging, posting content on the web.
- Studio orientation and facility policies
- Advanced one on one courses on Trinity Switcher and Titlewave programs and Adobe Premier
- Digital and Analog Editing classes

²⁰ Cost for bulletin board listing is \$10 per month or \$70 per year, arrangements can be made if organization cannot afford this fee.

At the end of the training the producers are “certified” on the equipment as a prelude to producing independently. If a producer does not wish to take the training courses, they can certify through a test and if they pass they can use the studio and equipment.

Cost to the public for the eight weeks of training is \$35.00. If a community producer does not have the money for the training, WCCA provides volunteer opportunities such as front desk reception, cleaning or assisting with production in lieu of the fee.

Fifty interns are trained at the facility each year. The internships are intensive, ten hours per week for twelve weeks. The interns are responsible for all areas of production and provide assistance, one-on-one to community producers.

WCCA estimates that it now has two-hundred and fifty active producers and production crew members because of its training.

WCCA has placed on emphasis on training youth to produce programming by creating the KidsNet/Youth Channel program. Staff estimates that approximately sixty youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen complete the program each year. The goals of KidsNet/Youth Channel are laudable. They are:

- To provide students with hand-on experience in a real television station.
- To offer students outside the classroom work in the real world.
- To encourage expression through technology applied in television arts.
- To furnish students with a link into the community, to nurture a sense of belonging while at the same time developing real career skills.

WCCA accepts students through an open enrollment process as well as through affiliated groups such as the Girl Scouts, local schools or youth organizations in the city.

Participants engage in the following training:

- Production Basics - 6 week training course which includes camera basics, lighting basics, audio basics and editing basics.
- Production Clubhouse – reinforcement of the basic training and introduction to additional skills; an intermediate level component which is on-going.
- Power Team – designed for advanced youth; they invite promising youth from the Club House to work with them on advanced projects where they learn additional skills and production techniques.

In addition, WCCA will provide customized training and media experiences to groups that make a request.

Participants in KidsNet/Youth Channel produce a youth show, *Teen Central*, which includes community public service announcements and feature specials, such as the recent

democratic rally in Worcester with a follow up interview with the now Lt Governor elect, Timothy Murray.

Training Recommendations

- Acquire additional space to accommodate training. This will eliminate conflicts between training schedules and studio use.
- Acquire a satellite facility to allow for training in another part of the city, not just downtown.
- Consider weekday evening training, which will require more staff, but may accommodate more schedules.
- Increase amount charged for training while still offering the volunteer-in-lieu-of-money option

Staff

There are seven full-time staff, including the Executive Director, and two part-time staff as follows:

Executive Director
Operations Manager/Bookkeeping
Membership Coordinator
Engineer/Technician
Youth Coordinator/Program Development
Receptionist
Playback/Technician
Production Facilitator
Web Developer/IT

Staff reports that given the current level of use of the facility by the community, they would like to add two new staff members immediately. Additionally there is a need to add staff to cover a “night shift.” The access center is open until 8:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 4:30 on Saturday. Most Public access center hours run until 9:00 or 10:p.m. during the week and until 8:00 p.m. on Saturdays, to accommodate working adults. Depending on the program (complexity of the set, script and camera direction) it is difficult for someone to leave work at 5 p.m. and have only two hours for production. Since evenings are the busiest time for the access center, there is greater demand on staff and great demand for space. Additional staff to cover longer hours would result in greater usage of the channel.

Possible new staff positions include:

Technical Facilitator

This would be someone who would work with producers not just in the studios but also at the editing suites.

Full time IT position

This is a position that is becoming more important to access centers as they stream video, which WCCA TV does.

Video Facilitator

This is a position that would work with producers on their video content and quality.

Maintenance Person

WCCA is a large facility and is in constant need of maintenance and repair.

When asked what prevented WCCA from adding staff, we were told that there is not enough money to budget for the long term and there was a feeling of hesitancy in adding new staff considering the City is engaged in franchise renewal. Facility space was also mentioned as a deterrent.

Worcester is twenty percent less expensive to live in than New York City and forty percent more expensive to live in than Baltimore, Maryland. A review of the salaries paid to staff, including the Executive Director, shows that given the cost of living in Worcester, the salaries are low. While salaries in the nonprofit sector typically lag behind the for-profit sector, adjustments need to be made in the salaries to make sure staff can enjoy a decent standard of living. Low pay can create turnover. And while the type of person who works in access usually does so for the benefit of the community and not the pay, the levels of salary of the staff of WCCA TV could be challenging.

Staff receives paid leave, health and dental insurance and a "Simple Roth" match of up to \$100 per month. Staff also receives federal holiday leave, three sick days, three personal days and one week vacation (when first hired) that increases as time progresses. There is no "carry-over" benefit of sick or vacation days.

Many personal policies allow carry-over of sick and vacation days to a certain limit. It is particularly important that sick leave be allowed to accumulate for two reasons. When there is no carry-over of sick leave, employees are encouraged to call in sick, even when they might not be, just to ensure that the leave is used. Additionally, if an employee has an emergency illness, such as a simple surgery, it can take anywhere from one full week to six full weeks of recovery. This forces the employee to have to take a cut in pay during recovery.

It is standard for most employees to receive two full weeks of vacation in their first year with increases at various intervals thereafter. Offering only one week vacation the first year can be detrimental to finding qualified employees.

A new practice the federal government has implemented is to award "Time-Off" awards to outstanding employees. These awards can range from eight hours to twenty-four hours. Awards of time off do not incur any out of pocket expenses and encourage employees to excel because they enjoy the recognition.

Staff Recommendations

- Resources need to be made available to provide more staff for WCCA TV 13.
- Once more staff is hired, extend operating hours of the access center to better accommodate working adults.
- Acquire facility space to accommodate additional staff (see Facility report).
- Review salaries in both the nonprofit sector and the for-profit sector. Find a salary comparison for access centers but weigh it against nonprofit and for-profit industries outside of the access field. Undertake a study of cost of living in Worcester to determine if staff salaries are keeping up with the cost of living.
- Consider increasing the amount that is matched in the Simple Roth.
- Change personnel policy to allow carry-over of sick leave.
- Consider changing personnel policy to allow carry-over of a certain amount of vacation leave.
- Change personnel policy for new staff from one week of vacation per year to two weeks per year (increased incrementally for years of service).
- Consider implementing “Time-Off” awards as a non-monetary method of giving bonuses and encouraging excellence.

Technical

Staff was queried on satisfaction levels with the technical capabilities of the cable plant. When asked if satisfied, staff stated “no.”

The reason for this dissatisfaction is that while there are remote drops at various locations throughout the city, WCCA has not been informed where those drops are. WCCA is aware of drops at the DCU Center and St. Paul’s Cathedral, but these are the only two drops it is aware of. Additionally there seems to have been past confusion regarding the protocol for accessing these drops.

In the past, WCCA TV was able to do live programming from a drop on Shrewsbury Street (Columbus Day Parade) and the Performing Arts School. However, when WCCA tried to cover the gubernatorial rally at the DCU, it was denied access and told it needed to give two weeks notice of using the drops and receive approval from Charter management.²¹ A concern was raised that using the drop without having a Charter technician present could possibly “crash” the City’s I-Net. While giving a two week notice is not terribly burdensome, and the City has a compelling concern for how the drops are accessed, it was the first time WCCA had been informed of this policy, so it was not able to cover the gubernatorial rally live. We have previously addressed the need for a dedicated strand for video delivery on the INet in the “Channels” section of this report.

Staff did report that there are problems with the transmission of the channel and when there are problems they are fixed quickly. However, staff also noted there are transmission issues that have existed since 1997. For example, when there is “snow” Charter fixes the

²¹ The event was eventually covered on tape.

problem fairly quickly but there is intermittent interference from the adjacent Channel 12 when 13 switches to live cablecasting. Channel 13 experiences “ghosting” and “graininess” at these times, resulting in an estimated twenty to thirty percent degradation of the signal (more noticeable on LCD monitors).

WCCA has experienced the channel going dark unexpectedly but staff reports that is usually the result of an outage on the overall system not just Channel 13.

Staff does not believe that Charter is responsive to their technical needs because of Charter’s denial of a second channel and the lack of inclusion of WCCA TV programming in the preview guide.

Technical Recommendations

- Provide WCCA TV a list of remote drops in the city. This will assist WCCA and the community by allowing WCCA to partner with the institutions that have these remote drops to provide live coverage of institutional and community events.
- Include in the franchise agreement and/or contract a protocol for WCCA (or the government or educational channels) to access these remote locations. Provide guidelines that will streamline the process and not prove to be over burdensome for either WCCA, Charter or the City.
- Provide language in the franchise agreement that would require access channels be transmitted with the same quality as cable and broadcast channels. Resolve the interference problems between Channels 12 and 13.
- As previously stated in the Channel Recommendations section of this report, require Charter to provide the second channel to WCCA TV as per the current franchise agreement.
- Require Charter to include WCCA TV programming in their preview channel, establish guidelines for how that information is transmitted to Charter and Charter’s obligations to provide that information to the public.

Equipment

Staff has spent approximately \$35,000 per year on production and other equipment. As per the contract with the City, WCCA TV received grants of \$150,000 in 1997 and 1998 for “equipment, furnishings and/or studio renovations.” WCCA’s expenditure on equipment alone has exceeded the sum of the initial grants. Staff reports that approximately 90% of its equipment is getting old and needs to be updated.

Staff has provided us with a list of equipment that will be needed to keep its inventory of equipment current and to fully transition to a digital environment.²² The sum for this equipment is \$824,495.00. A large portion of that budget, \$154,720.00 is designated for equipment the public can check out from WCCA and use independently of the studios.

²² See Attachment F, list of needed equipment and cost.

Unlike many other access centers in communities of Worcester's size, WCCA does not have a mobile van unit. In order to do remote location shoots, staff or volunteers have to load up their cars with equipment and transport it to the site. This is problematic in several ways, mobile van unit equipment is typically fixed and as such suffer less wear and tear than loading it in and out of vehicles. Mobile van units are typically equipped with a generator or multiple large batteries to provide a source of electricity for equipment as well as equipment to monitor video and audio quality. Even under the best circumstances, this ad-hoc way of covering remote shoots leaves WCCA at the mercy of not knowing whether they got quality video until they return to the access center.

Equipment Recommendations

- In order to meet the needs of WCCA TV 13 in the operation of its channels, equipment must be reliable and updated from time to time. Because much of WCCA's equipment is aging, the current funding rate of \$30,000 per year is not sufficient. WCCA will need a substantial equipment grant over the next few years to stay current with technology and fully transition to digital. Staff estimates that amount to be \$824,495.00 or roughly \$82,000 per year.
- The estimate for the grant amount does not contemplate a mobile van unit. We recommend that additional funds be secured to purchase a mobile van unit.

Focus Group

Background

On November 1, 2006, a Focus Group session was conducted at Worcester Community Cable Access headquarters at 415 Main Street. Forty people participated in the Focus Group and WCCA TV 13 staff attended as well. Every effort was made to invite as diverse a group of community stakeholders as was possible. The following is a list of the people in attendance and the respective organizations they represented.

Allison Alaimo, Massachusetts Veterans, Inc.
Rich Ardizzone, Joy of Music Program
Mark Bilotta, Colleges of Worcester Consortium
Edla Ann Bloom, AIDS Project Worcester, Inc.
Maurice J. Boisvert, YOU, Inc
Kim Ciottone, Common Pathways
Jill C. Dagilis, Worcester Community Action Council
William P. Durkan, "Senior Speak"
Sibyl Farson, Worcester Here & Now
John Foisey, Worcester Technical High School
Joan P. Fouhy, Business Expressions
Rodney Glasgow, Worcester Academy
Stephen Hill, City of Worcester Division of Neighborhoods and Housing
Jim Holliday, Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Penny Johnson, Worcester Public Library
Steven Jones-D'Agostino, Best Rate of Climb
Bruce Karlin, M.D., Worcester District Medical Society
Christopher Kerins, AIDS Project Worcester
Joyce Kressler, First Night Worcester
David La Rose, Worcester Here & Now
Vincent Lombardi, "Audio Journal"
Christina Lombardo, AIDS Project Worcester
Sarah Loy, Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts
Konnie Lukes, City Council Member
Elizabeth Ramona Marangos, Producer
Frank Mathews, "Senior Speak"
Sheila McMahon, Workforce Central Career Center
Edith Morgan, "Senior Speak"
Mike C. Perotto, Perotto's Perspective
Kim Pond, University of Massachusetts Extension, 4-H
Major (ret) Joe Raulinaitus, US Food and Drug Administration
Paul Richard, Community Healthlink
Kate Santos, United Way of Central Massachusetts
Clara Savage, Common Pathways
Maureen Schwab, Producer
Lynne Simonds, Southbridge Community Connections

Aaron Simoneau, “Audio Journal”
Jennifer Snell, Family Services of Central Massachusetts
Mark W. Steiner, Ovation Model & Talent
Gabriella Volante, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance

Over the course of four hours the Focus Group was conducted using the Focus Group Worksheet.²³ Participants were given background information on the current franchise agreement, PEG access operations, current and emerging technology, what is required or allowed by federal law, the definition of “Rights of Way,” and the definition of a “needs assessment.” Participants were walked through a series of questions regarding technology and their current and future communications and cable related needs. Questions were posed for both quantitative as well as narrative responses.²⁴ Participants were organized into small group discussion and at times into large group discussion. The following pages provide the results of the Focus Group session.

Questions:

Focus Group participants were asked to consider their individual and institutional communications needs both now and for the future in Questions #1 and #2. These questions were repeated at the end of the Focus Group session to determine if after receiving information regarding current and emerging technology whether those needs might have changed during the course of the session. The following are the responses from the beginning of the session. We will compare these against the same questions asked at the close of the session at the end of this section of the assessment report.

Of the forty participants, one did not respond to question #1. Some of the respondents focused on technology they needed, while others focused on delivery of a message.

1. What are your communications needs now?

- Televised events, generate awareness for agency
- Ability to produce on our site, video/audio of good quality of our programs, edit (above) easily and quickly for in-house, web and advertising use
- Voice, web, print used to disseminate, collect information
- Access to local programming on a regular basis for educating public on HIV/AIDS and the programs available at AIDS Project Worcester, access for online posting of events
- Improved website (interactive) web based applications for services and employment. Marketing services opportunities for donors to contribute as well as recruit the “best” work force. Easy access for all citizens—youth, disabilities, etc.

²³ See Attachment B.

²⁴ Narrative responses are presented as close to what was written as possible. Spelling errors were corrected and most abbreviations are explained. Grammatical errors may appear but most often reflect the participants’ desire for brevity.

- Community information, engagement, opportunity for discourse of Common Pathways' eleven Priority Community Themes—local tv, print, radio, community forums, publicizing Common Pathways activities, image building.
- To reach low income residents in Worcester and the South County and the general public re: the 15+ programs of WCAC (Worcester Community Action Council), web based info.
- More and better equipment.
- Booking guests on “Worcester Here & Now” who are contributing to the needs, pleasures and advancements of Worcester and its surrounding areas (Holden, Auburn, Shrewsbury, etc.).
- We plan to coordinate the DECA Hunger Awareness Benefit and other DECA related events and need to communicate our activities to the community.²⁵
- As owner of a small business that for 20+ years had operated almost exclusively by referrals, I don't have pressing professional communications needs. However, greater access would benefit both my clients and the nonprofit organizations I serve on boards on a pro-bono basis.
- A place to highlight and share some of the things we're doing at our school that might interest and benefit the community. A station that provides quality, up-to-date programming that can be used in the classroom for middle high schools.
- Distribute information, re: city programs and services and various community events and programs.
- Inform public transportation users of new schedules, events, etc. The mediums I use are local paper, i.e., press releases, radio for PSA's, exterior signage, internal vehicle postings and brochures, info posted on websites.
- Inform about public programs, inform about array of library services, keep current with variety of formats used by library users.
- Branding; public relations; promoting; marketing; news and information; teamwork sharing and discussing of data; information; text; video; audio, etc. in real time.
- Broadcasting needs; public announcements for education and promotional requirements—Aid in promotional announcements, re: events, public health, educational access to services.
- Being able to reach an ever growing audience for promotion of “First Night.”
- Better and more programs that enlighten community on making over our community and state of cleaner streets.
- Current, local info, accessible, turn print/visual info into audio to serve the blind population.
- Affordable broadcasting options on a regular basis, assistance in developing and filming ads. PR assistance—how are messages received, wider exposure, multi-language translation.
- Ways to educate the public about who we (LACCM) are and what we do and also to educate them about their civil legal rights.²⁶
- To reach out to Worcester constituencies regarding their specific interests, usually time-sensitive information needs. To obtain input from constituencies regarding issues of

²⁵ DECA: Distributive Education Clubs of America.

²⁶ Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts.

government complaints, requests from constituents for government responses in areas of public safety and health.

- Education on how to place programming on the web and manage it. Move production data from one system to another. Networking ideas within city and state. More coverage area in cable: multi-platforms.
- Radio and tv access to the community. Informing the community (especially seniors) of what is available in areas of health, employment, education, etc. (unvarnished news).
- High speed internet, email, phone, voicemail, high-end printing, high volume mailings, cell phone, marketing by all media formats, community partnerships, website marketing.
- At Senior Center: Broader coverage of events and feedback capabilities by/for seniors. Neighborhood (mine in Brittan Square served by East Side CDC) coverage of neighborhood interests, problems, activities.
- Coordinate lines of communication, I would have to improve the coordination of communication.
- Building awareness of current issues UMass is working on. Promoting on-going emergency programs and opportunities. Reaching a broader client base. Using more modern methods of communication.
- Massive viewer outreach on a wide range of consumer protection and health issues. Ex: food defense, product recall or health fraud.
- Internet, newspaper, radio but most of all television. The problem for nonprofit agencies is lack of resources for high-cost technology. I need to create greater awareness and education of such issues of mental illness, homelessness, poverty.
- Reach a younger, more tech-savvy audience through internet or with commercials at a low cost.
- Depending on the audience. For community at-large: newspaper, radio, tv, internet. For specials groups and individuals: radio, special groups' magazines, group interaction.
- Internet for entertainment and work. TV for entertainment. I use telephone for communication most of the time.
- Media support—new opportunities so youth especially and others to have access to media literacy, trainings and opportunities. A way that community members can be heard. Open airways and availability of technological services. Training and education.
- Accessibility, current info, world news, different language access.
- General outreach and volunteer recruitment, advertising, website (needs update), fundraising, internet, general print media, phone/fax, chatroom (for support groups), newsletter.
- As an acting and modeling school, we need to let the public know what our course offerings are and to let them know the talent that is available to them for their advertising and promotions.
- Promoting our services within the community and spread the word about different events we sponsor, plus issues we want to present to the public.

Of the forty participants, two did not respond to question #2.

2. What will they (communications needs) be five or ten years from now?

- Same, maybe more news stories.
- Simple ways of doing more with less.
- Cross registration for college students utilizing technology.
- Same as now but with more updated technology.
- Web-based client records, billing and outcome data. Increased role for website.
- Same—only more evolved/developed and hopefully expanded.
- Interactive web services. Web donor services/interactive.
- Ways to get younger people to pay more attention to older folks.
- Hopefully more celebrants of Worcester, 2nd largest city in the state, with so many growing and profitable businesses and organizations and improved neighborhoods.
- We are expanding DECA activities each year and expect our communications needs to grow as well. We are intending to add on MDA fundraising project next year.²⁷
- Helping people cut through the explosion of media—especially the internet...including blogs.
- The same.²⁸
- Community needs surveys, funding applications online, info and referral.
- I see the needs being similar in the next five to ten years, although on a larger scale because I anticipate significant regional growth.
- Provide greater in-home access to library services.
- Reaching expanded audiences beyond Worcester; using communication to remain competitive and relevant.
- Same but expanded to more information on demand, i.e., pod casting or similar.
- Same, continued expertise and assistance in ads.
- Same as above, plus (maybe this is too forward-thinking) perhaps w/advanced technology we can have more interactive outreach efforts (i.e., interactive tv show, intake over video/tv, etc.)
- Widen web services.
- ? no idea.
- Same—not sure of upcoming technological responsibilities. More space capacity on computer to send large graphic files.
- When Baby Boomers come to Senior Center, new services, opportunities for activities, learning, health and emergency info. Better connections between neighborhoods and city/government agencies for faster response.
- I would like to be current on all lines of communication.
- Staying current with modern methods of communicating. As Extension changes to meet the needs of the Commonwealth, sharing that knowledge and/or opportunities with the community. Potential training of staff in the technology available.

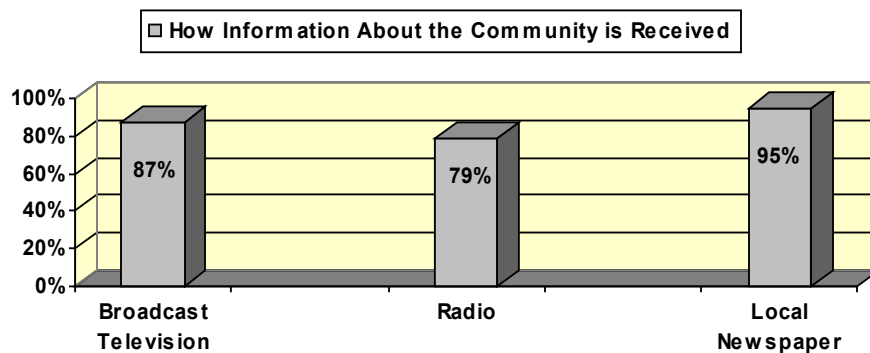
²⁷ MDA: Muscular Dystrophy Association.

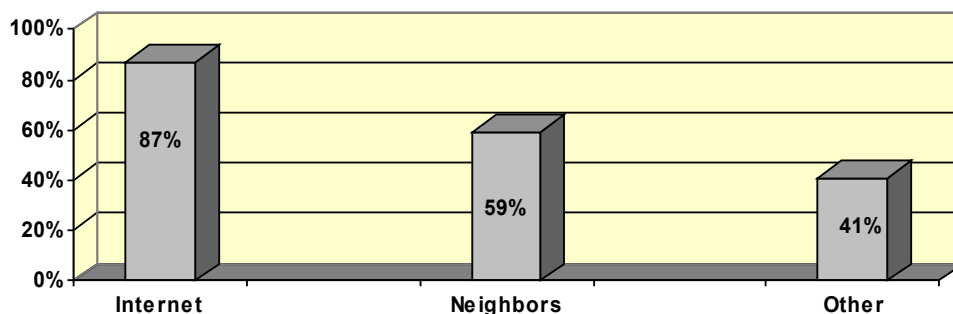
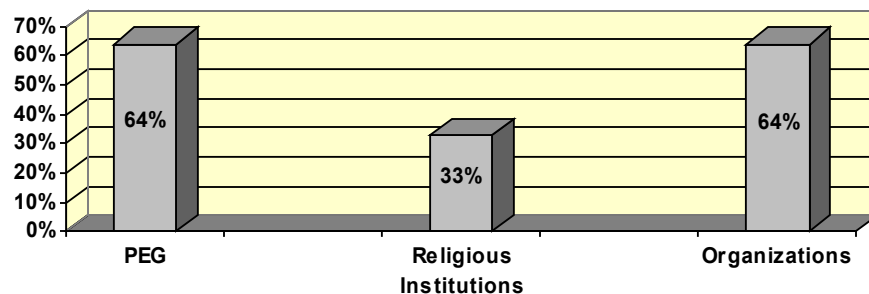
²⁸ Six participants gave this response without further elaboration.

- Same as above, probably with more detail and greater coverage! Need for more time “on camera” to discuss more sophisticated issues.
- I will need to reach audiences that are younger and more sophisticated in the use of technology.
- Always changing we need to be able to keep up with tech trends so that we are communicating through the most widely used technologies to our donor base.
- Probably the same plus others according with new technological channels of communication.
- The same—healthcare needs to be met via computer, will probably move to internet, basic visits/info.
- More access to public access tv—more capacity—shows from schools that break down barriers and stereotypes. More funding and respect for access tv. Need for more and more community involvement and collaboration through the media.
- Accessibility, info on demand.
- Probably the same as above, only expanded to a slightly larger scale.

3. How do you receive information about the community? (check all that apply)

This question was asked to determine how participants receive information about their community and to discover the potential role of PEG as an important communications venue for the residents of Worcester. The following charts show the responses of the thirty-nine participants who answered this question:





Each participant was asked to check as many as applied. Numbers shown in the charts are percentages of participants who checked each of these choices, the following are the real numbers of responses:

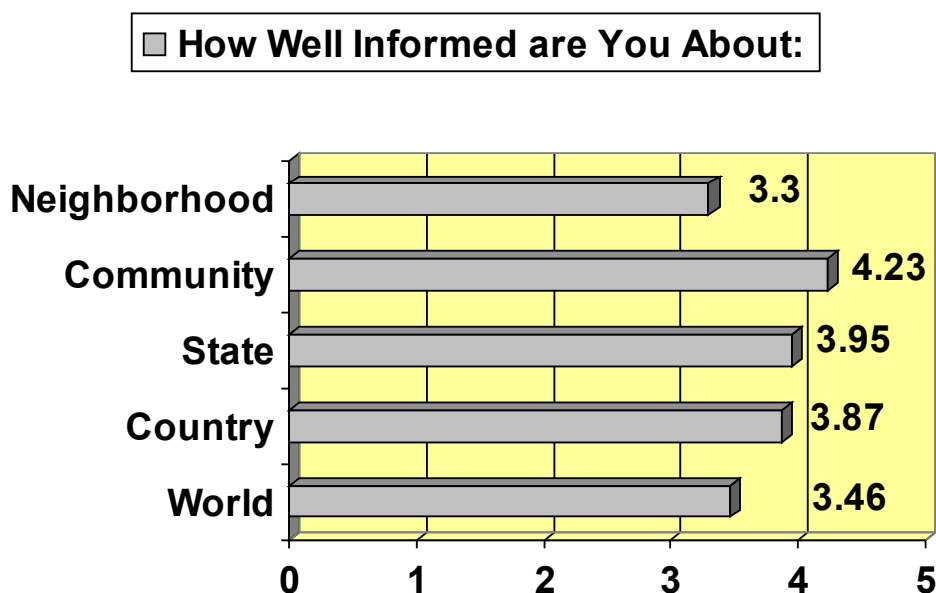
Broadcast Television	34
Radio	31
Local Newspaper	37
PEG	25
Religious Organizations	13
Organizations	25
Internet	33
Neighbors	23
Other	16

While the Local Newspaper is the most favored medium for receiving information about the community, PEG television was ranked quite high as a source of information about the community, with sixty-four percent of respondents answering they received information about the community through PEG access television. This sixty-four percent response rate is ten to forty-six points higher than all the other studies we have conducted. Worcester faces challenges from Broadcast television because it does not have local Broadcast channels, information on community events is spotty because Worcester Broadcast channels are transmitted from Boston. Only CBS Channel 4 maintains what they refer to as a “community desk” in Worcester, but no studios. Because of this, Worcester residents are in a position of having to depend on the local access channels for local information.

4. How well informed are you about: (scale of 1-5, 5 being high)

This question is designed to discover how well the participants are informed about news and events from the local community to world news and events. It is designed to determine the efficacy of the above mentioned communications methods.

The responses shown in the graph are “mean” numbers.



The rating of 4.23 for the response to the question of how well the participants were informed about the community demonstrates the efficacy of the local communications modes such as the Local Newspaper and PEG, particularly WCCA TV 13 since it covers local community organizations and events. Given a lack of local Broadcast stations and the fact that most radio stations are not locally programmed, it is surprising that the participants showed such a high degree of being informed about the community, this group rated .06 to 2.23 points higher than previous studies we have conducted. The participants of the Focus Group session are “community stakeholders” and as such, because of the organizations and agencies they work for, may pay greater attention to local news and events than the general population. However, we have found that when there is not robust PEG access television in a community, participants show a higher degree of knowledge about the “world” or the “country” than their local community, because of the pervasiveness of twenty-four hour newscasts such as CNN or Fox News.

Questions #5 and #6 were asked to find out what constituencies or “customers” the participants served and how they communicated with those customers. These questions were designed to evaluate the various communications needs of the participants. Thirty-eight of the forty attendees answered these questions.

5. Who are your customers?

- General public, donors/philanthropists, businesses, veterans or patriotic-minded citizens.
- Families with kids and anyone interested in work in the Worcester area. Potential donors.
- Colleges, students, faculty and staff. Low income, middle and high school students. Elected officials, community leaders.
- Youth, schools, community of faith. General public. Minorities. GBLT (Gay, Bi-Sexual, Lesbian, Transgender) community.
- Clients, insurance companies/funders/donors/volunteers.
- Community residents, city and regional government leaders, local employers, state leaders, various special groups, i.e., youth, elderly, disabled, various ethnic and small business groups.
- Low income residents, youth, audience, also our community partners.
- Mostly seniors.²⁹ Hopefully 30 to 50’s.
- People who benefit by exposure; their businesses, family needs, medical help, government directions, available offerings, including entertainment and restaurants.
- Our primary target market is the students and staff of Worcester Technical High School. We also target the community at large for many of our events.
- Traditionally clients have been a blend of large companies and small entrepreneurial organizations. Currently doing more work for nonprofits (hence their face is the general and donor community).
- Parents in the greater Worcester area who could be potential WA (Worcester Academy) parents.
- Target consumers who can benefit. Funded agencies who provide services. Entities eligible to apply for funding.
- Riders of the WRTA, public transit users.³⁰
- Entire community. Government officials.
- For profit and nonprofit businesses that have marketing and public relations needs.
- Our target audience includes everyone! Crossing over age, culture, sex, orientation, etc.
- Everyone.³¹
- General public.
- Blind, visually impaired, print disabled, elder.
- Both the general public as a whole, and, more specifically, low-income and elderly residents of Worcester County.

²⁹ This answer was given three times.

³⁰ Worcester Regional Transit Authority.

³¹ This answer was given three times.

- City of Worcester residents, workers, taxpayers.
- Women 25 to 49 years of age.
- Wide array of community orgs, job seekers, employers, educational institutions, media.
- A. For Senior Speak: Caregivers, providers or info. B. For Neighbors: business in area, absentee landlords.
- The citizens of the City of Worcester.
- Parents, educators, municipalities, youth, organizations (we have several different programs that have different audiences). 4-H Youth Development, Nutrition Education, Natural Resources, Agriculture: such as turf management.
- Entire public sector—all consumers and users of products, FDA regulators. Healthcare sector.
- Corporate community. Middle and upper class professionals and residents/property owners, parents, caregivers.
- Huge range but primary target audience ages 30-65, household middle-upper income.
- 1) Community at large. 2) Special groups: business, African American groups, Asian. 3) Individual (neighbors, residents).
- The average viewer, the general public, youth.
- Senior citizens, disabled individuals, families, couples and individual (counseling) and companies—grantors/potential donors.
- Business and children—adult (prospective students).
- Everyone in Worcester, plus Worcester County. Specific: low income service providers, other organizations, state officials, legislators, formerly homeless, concerned citizens.

The participants' constituents or "customers" (as we defined it) are primarily local residents, organizations and businesses. That being the case, their communications needs are very localized and also challenging because they have to compete with so much non-local information such as broadcast and cable news, Internet, larger market radio stations, non-local advertising and even non-local direct mail.

5 (a) How do you usually communicate with your customers?

- Internet, email, newsletters, phone calls, story in paper, word of mouth.³²
- Email, newsletters, radio, website.
- Phone calls, email, information pieces, webpage, fundraisers, through local media.
- Newsletters, email, website, radio, newspaper/tv.
- All of the above and community forums.
- Outreach mailing, newspaper.
- Radio, internet, word of mouth, Channel 13, Radio 91.3 FM.
- Formerly a columnist with Telegram/Gazette, Worcester Magazine, Jewish Chronicle, Senior Advocate. Now gathering play dates for guests on Worcester Here & Now.³³
- We have used primarily email and regular mail and WCCA TV and word of mouth.

³² This exact answer was given four times.

³³ Program on WCCA TV 13.

- With my own clients—mostly meetings (in person), phone, email, internet. With their clients: all of the above, especially website pulls, PR.
- Internet, email, US mail, phone, monthly newsletters, special events/meetings hosted at our school.
- Mailings, email (rarely), new stories, internet, website, phone.
- Brochures, newspapers, website, signs in buses, community outreach—attending senior centers, neighborhood centers, grocery stores, hospitals.
- Newsletters, email, local paper, radio, government channel, public access channel, word of mouth, fliers, posters.
- Phone calls, email, email newsletters, word of mouth, website, face-to-face.
- Newsletters, mailings, story placement in local paper.
- Newspaper, tv, radio, internet, etc.
- Email, word of mouth.
- Radio broadcast.
- Internet, newsletters, local paper, local news.
- I think our most prominent form of communication is word of mouth, followed by trainings and outreach activities we conduct.
- Phone calls, email, word of mouth, local paper, radio, tv, mail.
- Phone calls, internet, email for the questions, word of mouth, viewed shows.
- Radio, TV 13, word of mouth, common interest groups (clubs, orgs, etc.)
- Also: promotional fliers, brochures mailed, delivered, emailed and posted on website, job fairs, community events.
- B. For Brittan Square—newsletters (quarterly), agendas (bi-monthly). We have several groups—phone calls, visits (i.e., crime watch, 3 churches, businesses) that disseminate info. A. Radio/TV Senior Speak—word of mouth, notice in Senior Scoop.
- Phone calls, internet, email, personal networking.
- Newsletters, internet, emails mainly. Some stories sent to local paper and other media outlets.
- Email, phone calls, word of mouth, all levels of electronic media, meetings and presentations and briefings.
- Internet, newspapers, newsletters, advertising, word of mouth.³⁴
- Phone, email, local cable tv production.
- Internet, email, phone calls, word of mouth. I am a community organizer and activist.
- Newsletter, local paper, word of mouth, healthfairs, conferences, tradeshow, partner-agencies, local/state/regional, health/elder papers.
- Email, phone calls, newspapers, word of mouth.

Nine of the respondents (or 24%) cited “tv, WCCA TV, TV 13 or Channel 13” as a method used for communicating with their customers. In the Focus Group Conclusions section we will discuss the various modes that the participants use to communicate to their customers and the general public.

³⁴ This exact answer was given two times.

5 (b) How much money do you spend each year to communicate with your customers?

Thirty-five Focus Group participants answered this question as follows:

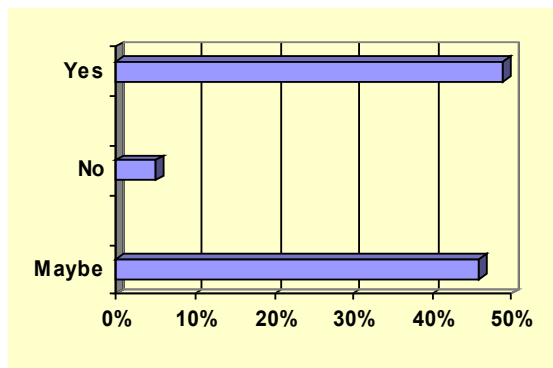
Under \$1,000	11	31%
\$1,000 to \$5,000	9	26%
\$5,000 to \$10,000	4	11%
\$10,000 to \$25,000	3	9%
Over \$25,000	8	23%

5 (c) Do you think your communications are effective?

Thirty-nine participants provided an answer to this question with a “Yes” “No” or “Maybe” response as follows:

Yes	19
No	2
Maybe	18

The chart below shows the responses in percentages of participants who responded.



Less than half of the respondents felt their communications were effective. This could be due to the small amount of money spent each year by the participants on communications with their customers. Even though the participants in the Focus Group session were important local stakeholders; such as educators, government agencies, healthcare providers and educators, legal assistance providers, economic development workers, nonprofit leaders, social service providers, and community activists; and their communications are important to the welfare, health and safety of the community, they by and large do not have the resources they need to adequately communicate with their constituencies.

5 (d) What three central messages would you like to deliver to your customers?

This question was designed to get participants thinking about their most important messages they needed to deliver. Thirty-seven participants responded to this question.

- Awareness about organization/programs it offers. Educate about veterans.
- High quality music education for everyone. Impact on community (youth and education) Impact on low income kids. Access to music education.
- Worcester and region as a great college town. Accessing higher education. Promoting academic and social events.
- HIV/AIDS infections continue to occur in our community. The fastest growing population of those who are getting infected is between 13-24. Everyone should have an HIV test. Our message is one of living after 25 years of the disease and not of dying.
- Easy access. Quality care/outcomes. Cost competitive.
- Existing assets and gaps in services in Worcester. Ways to get involved/effect change. Reporting back results of specific efforts. Setting new priorities.
- Services available. Who is eligible. How to access services. WCAC=central agency for low income services.
- Learn the truth. Tune into PBS.
- No community can survive without neighborhood support. We need to spread the word on all that this city has to offer. Public access, WCCA community television is a vital and growing movement.
- Improve community awareness of hunger. Our responsibility to our students includes leadership development, social consciousness. Create civic consciousness in students and vocational understanding.
- To my clients regarding communications: Avoid jargon “insider speak.” Keep it simple. Show the benefits.
- We are a school with a great academic program. We are a diverse community. We are a great option for many kinds of students and families.
- Availability of programs and services. Availability of funding (thru grants): deadlines and parameters. Eligibility criteria for programs and service.
- The new information (schedules, tickets, times, routes, etc.). Where to find more info (customer service, web, tech). How to use new info.
- The library has something for everyone. You don’t need to have time to read to use library resources. You don’t need to come to the library to use its resources.
- Value, affordability, timeliness of my services.
- HIV/AIDS is still a reality and continues to be a real current health issue. Everyone is at risk. Education and communication is necessary to combat this pandemic (ignoring it hasn’t worked).
- Family oriented celebration. Largest arts festival in region. Time-date-cost.
- Environment. Safety. Interconnecting with each other.
- Vital information is available. Cultural events can be accessed. Opportunities available for the disabled.
- It’s important to learn and stay updated on issues of HIV/AIDS and sexual health. HIV is still present and there continues to be new infections each year.

- Who is eligible to receive our services. What services we provide. What people’s civil legal rights are.
- Connecting people to others. Showcasing the city. Community social services.
- Access to information. Access to participation. Access to involvement.
- Employment training. Services available to employers. Employment and training services for all job seekers. Promote one-stop career center.
- Seniors are vibrant, have many interests, do interesting things, give back to the community, and have many services.
- Services that are available to the citizens of Worcester.
- What are our programs such as 4-H and misconceptions. Needs programs such as “Operation Military Kids” “Supporting suddenly military families.” Outreach branch of the University in the community.
- Accurate up-to-date information on regulatory issues. Educational information on government issues. Consumer protection programs.
- We play a vital role. We deliver essential and quality services. We make a difference in your life.
- United Way of Central Massachusetts is working to help people in your community. United Way of Central MA is creating positive change and impacting lives. Your investment will help address issues in people’s lives so that they can become self-sufficient.
- Updates about Common Pathways. Opportunities for volunteers.
- Information. Information about events.
- They have value. They need to speak up and out. They need to advocate for things that improve their lives and others. We all count.
- “Life brings challenges—we bring help” regardless of ability to pay. Fundraising. Volunteer opportunities. Source of information/not just services.
- Courses offered. Client needs.
- Support our efforts/programs by donating or attending special events. What we provide service wise. Spreading the word about housing/homelessness issues.

Again, the stakeholders’ messages are important to the welfare, health and safety of the community. They speak to quality of life issues in the City of Worcester and the greater Worcester region.

6. What problems do you have when communicating with your customers?

This question was asked to determine what obstacles the stakeholders have when trying to communicate their messages to their constituents. Thirty-seven of the participants responded to this question.

- Getting message to all.
- Too expensive. Advertising is hit or miss.
- Reaching the right audience at the right time.
- Difficult message to deliver due to stigma attached to the disease. Awareness of services we provide.

- Frequency/quality of contact.
- Reaching all the various groups on a consistent and regular basis. Effectively promoting capabilities.
- Customer follow through. Need to educate customers/working on.
- Can't or don't want to speak English.
- Only booking times. So many people who want to appear as guests but finding an accommodating date that won't conflict with their work.
- It is very time consuming.
- Every client has a different challenge or set of challenges.
- We keep tapping the same audiences—how to reach a diverse crowd. We have a high price tag—how do we communicate across the financial gap?
- No one media outlet reaches the entire target population. Cultural, economic and linguistic differences.
- Not reaching everyone, literacy, language.
- Keep message fresh.
- Breaking down the silos that are designed to prevent infiltration by outsiders.
- Certain parts of the community don't feel comfortable in discussing HIV/AIDS particularly due its mode of transmission (sexual/IV drug use). And this is unrealistic especially in regards to reducing transmission (it's still a shameful disease).
- Not able to evaluate/track audience beyond zip code information to inform decisions and planning.
- None.
- Awareness of service. Strength of signal reliability of cable access providers (awareness, technology, skills, need to share).
- People are unaware of the continued infections because of stigma. Do not know the effectiveness of messages.
- Reaching our client population (low income and elderly). Language barriers.
- Not enough tech cross-over to show or promote. Strength of signal and equipment.
- ³⁵
- Reinforcing that job seekers come to job fairs “dressed for success.” Note: (Network of community partners contributes significantly to outreach success.)
- Phone tag.³⁶
- Language barriers. Have done some transcription but then problem is bi-lingual staff to answer questions. New issues out in a timely manner.
- Sometimes access (lack of) to major media outlets; preventing distribution of information.
- Budget, positioning, overcoming myth.
- Cost! We are a nonprofit so advertising budget is extremely tight. Range of target market is diverse so reaching all through one channel is impossible.
- Difficulties to follow up. Listen reaction to my first communication.
- Lack of audience. Lack of audience response.
- They do not trust the system. They don't think they can cause change. Ambivalence.

³⁵ This exact answer was given two times.

³⁶ This exact answer was given two times.

- Confusion with agencies with similar names. Not being able to get the full message across. Narrowing down target audience.
- People are not always getting what we try to communicate. There is a gap sometimes between the information sent and it actually getting to those we need it to reach.

The stakeholders’ obstacles in communicating their important messages to the community are significant. Overcoming those obstacles is important and necessary to the community as a whole. It is interesting that language barriers appeared many times as a common theme among the participants. We will address what can be done to help overcome language barriers in our Focus Group Conclusions part of this report.

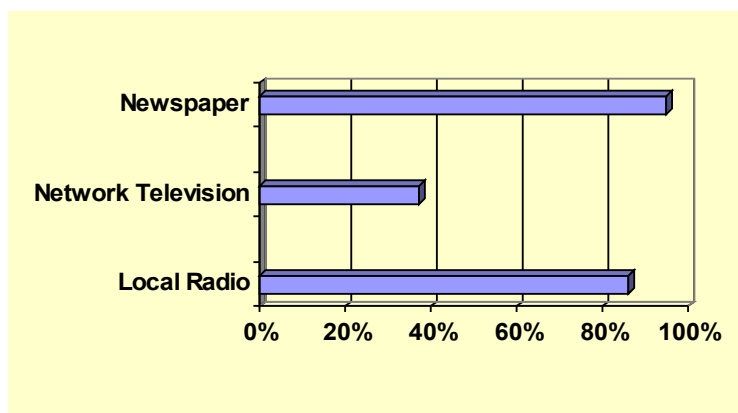
Question #7 was asked to determine if participants’ had received media coverage from traditional outlets over the course of a year.

7. Which of these media outlets has covered or reported on your agency, institution, special event or issue in the past year? (check all that apply)

Thirty-seven participants responded to this question as follows:

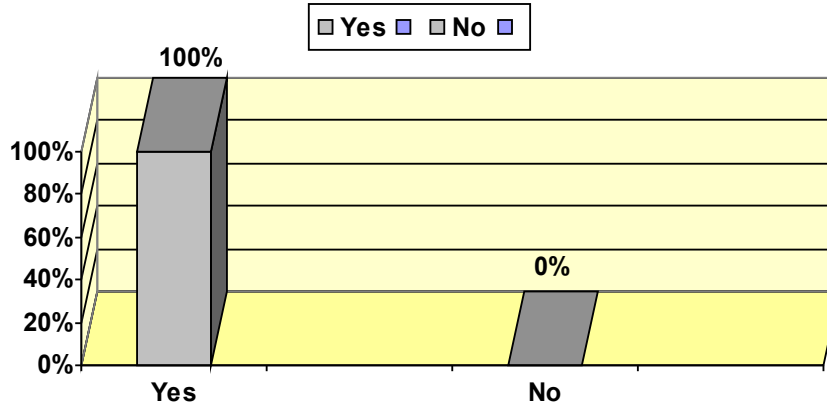
Newspaper (Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Worcester Business Journal. Other)	35
Network Television Affiliate (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, other)	13
Local Radio Station (s)	32

The chart below shows the responses as percentages.



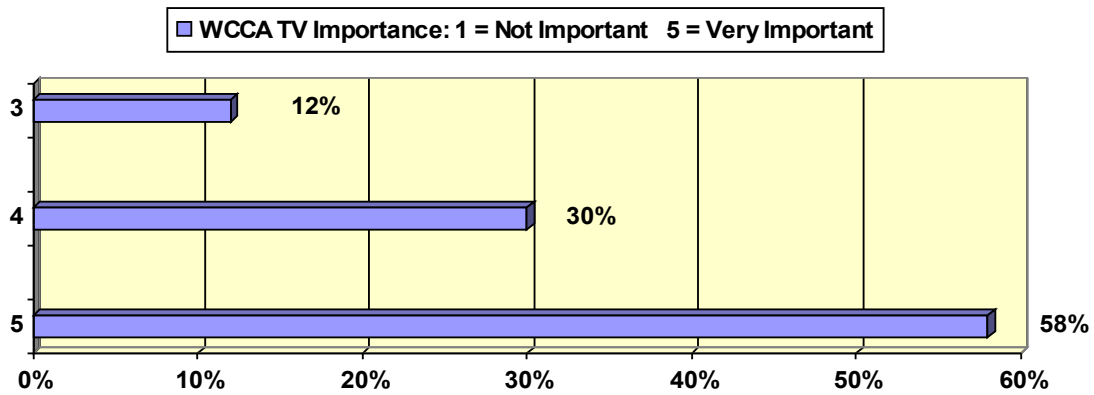
8. Do you think that WCCA TV is important?

Thirty-six participants answered this question with all of the participants answering in the affirmative.



Question #9 rates the level of importance the participants gave to WCCA TV.

9. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being best) rate WCCA TV’s importance:

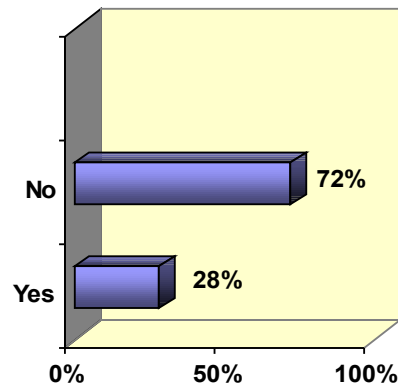


Thirty-three participants rated the importance of WCCA TV. No participant rated WCCA TV at a value of 1 or 2 for importance. Four participants gave WCCA TV a value of 3 (medium), ten gave WCCA TV a value of 4 (somewhat important) and nineteen gave WCCA TV a value of 5 (very important). A combined total of eighty-eight percent of the participants gave WCCA TV a rating of “somewhat important” to “very important.”

Question #10 asked the participants if they currently produce an access show at WCCA TV.

10. Do you currently produce a show at WCCA TV?

Do You Currently Produce a Show at WCCA TV?



Thirty-six participants answered this question with ten saying “Yes” and twenty-six saying “No.” While less than a third of those who answered this question actually produce a television program at the access center, WCCA TV enjoys high favorability among the Focus Group participants. Additional comments were written in the margin as follows:

- Will be in the future.
- No, but want to.

Participants were then asked what the name of the show is and gave the following responses:

- Senior Speak³⁷
- Worcester Here & Now³⁸
- Coffee With Konnie
- Ramona Interviews
- Perotto’s Perspective
- Close to Home
- The Flipside

The subject matter of these shows is as follows:

³⁷ Three participants gave this response.

³⁸ Two participants gave this response.

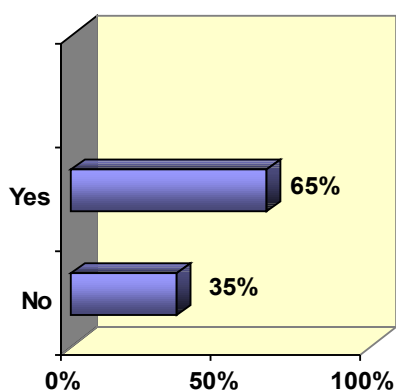
- Interviewing people who have left or are leaving their signature on our city.
- Interviewing people that have left impact on city.
- Guest's views about Worcester—living and working here.
- Interviewing persons with a life experience or positive message.
- Information and entertainment for seniors by seniors.³⁹
- Providing information on services available City of Worcester.
- Pro-life, pro-family issues.
- Talk show highlighting individuals, organizations and regular—opportunity for folks in the city to tell and talk about their stories, etc.

Question #11 queried participants for their interest in producing a show and follows with a question to determine what prevents them from doing a show.

11. If you DO NOT produce a show at WCCA TV, have you ever thought about producing an access show?

Thirty-one participants gave a response to this question with twenty responding that they had thought about producing an access show and eleven saying they had not thought about it.⁴⁰

Have You Ever Thought About Producing an Access Show?

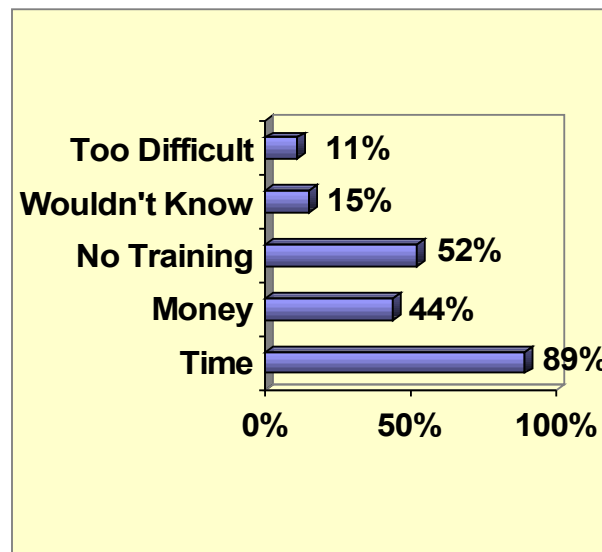


Participants were then asked what prevented them from producing an access show.

³⁹ Two participants gave this as a similar response.

⁴⁰ The number of respondents to this question is in discrepancy with Question #10. Ten participants responded that they did produce an access show. The total of respondents here is thirty-one. If we combine that with the responses of Question #10 we would have forty-one participants and the real number of participants in the Focus Group was forty. We examined the Focus Group responses and noted that at least two of the “Yes” respondents to Question #10 stated that they were “assistants” in production. We might be able to conclude that since they identify themselves as “assistants” they view themselves as not actually being the “producer” of the show.

What Prevents You From Producing an Access Show?



Twenty-seven participants answered this question. The actual number of responses to this question are as follows:

Time	24
Money	12
No Training	14
Wouldn't Know What to Do It On	4
Seems Too Difficult	3

The last two answers are particularly significant. Only four participants stated they wouldn't know what to do an access show on and only three stated it seemed too difficult. We can assume by these answers that a great majority of the participants would know what subject to do a show on and most did not see it as being difficult to produce a show.

Time and training rated as the highest barriers to doing an access show with money being a factor at less than forty-five percent.

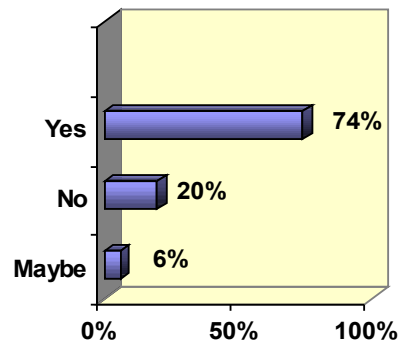
Question #12 lists the following classes and training on television production for adults and youth as follows:

- Introduction field production, including camera and basic SVHS and mini DV camera use and tripod set-up.
- In Studio production basics including: training in studios A&B, introduction to studio cameras, audio, Trinity Digital switching, lighting applications, floor director, teleprompter, technical director, production design considerations and director's duties
- KidsNet/Youth Channel media literacy and career skills in communications
- Computer applications : character generator, HTML, vlogging, posting content on the web.
- Studio orientation and facility policies
- Advanced one on one courses on Trinity Switcher and Titlewave programs and Adobe Premier
- Digital and Analog Editing classes

After review of these classes and training, participants were asked if they would be interested in taking classes.

12. Would you be interested in taking one or more of these classes?

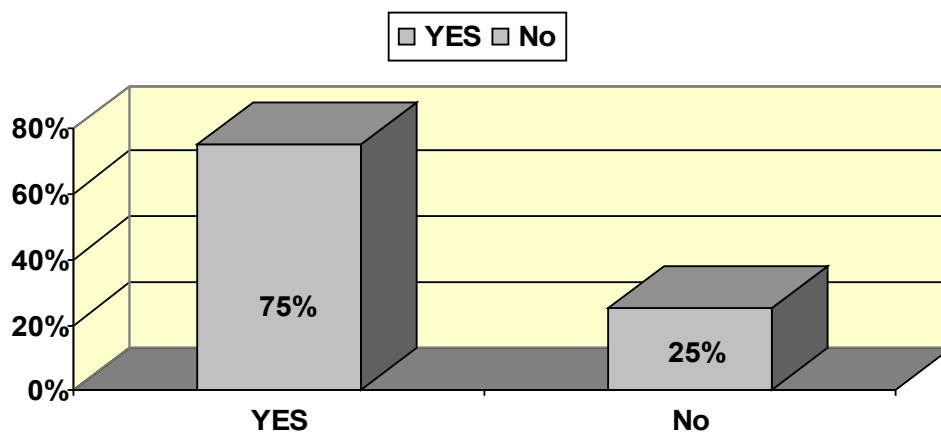
Would You Be Interested in Taking One or More of These Classes?



Thirty participants answered this question with twenty-three answering they would like to take one or more classes, six saying they would not and two writing in the response “maybe.” Given that time and training were the greatest perceived obstacles for those who had thought about producing an access show, the interest in taking production classes would indicate that participants were very willing to commit time and were very interested in the training.

Question #13 asks if an access show has ever been done about the participants' agency or institution.

13. Has an access show ever been done about your agency/institution/issue, etc.



Thirty-two participants gave a response with twenty-four saying “Yes” and eight saying “No.” This is an impressive number given that the access center does not have a mobile van and limited access to remote drops. This means that most of these shows had to be done either in the access center or taped and taken back to the access center for editing and post production. It is often difficult to get agencies, institutions or advocacy groups into the access center for a show. To do shows at the agency, institution or advocacy group locations, camera and sound equipment have to be transported to the site. Given there is no mobile van unit that is permanently equipped, means that staff and/or volunteers have to load up the equipment separately for each taping of a show.

Question #14 asks about who it was that did the show.

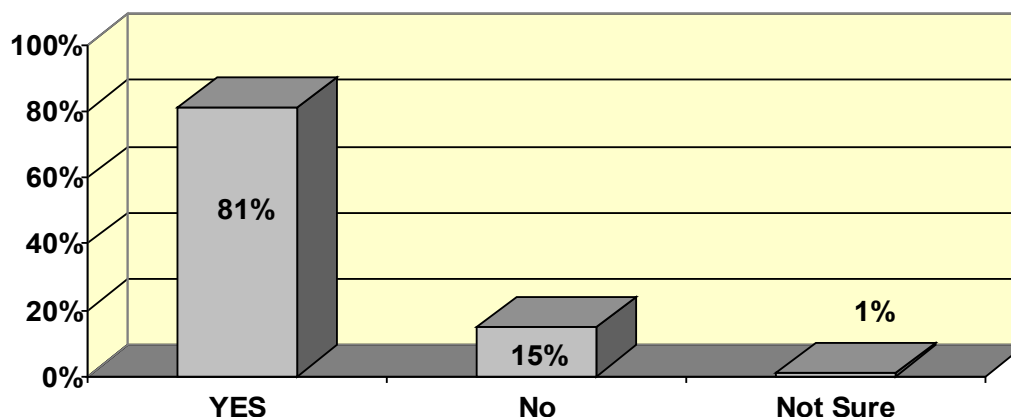
14. Was it an individual or the access center that did a show about your agency/institution/issue, etc.

Nineteen participants responded to this question, with six indicating shows about their agency, institution or issue had been done by both WCCA and volunteers.⁴¹ The low number of respondents leads us to believe that the question might have been confusing to the participants and perhaps should have been explained better. Of those who responded, seventeen indicated it was an individual that produced the show and sixteen indicated that it was WCCA.

Question #15 asks if there is a special event, issue or program the participant would like WCCA TV to produce a show on.

⁴¹ We might assume these were separate shows.

15. Do you have a special event, issue or program you would like WCCA TV to produce a show on?



Thirty-three participants answered this question with twenty-seven saying “Yes,” five saying “No” and one writing in “Not Sure.” Among Focus Group participants there is a strong desire for a show to be done about their special events, issues or programs.

Participants were given a chance to describe their desired programming as follows:

16. If so, what is that special event, issue or program?

- Veterans Issues
- Upcoming Events
- Tons!
- College Town—Enhancing Worcester as a premiere college town and destination
- Walk for Life, Holiday Program⁴²
- Foster Parenting (recruit prospective homes through education)
- Several focused around Common Pathways activities, upcoming indicator report and community themes
- Worcester Community Action Council programs
- Action Hero Awards
- A “Session” get together of musicians on Sunday afternoon.
- Locally provided entertainment—monthly. Silver screen features, local performers.
- Talented young children (under 10 years), music, dance, skate, sing, recite, take on persona, paint, etc.
- Hunger Awareness Benefit
- I am on the Advisory Board for Rainbow Child Development Center and feel they have an amazing story to tell
- A series about diversity, looking at a number of issues, particularly race, class, gender, sexuality
- EITC tax preparation services and information

⁴² Two respondents gave a similar answer.

- Cultural Commission grants and programs
- As a Government Department we have access to Channel 12. Our Friends and foundation may be interested
- Common Pathways upcoming roll-out of its community-indicators initiative
- Immunization of November 18th, already produced
- Prevention and education information
- Agency information (general), testing
- New Year's Eve arts festival coverage should occur because this is the largest community wide event in our city. Additionally there are programs in schools and neighborhoods prior to the event that should be covered
- 20th Anniversary. Community based employment service program with Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
- Children, Youth and Family Services
- Special events: walk, Latino/Black AIDS Awareness, World AIDS Day, National Testing Day, etc.
- Special show showcasing new Technical High School
- Senior Center has many great programs and activities that could be featured regularly. We mention them on Senior Speak, have advertised activities (Gala, etc.).
- Operation Military Kids—Reaching out to the “suddenly” military. Families in Worcester and throughout Massachusetts
- Food security and food defenses with regard to the “War on Terror”—bioterrorism issues!
- Housing, healthcare, youth achievement, social service network
- 3rd Common Pathways Community Forum and small group discussions for special groups: small business, medium and big business, ethnic groups
- Volunteer recruitment—Senior Campaign Program—Volunteers age 60+ helping other seniors who are frail/homebound
- Our basic image course which teaches confidence, self-esteem, wardrobing, communications skills, interviewing

Question #17 asks about participants' sponsorship of imported programming.

17. Have you ever requested a particular program be shown on the access channel (s) (one that was produced by an individual or organization at the state/national level)? For instance, the Dept. of Health and Human Services produces programming on addiction.

Thirty participants responded to this question with three saying “Yes” and twenty-seven saying “No.” That only ten percent of respondents had requested an imported show be shown on the channel could indicate that they don't know that individual residents can sponsor programming created elsewhere. However, that said, WCCA TV's schedule is quite filled with locally created programming and does not have a great deal of room to accommodate imported programming.

When asked what the name of the show was and what was it about, we received the following answers:

- Several—one recently on youth employment/jobs
- A “session” (seshoon) at “The Emerald Isle” (A.O.H). Irish music by non-professionals
- Local offerings/weekly. Shows on stage, film, restaurants, specialties
- National Council of Jewish Women 100th Anniversary video. 100 years of service, NCJW
- Local youth

Question #18 asked participants about their familiarity with WCCA TV programs as follows:

18. List the kinds of programming you have seen on WCCA TV:

- Talk shows⁴³
- Interviews⁴⁴
- Cooking⁴⁵
- Travel⁴⁶
- Political⁴⁷
- Faith based⁴⁸
- Soap Box⁴⁹
- On-the-street interviews
- Medical
- Programs that are recorded community events (like the City’s annual Martin Luther King Youth Breakfast)⁵⁰
- Some music and news (ethnic, youth)⁵¹
- Common Pathways Community Forums
- Community events
- Calendar kind of shows⁵²
- Ramona interviews
- Richard Preston interview
- Sybil Farson⁵³
- Interviews with officials, business people
- Community Vision
- Hermes Yanis, Jr.

⁴³ Four respondents provided this answer.

⁴⁴ Six respondents provided this answer.

⁴⁵ Two respondents provided this answer.

⁴⁶ Three respondents provided a similar answer.

⁴⁷ Two respondents provided this answer.

⁴⁸ Two respondents provided this answer.

⁴⁹ Seven respondents provided this answer.

⁵⁰ Five respondents provided a similar answer.

⁵¹ Seven respondents provided a similar answer.

⁵² Two respondents provided a similar answer.

⁵³ Two respondents provided this answer.

- Senior Speak⁵⁴
- Entertainment
- Community interest programming
- Koffee with Konnie⁵⁵
- Graduations
- Performances⁵⁶
- YouthNet
- City Council meetings⁵⁷

Question #19 asked participants about what kind of programming they would like to see on PEG access television.⁵⁸

19. Along with considering your communications needs, tell us what kinds of programming you personally would like to see on PEG access television. Check all that apply.

The following gives the real numbers of responses for each type of programming.

- 21 City/County Council Meetings (Zoning Boards, etc)
- 14 Government Agency Programming (such as Police and Fire Departments)
- 19 Safety Programming
- 24 Health Programming
- 19 Parks and Recreation Programming
- 22 City/County Sponsored Events
- 11 School Board Meetings
- 12 Focus on Schools Programming (curriculum reviews, district mapping, school schedules)
- 11 School Sports Programming
- 18 School Arts Programming
- 16 Academic Competitions
- 19 Higher Education Programming (spotlight on colleges, universities, entrance requirements)
- 17 Distance Learning (for and not for credit courses)
- 9 Higher Education Sports Programming
- 17 Higher Education Arts Programming
- 12 Higher Education Academic Competitions
- 32 Community Arts and Festivals Programming
- 26 Community Information Programming (spotlight on recreation, dining, entertainment, shopping)
- 24 Neighborhood Shows
- 21 Seniors Programming
- 21 Shows by and about Children

⁵⁴ Two respondents provided a similar answer.

⁵⁵ Two respondents provided this answer.

⁵⁶ Two respondents provided this answer.

⁵⁷ This answer indicates confusion between WCCA and the government channel.

⁵⁸ PEG was used here instead of WCCA TV to give participants a broader range of options.

- 20 Shows by and about Persons with Disabilities
- 14 Second Language Programming
- 26 Ethnic and Cultural Programming
- 18 Women's Programming
- 12 Gay and Lesbian Programming
- 17 Fitness and Lifestyle
- 15 Home and Garden Programming
- 8 Animal Shows
- 25 Political Programming (discussions, debates, candidates, "get out the vote," etc.)
- 8 Military Programming
- 30 Local History and Culture Programming
- 24 General Non-Profit Programming
- 9 Religious Programming

A high level of interest among the respondents would rate at 20 and above. Numbers 10 through 19 show an average interest and numbers below 10 show a weaker interest. The listing of these types of shows comes from programming guides from access centers from across the United States. Depending on the community in which this question is asked, interest in particular types of programming will be stronger or weaker.

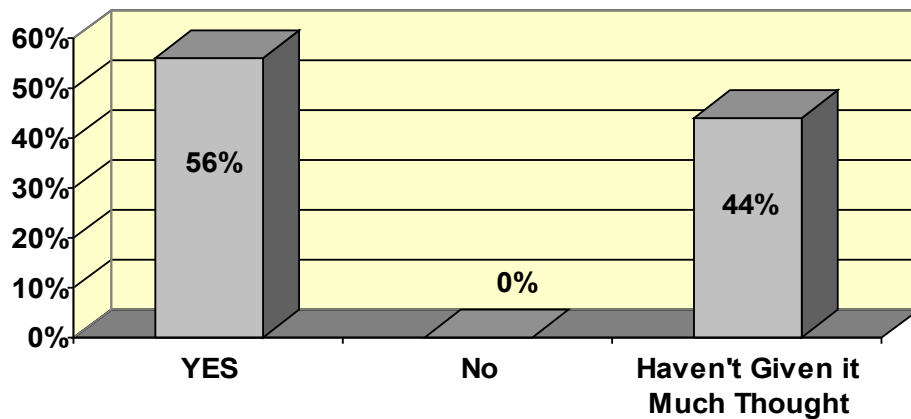
Participants were also asked to add their suggestions to the list of programming. Four participants did so as follows:

- Veteran's groups/issues
- Special competitions such as a film festival w/all films shown on WCCA TV 13
- English speakers of other languages
- What's here, what's now!
- Environmental concerns
- How about a talk show? One with a live audience and contemporary topics. You could even do something like this once a month.
- Renewable, sustainable and clean energy for transportation and buildings
- Cooking—featuring local chefs
- Employment opportunities
- Call-in or write-in advice shows, i.e., car trouble advice, health advice, legal advice, mental health advice, home improvement advice, relationship advice
- Need a separate channel for a menu of programming
- College consortium
- Featuring the inventive/inventions
- Weekly news cap. The city suffers from not having a network affiliate and the news on the local Charter news show is woefully deficient in covering real issues in Worcester
- By starting with the United Way, as a program all of these shows could be branched out

- I think everything from A to HH is worth covering.⁵⁹ However, I don't think that each constituency can support such "niche" programming. So the ideal kind of programming would seem to cover a spectrum related in some way.

Question #20 is asked to determine which of the participants would be interested web-streaming their programming.

20. WCCA TV web-streams programming, would you be interested in webstreaming your television program?

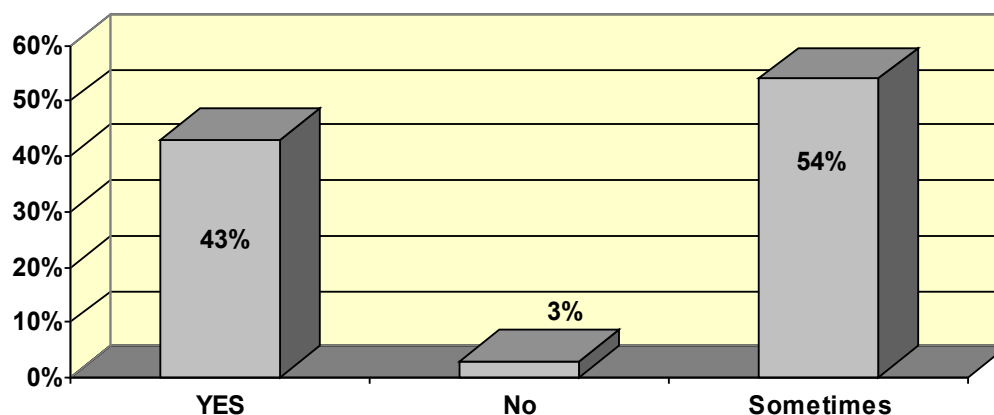


Thirty-three participants answered this question with fifty-six percent saying "Yes" and forty-four percent answering "Haven't Given it Much Thought." No participants answered "No."

Question #21 asks whether WCCA TV is serving the needs of the participants.

⁵⁹ HH is the last selection in the list: Religious Programming.

21. Do you think the PEG access operations serve your needs?⁶⁰



Thirty-one participants answered this question with thirteen answering “Yes” and seventeen answering “Sometimes.” One participant answered “No.”

Next, participants were asked what WCCA TV could do to better serve their needs.

23. What would you do to improve WCCA TV operations so they could better serve your needs?

- Get the tv listings on the cable tv guide, interconnectivity.
- ?
- Lobby for a better contract.
- Access to homes in (nearby) towns. Mobile van unit.
- Partner on best practices, local needs and expanding programming.
- Sponsors for some programs in order to pay hosts (and participants if possible).
- I need to know what’s coming on and at what time. Please consider getting a slot on the on-screen tv guide. With digital cable and nearly 300 channels, the tv guide is the only way I find out what to watch.
- It needs additional resources to grow capacity. Marquee could move slower.
- On-Demand availability. Enough “talking heads”—more visuals.
- Give WCCA another cable channel for its programming needs.
- We would like a live feedback for “Health Matters.”
- We would like to have interaction with production “students” at WCCA TV for nonprofit promotions and programming.
- Real time coverage of First Night with footage available for the organization. Have a separate process to provide coverage of special projects that take place prior to the event. All footage would be valuable and helpful for us to use in foundation or

⁶⁰ This question was stated incorrectly. It should have read “Do you think WCCA TV is serving your needs.” It is however, safe to assume, that since the group had been discussing WCCA TV throughout the session and not the government or educational channel, the responses given apply to WCCA TV.

sponsoring requests. In fact, it might be interesting to pursue creating a separate fund/application process specifically for nonprofits to provide different types of coverage that can be used for internal purposes. Is there any information about the audience that views programming on WCCA? Is there any way for WCCA programming to be available “On Demand?” With busy schedules, set times often make viewing difficult. How about a separate Focus Group for nonprofits—or other specific groups to be targeted for input?

- More of the same.
- More publicity re: programs and educational programs (mailing list).
- Provide production services for the public more. Add graphics screens throughout programs. Call-in capability.
- Update equipment and focus on web use, use CD’s and DVD’s to show in post production, more edit suites or/and share software via internet to edit at home.
- Extend WCCA (Ch. 11, 12, 13) reach suburbs—many people have connections in Worcester. I like to see what goes on here (some work here, some live outside city).
- Don’t live in Worcester but work here (need to know more). More opportunities, resources for field operations, increase outreach so folks know services.
- Enriched staff and specific required programs. Make FDA/Regulatory programming more available to Ch. 13.
- More resources to support. More “out of studio” programming and more timely programming.
- Work program. Live outside of Worcester, can’t see program.
- More people using this channel and get it everyday more attractive to audience.
- Fix video stream—it does not work! Stop promoting it if not available!
- We need more shows. We need another channel. More inputs from the public on what they want to see on cable access. More real issues get covered on access (more real people). Fun and informative shows.
- Broadcast to “Greater Worcester.” I live outside Worcester but work in Worcester—I miss out on Worcester programming from WCCA TV.
- I think our organization would benefit from being able to advertise events/programs and produce a show/be on a show to discuss certain issues when it is necessary.

Question #23 asks participants for their opinion as to what should be included in the new franchise agreement. Thirty-five participants answered this question. The results are as follows:

23. We’ve reviewed the current franchise agreement. In the new franchise agreement, what kinds of provisions do you think should be made for WCCA TV?

More channels	46%
Monetary support for building and equipment	88%
Additional funds for operation of WCCA TV	88%
Drop points at various locations so WCCA TV can provide live programming	74%

Public service announcements on the other cable channels about WCCA TV	69%
Inter-connect WCCA TV throughout the county	83%
Keep the provisions for WCCA TV the same in the new franchise	11%

Unsolicited additional comments were written at the bottom of the pages of the worksheets as follows:

- I do think there are many possibilities for synergy. Including connections with towns like Shrewsbury with independent local cable systems.
- A spot on the on-screen tv guide. This is key.
- Put on tv menu. Money for achieve programs for people to do. Fix video stream. Need inter-connectivity.
- Too often too many are using same equipment—hard to repair. They do wonders with present staff, need more.
- Improve cameras.
- Server/broadband. (Inter-connect) without disrupting town access tv.

Participants were then asked the same questions that were asked at the beginning of the session to determine if during the course of the Focus Group their opinions had changed.

24. What are your communications needs now?

Twenty-seven participants responded to this question.

- General awareness, televised events/inform public of events. Web based.
- Programming on higher education issues.
- Same.⁶¹
- To enhance the “brand and image” and household name of Worcester Community Action Council.
- Money.
- Greater funding.
- To highlight our academic program and extra-curricular offerings both to use as an admission tool for us and to provide a benefit to the community who might enjoy this information.
- To reach out to public transit riders.
- Higher education should be included.
- Need inter-connectivity. Fix video streaming. Bigger service.
- Update equipment.

⁶¹ Eleven participants provided this answer.

- Phone, INet, mail, community network connections, email, website.
- (My bias still runs to print media). For me, they're being met by the plethora of media (print, cable, email, etc.) for neighborhood organizations.
- Get a program taped and played/broadcast and streamed. Bring our youth and Teen Central youth together for collaborative programming/news. Package materials in a way for easier access—get trained to utilize tools.
- Still a large scale and effective outreach to a wide range of public groups. Increase number of topics.
- I need to reach specific audiences so I can educate about our programs and distinguish ourselves from other agencies.
- Opportunities for feedback about such programs. Use of feedback in future programs.

25. What will they be five or ten years from now?

Twenty-five participants answered this question.

- Connecting local colleges for academic opportunities.
- More community interaction/engagement opportunities.
- Not sure.
- Same.⁶²
- More money.
- I think the explosion in media will only continue. Cutting through the clutter and standing out from the crowd will continue to be challenging especially for nonprofits with limited time and financial resources.
- Same need but on a larger scale as the region and hopefully, transit authority grows.
- Utilize various formats. Younger people aren't using traditional communication vehicles.
- New people to get involved.
- Same and any new, user friendly technology.
- Baby boomers will need more programming for their interests and age group—more geared to “keeping mind alive” activities—maybe even a “dating” system (Senior Affairs?). Greater emphasis on prevention at all ages. “Alternative” medicine ideas, comparison shopping ideas: daily or weekly price comparisons, “bargain” ideas. Free time, a week before elections for all candidates to inform voters: debates, individual appearances, interviews, in-depth analysis.
- Stay current with technologies to utilize as they become available. Fast track information from university to communities. Clients go to WCCA TV for information.
- More interactive and detailed program/on camera time on a wider range of consumer protection topics. Yes, an understanding to enhance programs and be more proactive in seeking and participating in programming.
- I will need to reach audiences quickly and clearly and concisely.

⁶² Eleven participants provided this or a similar answer.

- More funds to attend specific neighborhood needs. New technology, mobility to produce at different sites.

Focus Group Conclusions

Focus Group participants represent a wide array of “service” providers from education, healthcare, social service, government and community advocacy sectors. We were impressed by the level of participation by this particular Focus Group and the enthusiasm they expressed for getting out their messages about their particular services. Narrative answers were well thought out and often had a level of detail we have not seen before in other Focus Group sessions.

With sixty-eight percent of the participants having less than \$10,000 per year for communications, these groups and agencies face interesting challenges. While they have valuable and essential messages to communicate, over fifty percent of the participants were not sure or did not think their communications were effective. Only thirty-five percent of the participants reported that their agency, institution or special event had been covered by Broadcast television in the past year. Local Newspaper and Radio had covered their agency, institution or special event in the past year at ninety-four and eighty-six percent respectively. There was a heavy reliance by the participants on newsletters, email, phone calling and word of mouth. These methods of communication are labor intensive and newsletters, in particular, can be expensive. One quarter of the participants cited WCCA TV 13 as a method for communicating with their current and prospective constituencies.

Worcester has some demographic characteristics that render traditional methods of communication difficult. It has a high foreign-born population (eighteen percent vs. United States average of twelve percent). Foreign language speakers in Worcester account for twenty-nine percent of the population vs. the United States average of nineteen percent. And its disabled community is two percent higher than the national average.⁶³

Worcester’s unemployment rate is just above the rate for the State of Massachusetts and the entire United States at five percent, but the median household income is roughly nine thousand dollars less than the U. S. median household income and individual income is roughly three thousand dollars less than the U.S. per capita income. Almost twenty percent fewer people own their homes in Worcester than in the nation as a whole.⁶⁴

While Worcester’s overall poverty rate is five percent higher than the national average at almost nineteen percent, it has a higher Hispanic population than average and poverty among Hispanics is almost twenty-two percent on average nationwide, which could account for some of the difference, but certainly not all.⁶⁵

Worcester also has a higher rate of seniors (over thirteen percent) than the nation as a whole (twelve percent), as does the state of Massachusetts (again over thirteen percent). While we could not find projections for growth in the senior population specifically for Worcester, we

⁶³ Percentages taken from the US Census Bureau, 2005.

⁶⁴ US Census Bureau, 2005

⁶⁵ US Census Bureau, 2005

did find that Massachusetts growth for seniors is projected to reach over twenty-percent of the population in the next twenty-five years.⁶⁶

While Worcester faces challenges, it also has steadily been growing over the past few years and its population is about 175,000.⁶⁷ Additionally, the city has experienced economic growth through downtown revitalization, the addition of a new convention center, new hotel and condominium projects.⁶⁸ Secondary school graduation rates are comparable to the rest of the United States with over eighty-four percent of the population possessing a high school diploma. The percent of residents with a Bachelor's degree of higher is two percent greater than the national average.⁶⁹ The City website notes that biotechnology and bioengineering are an important cornerstone of Worcester's economy, as well as the several colleges and universities (including a medical teaching hospital) that are located in Worcester.

The Focus Group reported a high reliance on the Internet for receiving information about the community (eighty-seven percent).⁷⁰ This is much higher than we have seen in other studies and could be accounted for because of the participants themselves being leading stakeholders, nonprofit managers, community activists and educational representatives. Local Newspaper ranked highest for receipt of information at ninety-five percent.

The popularity of these two methods of communication could pose a problem for many of the Focus Group participants if they are perceived as the best modes of communicating with desired constituencies. Certainly these two methods work if one is seeking to communicate information regarding opportunities in business or higher education (as some of the participants need to do), but they do not work if the constituency is poor, non-English speakers, or blind. Communicating with seniors via the Internet is not very effective as only twenty-two percent of seniors sixty-five and older have Internet, compared to seventy-seven percent of eighteen to twenty-nine year olds.⁷¹

It is a positive that sixty-four percent of the participants cite PEG access as a source for local information. Based on reported subscriber numbers and numbers of total households in Worcester, cable penetration is roughly seventy-six percent, that is eight points higher than the cable penetration nationally. Roughly fifty percent of the poor have cable and rely on it for their main source of information.⁷² PEG access, particularly WCCA TV, can deliver messages to a public that might not receive them otherwise, that being the poor, the non-English speakers, the blind and the elderly. These are significant populations for Worcester.

The Focus Group participants were well informed about their community rating on a scale of one to five, a 4.23 mean. They had a wide range of information to deliver to the community regarding programs and services and cited a wide range of difficulties they faced in

⁶⁶ US Census Bureau, 2005

⁶⁷ US Census Bureau, 2005.

⁶⁸ Worcester Telegram and Gazette, various articles.

⁶⁹ US Census Bureau, 2005

⁷⁰ This question usually renders a fifty percent response.

⁷¹ Older Americans and the Internet: Pew American Life/Internet Project.

⁷² Heritage Foundation, 2004

getting their message out, including: money, language barriers, inability to reach constituents, quality of contact, etc.

During the course of the Focus Group, we concentrated on WCCA TV to discover its value, how participants used it and what interests participants had in using WCCA TV as a communications vehicle.

All of the participants answered that WCCA was important with eighty-eight percent rating WCCA as “important” or “very important.” While twenty-eight percent answered that they did produce programming at WCCA, seventy-two percent did not, yet, WCCA enjoyed a high level of popularity among all participants. Over sixty percent of participants could cite the name of a particular program they had seen or describe its general content.

Sixty-five percent of participants said they had thought about producing an access show. This number can be seen as “fairly” reliable because only thirty-one of the forty participants answered this question. We do know there were ten producers that attended the focus group and we can assume that eight or nine abstained from answering this question.

Those who had thought about producing cited “time” as the number one factor for not producing, with training coming in second. Forty-four percent showed concern regarding money but only eleven percent thought it would be “too difficult.” Eighty-five percent of those who answered said they would know what to do a show on. This is further evidenced later in the session when we asked participants regarding their ideas for programming.

Eighty-one percent of the participants said they had a special event, issue or program that WCCA TV could produce a program on and there was a high rate of interest for certain types of programming such as: health programming; city/county sponsored events; community arts and festivals programming; community information programming; neighborhood shows; seniors programming; shows by and about children; shows by and about persons with disabilities; ethnic and cultural programming; political programming; and local history and cultural programming. Other types of programming also garnered interest but those listed above scored the highest. Fifty-six percent of participants replied that if they had programming they would want to web stream it.

When asked if WCCA TV 13 served their needs, forty-three percent said “Yes” while fifty-four percent said “sometimes.” Respondents cited the need for WCCA to be seen outside of Worcester, in neighboring communities as their number one recommendation for improving WCCA services. Other issues raised were a mobile van unit, listing on the cable tv guide, On-Demand availability, provision of production services for nonprofits, call-in capability, upgraded equipment, an additional channel, etc.

Additional funds for the building, equipment and operations were rated at eighty-eight percent by the Focus Group attendees for what should be included in the new franchise agreement. Interconnection throughout the county rated at eighty-three percent, drop points at various locations rated at seventy-four percent, WCCA public service announcements on other

cable channels rated at sixty-nine percent and more channels rated at forty-six percent. Eleven percent of participants replied the provisions for WCCA should remain the same.

One third of participants indicated that their communications needs had not changed from when the Focus Group began. Those remain primarily content oriented needs, how to get the information out to the local community and how to target particular constituencies. There was also a real sense that in five or ten years there will be a need to keep up with new technologies, but still a need to create content in a way that effectively communicates services.

WCCA TV 13 plays an important role in the community as a communications vehicle for agencies, institutions and advocacy groups. The Focus Group results demonstrate that WCCA needs to play an expanded role in facilitating communications between the participants and their desired constituencies. This increased role will put more demands on WCCA and its resources.

Focus Group Recommendations

- Increase WCCA TV 13 staff to meet the needs of community stakeholders such as the Focus Group participants. Focus on production facilitators and marketing/outreach.
- Acquire additional space to accommodate increased staff and production.
- Consider a “PSA Day.” This is something done by other access centers on a yearly or quarterly basis. Nonprofits are invited into the studio to tape a sixty-second video PSA.
- Acquire a mobile van unit so more production can be done in the field at community events.
- Consider building an “express” studio to accommodate easy production by organizations and service providers (see Chicago Access Network).
- Update equipment to accommodate current and new producers.
- Require interconnectivity of channel to nearby towns to accommodate those who work in Worcester but do not live in the city limits.
- Acquire additional channel to meet increased demand.
- Acquire “avails” on other channels on the cable system to promote WCCA. This has become standard in franchising.
- Acquire listing in the cable guide.
- Make provisions to be included in “On-Demand.”
- Upgrade server for webstreaming, consider using BitTorrent or similar methods of delivery.
- Train organizations how to webstream.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Facility Recommendations

- Provide WCCA TV 13 with additional funding that will adequately address ongoing maintenance and repairs. Additional capital funds should be acquired to address the electrical problems, the HVAC problems, renovation of the KidsNet/Youth Channel space and renovation of the façade of the building. A capital grant must be sufficient enough to address anticipated building repairs over a ten year period.
- Given there is a need for an additional twenty-five hundred square feet to adequately meet staff and producer need, identify additional space for a “satellite facility.” Frequently, municipalities have surplus buildings which they give to access centers. Work with the City to arrange for surplus property to be acquired as a satellite access center. Access centers typically seek to establish a satellite facility in an area of the city that is not being served by the central facility. Again, a capital grant is usually needed for preparing the satellite facility for production. A satellite facility could also take the pressure off the competition for training and production space at WCCA, since producers who live in the vicinity could use the satellite facility for production. Also with enough pre-planning the satellite facility could house storage space and a shop for building sets.
- Secure handicap parking spaces around the facility, with perhaps two on-street spaces being reserved strictly for handicap parking permits. This would assist the senior producers at WCCA (some of whom we met at the Focus Group Session) who have to use walkers. Make sure that the sidewalks cuts are adequate to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers.

Channel Recommendations

- Require compliance from Charter to release a second channel to WCCA as per the current franchise agreement.
- Acquire future channels based on a percentage of capacity v. current definitions of spectrum.
- Facilitate “live” and remote programming by addressing concerns regarding INet capacity and usage. Set aside a separate strand just for video feed so it won’t interfere with the City’s capacity. Identify drops around the city and arrange for WCCA TV to have access to those drops as needed. If a technician is needed to be present, ensure that Charter assumes the cost of the technician.
- Include a provision in the franchise agreement that will prohibit WCCA TV 13 from being moved from its current location, unless pre-empted by Federal must-carry rules.
- Provide for compensation and advanced notice of any channel changes, either for WCCA TV 13 or subsequent channels.

Programming Recommendations

- WCCA TV 13 is doing a good job of having a wide variety of programming and engagement of community groups. When we compare the variety of programming on

WCCA against other access centers around the country, we believe that WCCA has achieved an excellent balance and stands out as an example.

- With the level of programming currently being created, additional resources will be necessary to program a second channel and to pursue a partnership for distance learning programming.

Training Recommendations

- Acquire additional space to accommodate training. This will eliminate conflicts between training schedules and studio use.
- Acquire a satellite facility to allow for training in another part of the city, not just downtown.
- Consider weekday evening training, which will require more staff, but may accommodate more schedules.
- Increase amount charged for training while still offering the volunteer-in-lieu-of-money option.

Staff Recommendations

- Resources need to be made available to provide more staff for WCCA TV 13.
- Once more staff is hired, extend operating hours of the access center to better accommodate working adults.
- Acquire facility space to accommodate additional staff (see Facility report).
- Review salaries in both the nonprofit sector and the for-profit sector. Find a salary comparison for access centers but weigh it against nonprofit and for-profit industries outside of the access field. Undertake a study of cost of living in Worcester to determine if staff salaries are keeping up with the cost of living.
- Consider increasing the amount that is matched in the Simple Roth.
- Change personnel policy to allow carry-over of sick leave.
- Consider changing personnel policy to allow carry-over of a certain amount of vacation leave.
- Change personnel policy for new staff from one week of vacation per year to two weeks per year (increased incrementally for years of service).
- Consider implementing “Time-Off” awards as a non-monetary method of giving bonuses and encouraging excellence.

Technical Recommendations

- Provide WCCA TV a list of remote drops in the city. This will assist WCCA and the community by allowing WCCA to partner with the institutions that have these remote drops to provide live coverage of institutional and community events.
- Include in the franchise agreement and/or contract a protocol for WCCA (or the government or educational channels) to access these remote locations. Provide guidelines that will streamline the process and not prove to be over burdensome for either WCCA, Charter or the City.

- Provide language in the franchise agreement that would require access channels be transmitted with the same quality as cable and broadcast channels. Resolve the interference problems between Channels 12 and 13.
- As previously stated in the Channel Recommendations section of this report, require Charter to provide the second channel to WCCA TV as per the current franchise agreement.
- Require Charter to include WCCA TV programming in their preview channel, establish guidelines for how that information is transmitted to Charter and Charter's obligations to provide that information to the public.

Equipment Recommendations

- In order to meet the needs of WCCA TV 13 in the operation of its channels, equipment must be reliable and updated from time to time. Because much of WCCA's equipment is aging, the current funding rate of \$30,000 per year is not sufficient. WCCA will need a substantial equipment grant over the next few years to stay current with technology and fully transition to digital. Staff estimates that amount to be \$824,495.00 or roughly \$82,000 per year.
- The estimate for the grant amount does not contemplate a mobile van unit. We recommend that additional funds be secured to purchase a mobile van unit.

Focus Group Recommendations

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