



WHAT IS COMMUNITY TELEVISION?

Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access television is often referred to “Community Television”. In the US, over 1700 organizations in all 50 states provide local channels to residents that are recognized as “PEG” community channels over cable systems and through other transmission means. Federal law allows local and state governments to negotiate for these channels and support. Many of these organizations have long-standing records of community service to towns and counties that otherwise do not have local information or television broadcasts.

WHY IS COMMUNITY TELEVISION IMPORTANT?

• Service to Communities Not Served by Local News

In towns and cities where local news production has declined in the past few years, Community Television channels have begun providing essential local information and news helping to alleviate “news deserts”. These areas include rural communities and suburban and exurban towns which are often passed over by metropolitan newspapers and broadcasters.

Prominent examples include PEG operations in “orphan communities” that aren’t served by broadcasters because their towns are outside the broadcast Designated Market Area.

• Promotion of Transparency and Open Government

One of Community Television’s core purposes is the promotion of transparency and open government at the local level. PEG channels have long been devoted to providing meeting coverage of city, county and township boards for residents. During the Covid pandemic, Community Television has expanded that role to increase remote meeting coverage and ensure citizen participation in local government.

PEG organizations increased meeting coverage during the pandemic to ensure open access to government proceedings, and provided technical assistance to both community members and local officials to ensure they could effectively use online meeting platforms. In some cases, local journalists now rely on their technical feeds to ensure local meeting coverage in their news services.

This transition has been documented by American University in the study “PEG Access Media: Local Communications Hubs in a Pandemic” (Aufderheide, Haywood and Santos, 2020)

<https://cmsimpact.org/report/peg/>

• Public Safety and Health Communication

Community Television provides trusted local information to townships and cities, and has been essential for communicating health and public safety information.

PEG channels provided daily local updates during the Covid pandemic so residents could find health resources, public safety briefings and business assistance information. With the reduction of local news and information resources in many US communities, they provided consistent local information for large and small cities.

Additionally, Community Television organizations provided support for community institutions and religious organizations which were forced to close to the public in the early phases of the pandemic. PEG channels in small towns and cities provided remote religious ceremonies for people of all faiths and supported community-wide celebrations such as high school graduations that had to be conducted via video during the pandemic.

• Local Culture, Events, History and Small Business

Community Television consistently provides a venue for residents to see themselves, their families, their history and their culture on local television. High school sports, local parades and festivals, performances, and local history all lend to the essential character of a community and cannot be provided by broadcasters or internet service like YouTube, which provide delivery of content but not content creation itself.

PEG channels also partner and provide support for small businesses in local communities which are at the heart of keeping communities economically vibrant.

• Forum for Freedom of Expression and Religion

Public Access channels in the United States remain a consistent forum for freedom of expression without government restraint and enable and support expression by a wide range of people in local communities. Religious, political, and artistic expression by all remains a right protected by public access channels throughout the United States.

• Service to Seniors

Cable viewership rates among senior citizens remain relatively high and when combined with relatively low broadband adoption rates for seniors, Community Television remains an effective tool to connect, inform and support elderly residents. This is especially true in more rural communities with an average older population.