

PEG Community Needs Assessment: Key Issues for Strategic Planning

A community needs assessment was conducted in 2006 regarding Tucson's needs and interests related to PEG (Public, Educational, and Governmental) facilities, equipment, programming and channels to assist the City of Tucson in its preparation for a license renewal with Cox Communications. As part of this assessment, the consultant conducted 14 focus groups during June and October, with participants representing 41 community organizations. Participants completed written questionnaires as part of the focus group process. In the focused discussions, participants were asked to: 1) describe any benefits of local programming/PEG access, 2) list issues facing the community and their organizations, 3) think about how local programming/PEG might address those issues, 4) imagine how their organizations might use video communications in the future, 5) describe barriers to the use of PEG facilities and channels, and 6) prioritize a list of issues related to PEG.

Additionally, five interviews were conducted with the PEG entities in person and by phone in June, August and September. Key findings (listed in executive summary):

- There is a significant need and interest in public, educational and government access channels, facilities, equipment and financial support.
- While some channels rank higher than others, there is a significant need and interest in all of the analog PEG channels provided to subscribers. If adequate support is provided, usage can be expected to grow. Based on current usage, a temporary reduction of one PEG channel could be justified, if other needs and interests are satisfied.
- There is a substantial need and interest in maintaining current levels of support in real dollars, and strong support for *increasing* the current levels of support.
- There is a significant need and interest in taking advantage of new cable technologies to enhance existing PEG operations.

Other interesting findings:

- During focus groups, PEG channels were described as providing a means of "holding a mirror up to the community" and "giving it a sense of itself that it wouldn't have any other way." This was so even though some respondents were not familiar with programming on all of the channels (some indicated that they were unaware of Access Tucson, the entity responsible for managing public access in Tucson).
- Themes that were repeated throughout the focus groups included that PEG channels were an important vehicle for community information and education, that PEG programming needed to be of a good or high quality, and that PEG channels and programming needed more promotion, because many participants were unaware of when programs were on, and some were unaware of Access Tucson itself.

- Participants perceived that most organizations, including non-profits, education, and government, are strapped for resources and everyone has to “do more with less.” The access channels were seen as tools the groups could use to promote their organizations and events, provide information about important issues, help create a community dialogue, deliver services (such as education) and even help different levels of government (city, county, state) work better together.

- In the written focus group survey, participants were asked: What things would increase your use of the local access facilities, equipment and channels?

Responses:

- 72.00% 54 Promotion of my program so people will know it's on
- 70.67% 53 Internal support in my organization for this activity (E.g. time, resources)
- 68.00% 51 Ability of low income persons to be able to afford to view my program
- 53.33% 40 Video production equipment dedicated to organizations like mine
- 53.33% 40 Ability of people to view my program on the Internet
- 52.00% 39 More video production assistance from staff at Access Tucson
- 48.00% 36 More volunteers to help on projects
- 45.33% 34 Ability of people to view my program “on demand” on the cable system
- 44.00% 33 More playbacks of my program on the local access channels
- 44.00% 33 Knowing that viewers valued my program
- 30.67% 23 More video production classes available from Access Tucson
- 30.67% 23 Better technical quality of the channel (not the program, this is about the cable network technical quality)
- 8.00% 6 Other

Marketing efforts – improved reputation – improved programs

More hours open for editing/production, etc.

- Organizations saw web (including web video), e-mail, and the internet as key communication methods to reach clients/constituents over the next five years; the vast majority thought it important or very important to be able to prepare and broadcast video and audio programs & information about their organizations and its activities and for clients/constituents to be able to select and view programming “on demand” over the cable system rather than at a scheduled time.