

Who we are

Pittsfield Community Television, established in 1986, serves the Pittsfield Community with access to television production equipment, training, and cablecast air time. Access can be as simple as dropping off a program to be scheduled, or as involved as producing a large studio or mobile production.

Anyone in our community can become a program producer. The possibilities are only limited by the effort and creativity that you bring to your program. Let us help you take your ideas from concept to completion!

The handbook you are holding outlines the steps involved in the production of a public access television program. We hope you find this helpful in preparing you to produce your own program.

This document has been approved by the PCTV Board of Directors, and should not be seen as a substitute for reading and understanding our full Operating Rules and Procedures.

Contact Us

We can be reached in person, by phone, and on the web:

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Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Public Access Producer Handbook



**PITTSFIELD COMMUNITY
TELEVISION**

Rev. 10-2017



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Public Access Television

Membership



Pittsfield Community Television is a membership organization. For a nominal membership cost, people and organizations in Pittsfield can benefit from all the resources we provide.

Training



We provide training on all the facilities available, including our studios, remote cameras, editing, and mobile production.

Production



Have an idea for a program? Great! That’s the first step. We can help you realize your goal of producing a fantastic program to show to our community.

Welcome to PCTV!

How is PCTV Organized?

Pittsfield Community Television is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) charitable membership organization, which is funded through a license agreement between Spectrum Cable and the City of Pittsfield. We provide Public, Education, and Government (“PEG”) access to the City of Pittsfield. We have a volunteer board of directors and a staff of seven television professionals.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Our Mission

The mission of Pittsfield Community Television is: To provide access to the medium of television and related technologies, including training, production facilities, and cablecast time, to public, educational, and governmental constituencies located in and/or serving the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and to provide the Pittsfield community with local television programming.

Channels

PCTV operates three television channels that can be seen in Pittsfield, Dalton, and Richmond on Spectrum Cable.

What is special about Public Access?

Public Access Television promotes First Amendment values by allowing access to the medium of television to people in our community. Without special conditions, technical expertise, or large amounts of money, ordinary local people have access to this mass medium to get their message out to their neighbors.

Our Board of Directors

Our Board consists of thirteen members of PCTV, elected by the membership, which performs the following governance functions, among others:

- Hire and review the Executive Director
- Establish and maintain the Operating Rules and Procedures
- Approve the annual budget, and perform fiduciary reviews
- Hold monthly board meetings
- Conduct the annual Meeting of the Membership
- Set forth fundraising plans for the organization

The Mayor of the City of Pittsfield is an Ad-Hoc member of the Board.

Our Staff

Our staff consists of the following full-time positions:

- Executive Director
- Office Manager
- Public Access Coordinator
- Supervisor of Education, Government, and Tech Operations
- Coordinator of Advancement & Community Production
- Production Technicians (2)

“I Have An Idea...”

“I have an idea for a program at PCTV. How do I begin the process?”

Once you have an idea for a program, you should write it down and meet with our Public Access Coordinator to discuss. He or she will help you decide which facilities are best to accomplish your goals. You will be the producer of your program. More on that later.

Programs produced with PCTV equipment must be aired on our channels. Our equipment is not for private or commercial use.

Multi-Camera or “Studio” Production

Depending on the complexity of your program idea, a production using multiple cameras might be best. This program could be produced at one of our two studios, or on location using either of our mobile production facilities.

Single-Camera or “Remote” Production

Sometimes the best solution to producing your program might be to borrow one of our portable cameras, record your content on-location, and bring the raw footage back to our editing facilities to finish it for air. Our Public Access Coordinator can help you decide what is best.

Ownership and Responsibility

Who is responsible for the content?



The program producer is responsible and liable for the program content. The producer is also responsible for meeting the guidelines for programming that are outlined in the PCTV Operating Rules & Procedures. **The Producer must submit a Producer Contract** to use facilities and have the program scheduled.

Does PCTV censor programming?



No, PCTV does not pre-screen, edit or otherwise alter programming created by members that meet the programming guidelines. Think of public access television as an “electronic soapbox,” a forum for you to express your views without a gatekeeper, something not offered on other media.

Is there anything I can’t include in my program?



Your production cannot be commercial in nature. This means that what you televise cannot promote products or services for which someone receives a profit, or contain advertising. Also, the programming cannot be used for illegal purposes as defined by the FCC, federal or state laws, or settled case law.

Becoming a Member

How do I become a member?

Simply fill out a membership form, and pay a nominal membership fee. Being a member allows you to get training, reserve our studio and editing facilities, and borrow equipment for on-location shoots, all for the annual cost of membership.

“Anyone who wishes to use PCTV equipment to produce a program must become a member.”

Are there different kinds of membership?

Yes. We offer:

- Individual memberships
- Family memberships
- Group and Organizational memberships.

Full memberships are available to people who live or work, or are retired from work in the City of Pittsfield, and full members are voting members of our corporation.

Associate memberships are open to everyone in Berkshire County.

We also offer membership discounts to seniors and students.

Being a Producer

The process of creating a program, and getting it aired on PCTV, requires a producer. The producer is the single point of contact with PCTV for everything regarding the production, and is solely responsible for the content contained in the program. We require this person be 18 years of age or older.

The program producer:

- Develops a plan to get the production accomplished, with guidance from PCTV staff
- Signs and submits a program contract for each show or series of shows
- Requests and confirms facility reservations
- Is responsible for arranging for a volunteer crew as needed, to make the program possible
- Arranges for any training the crew might need
- Is responsible for obtaining any permissions or clearances for guests or other content
- Submits the program for cablecast to the Access Coordinator, and requests cablecast air time



Content Guidelines

First Amendment

Public Access Television is an expression of speech protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The purpose of Access Pittsfield, PCTV's Public Access Channel, is to protect and increase freedom of expression, diversity of ideas, and community-wide communication through the medium of television.

More details of these guidelines can be found in our full Operating Rules and Procedures.

Prohibited Speech

There are certain types of speech that are not protected by the First Amendment, and/or not allowed in programming aired on Public Access. These include:

- Violation of Copyright
- Libel and slander
- "Fighting Words" and Incitement
- Obscenity
- Illegal Acts
- Lottery, solicitation of funds, or fraud
- Commercial programming

Commercialism and Calls to Action

The content and use of your program must not promote the sale of a profit-making product, service or trade. While this rule does not prevent you from inviting businesspeople as guests on your program, it does mean you will have to be careful with your conversation. Simply referencing a business name does not constitute commercialism; however, avoid discussing product prices and sales, for example.

Avoid calls to action. In marketing, a **call to action** (CTA) is an instruction to the audience designed to provoke an immediate response, usually using an imperative verb such as "**call now**", "find out more" or "visit a store today".

Sometimes, crossing this "gray line" of commercial content happens because a producer has invited one guest to discuss a specific business, instead of conducting a more general business discussion with multiple guests. Or perhaps repeatedly promoting one business in subsequent programs.

We recommend you discuss these guidelines with your guests before you conduct an interview.

Pre-viewing of program content

PCTV does not normally pre-view your program for content prior to air on the channel. However, for technical or scheduling reasons, we may need to do so. This technical monitoring is not intended to catch violations of our policy; but if problems are found in this process, the Public Access Coordinator has the right to remove the program from the schedule until the violations are resolved by the producer.

Reserving Facilities

How Do I Reserve PCTV Facilities?

Connect with the Public Access Coordinator, who will work with you to find the best and available facility time to reserve for your production, and to determine how much time is appropriate for what you'd like to accomplish. Facilities are reserved on a first-come, first-served, non-discriminatory basis. Our goal is to make every production successful, while managing the demand on our facilities in a fair and equitable manner.

Only a program producer may reserve PCTV facilities.

What Facilities Are Available?

As a PCTV member, you may reserve any of the following facilities in order to complete your production:

- Production Studio-A or Studio-K Demonstration Kitchen
- Mobile Production Vehicle
- Flypack Multi-Camera Production Gear
- Camcorders and Electronic Field Production (EFP) Equipment
- Editing Suites

Are There Any Limits on Reservations?

You are able to reserve certain amounts of time in each facility, and you must use some of this time before you can reserve more. We cannot reserve facilities more than four months in advance. Here are the guidelines on reservations:

- Studio, Truck, Flypack: 20 hours each
- Editing Suite: 12 hours
- EFP Equipment: 72 hours

Example: let's say you have 12 hours of editing booked (the maximum allowed). You come in and use four hours on one day. You are now able to book an additional four hours in the future, as available.

You are welcome to use any single facility listed above at any one time, but not more than one, unless prior approval has been granted. You can reserve up to two EFP camcorders for a production, and one editing suite at a time.

Cancellations

What if I Have to Cancel?

Our facilities and staff are in demand by all our members, so it's important to use a reservation that you have made. But we understand that sometimes things go wrong, and productions need to be rescheduled. We require 24 hours' notice on cancellations. Producers who repeatedly cancel reservations risk losing rights to reserve facilities in the future. Late arrivals may forfeit their reservations to other productions if the facilities are in demand at that moment.

Training

How do I become trained on the equipment?

We have several options. The best way is to reach out to our Public Access Coordinator, and schedule a time for training. He or she can determine the type of training you will need, how much time it might take, and which staff person will be available to conduct your training.

What if my whole crew needs training?

If you are producing a studio program, our Public Access Coordinator will arrange a time for you and your crew to attend one or more training sessions here at our facilities.

How long does it take?

It depends. Training on operating a remote camera can be less than one hour. Training for a full studio crew could take two or three sessions and a mock production. It is a fun and rewarding experience.

“In order for you or your crew to use PCTV equipment, you must be properly trained.”

How much does the training cost?

Nothing! All training is free of charge to our members, and is included in the cost of your membership!

PCTV's Role

What will PCTV do for my production?

PCTV is in charge of making sure that our facilities are technically ready. That means that the equipment will be operational. We provide ongoing training and follow-up assistance necessary for a good production.

Will PCTV staff be involved in my production?

For multi-camera productions, a PCTV staff person will function as the engineer, ensuring the video and audio levels are correct, and that the program is properly recorded.

What is PCTV's goal for producers?



PCTV encourages producers to strive for a high-quality production. Our goal is to have the crew become independent and confident in production skills as soon as they are able.



PCTV will occasionally suggest names of members to serve on your crew, but is not responsible for finding crew or participating in the actual production.

Single-Camera Programs

I want to record an event on location. How?

PCTV maintains several sets of remote equipment, which we call “Electronic Field Production” or “EFP” equipment. This consists of:

- Professional camcorders
- Tripods
- Microphones and audio equipment
- Other accessories

These are the production tools that will enable you to capture an event on-location.

“Single-camera productions usually require some editing.”

Sign out the EFP Equipment.

After reserving the equipment, you will sign out the gear you need to capture your remote event. PCTV staff will be on hand to assist in this process, to help you select the appropriate video and audio equipment you’ll need on location. A listing of the gear you are signing out will appear on a form; sign the form, and you’re on your way to the shoot! Remember, as producer, you are responsible for the equipment, so take good care of it while it is in your possession.

I recorded my footage. What do I do next?

When you bring your EFP equipment back to PCTV, you will have what we call “raw footage.” This is the recording of your event. From there, you may want to edit parts of this footage out, while adding elements such as graphics, an intro, closing credits, music, and voice-overs. Your end result after editing could be either a complete program, or a short “roll-in” that can be used in a multi-camera production.

Editing

Do I need to edit my program?

Shooting footage with a single camera means some editing will probably be necessary to turn “raw” original footage into a finished program or a “roll-in.”

How much time is involved?

It depends on the type of program you are producing. Meetings and other “news” events require little editing. Perhaps simple titles, credits, or a graphic overlay is sufficient. This could take as little as a couple of hours. The more creative the program is, the more editing will be needed.

How can I use the edit suites at PCTV?

Once the suite has been reserved, PCTV staff will ensure that the media you need is available, all software is loaded, and the equipment is operational. You arrive and begin editing. If you should need guidance, PCTV staff is normally available to answer questions.

Multi-Camera Programs

Studio, Truck and Flypack Productions

The great thing about producing your show with multiple cameras is how quickly your content can get to air. It takes a little more preparation, but usually once the production is done, you have a finished show ready to schedule.

“The most important part of any good studio production is its crew.”

Who is responsible for finding a crew?

You, the producer of the program, is responsible for finding a crew and for delegating the various duties to specific crew members.

How many crew people are needed?

It depends on what kind of production you plan on doing. There are some crew positions that you need for a typical studio production. They are:

- Director
- Camera Operator (1 to 3 of these)
- Audio Operator
- Graphics Operator
- Floor Manager

What are the responsibilities of each person?

There are forms available at PCTV that better illustrate what each crew member is responsible for during a production. A brief description is shown below.



Director: selects camera shots that will be used. Regulates the time of the show. Guides the other crew people to perform their duties.



Camera: Operates a studio camera and composes shots as called by the director.

Audio: Operates all sound equipment for the production.

Graphics: Operates the character generator, placing graphics on the program as called by the director.



Floor Manager: Interface between director and studio on-camera talent.

Teleprompter: runs a script read by talent.

Engineer: a PCTV staff person will fill this role, ensuring program technical quality.

What if I can't find enough crew people?

PCTV will always provide access, even if you can't find the required number of crew people. The quality of your production will be higher, however, when you are able to fully crew your production. At least one PCTV staff person will always be available during your production time. If you need advice prioritizing your available crew for open positions, just ask the Public Access Coordinator.

Production Design

Set and Props

A “set” is anything that you wish to have on camera to help in your production. This could mean a backdrop of some kind; chairs, tables, plants, desks, or anything that you see fit. PCTV does have a limited selection of set materials and background elements. Adding unique items to your design will help distinguish your program from the others that are created here at PCTV. PCTV has limited storage space for larger items, so consult with the Access Coordinator for more details.

“While not required, production design will enhance the quality and identify your program for the viewer.”

How do I go about getting a set?



Ask about using props and set materials presently at our studio. Some items have been brought in by other producers, so it’s always best to ask if you can use them.

Think about what you can bring from home. Perhaps you could get materials or services donated by a business.

Graphics

Graphics are the titles and credits shown at the beginning and end of a production, and also used during the body of the program to show the names and affiliations of on-camera talent during a production. They consist of the following elements:

- Full-screen graphics
- Lower-thirds
- Logos and “bugs”

What’s involved in designing the graphics?

After receiving proper training, you may work on the graphics whenever the character generator is available. We recommend that you schedule a time with the Public Access Coordinator prior to the day of your production to design the graphics. Staff assistance is also available to help you with your designs.

Other Show Elements

Most multi-camera productions contain common elements, including:

- Show “Intro”
- Show “Closing” including credits
- (Optional) “Roll-In” edited video package(s)

Much like your graphics, these elements need to be designed prior to the production date. However, once they are created, you can use them for most of your subsequent programs! PCTV staff can be of assistance to you during your design.

Scheduling Air Time

How do I get my program scheduled on PCTV?

Your program is finished. Congratulations on your achievement! Naturally, you'll want to get your program cablecast on PCTV. Let's walk through that process now.

Take pride in seeing your program on the air! That's what it's all about.

Requesting a Time Slot

You'll need to connect with the Public Access Coordinator to request a time that your program can be cablecast on the channel.

You will receive a primary cablecast date and time for your program or series. You may also receive additional time slots if the schedule permits, but there are no guarantees. Cablecast dates and times are made at the discretion of the Public Access Coordinator, and are subject to change.

Channel schedules are prepared weekly (normally by Thursday for the following week), so your program will need to be submitted in time for the channel to be programmed. That includes delivering a playable file for our playback equipment, and submitting a valid producer contract to the Public Access Coordinator. Once that week's schedule is set, you will need to re-submit your request for future weeks' schedules.

Scheduling Priorities

Depending on the producer, and the production location, your program will be scheduled on Access Pittsfield according to the following scheduling priorities, in descending order. The intent is to favor local programming, and programming requested by local people.

- Highest priority: First-run programs produced using PCTV equipment, by either full members or PCTV Staff
- First-run programs produced by full or associate members, using either PCTV equipment or outside equipment
- First-run locally produced programs originally scheduled on the Education or Government Access channels
- First-run Berkshire County-Originated Programs
- First-run outside programming scheduled by the Access Coordinator
- Program segues or interstitials scheduled by the Access Coordinator
- Community Bulletin Board programming
- Non-first-run locally produced programming
- First-run outside-submitted programming requested by a constituency of the access channel
- Other first-run outside-submitted programming
- Lowest priority: Non-first-run outside submitted programming

Read our Operating Rules and Procedures for all the specifics of program scheduling on PCTV.

Copying and Sharing

Can I get a copy of my program?

Yes! Every producer is entitled to one free copy or “dub” of a program they produced, but they must provide the blank media (recordable DVD or file storage device). In addition, a producer can request up to four more dubs intended for program guests or production crew.

If you require more than five copies of your program, our regular dubbing rates will apply.

Many producers keep a stack of blank DVDs here at PCTV for the purposes of making copies.

Are there any limitations on my copies?

Copies of programming produced with PCTV equipment are for private, personal use only. You can't distribute, sell or re-sell, publicly display, use commercially, or use clips of your show in other programs without express written permission from PCTV.

Since PCTV equipment, owned by the membership, was used to help you create your program, PCTV has the right to telecast, duplicate and distribute any program material that is created.

Can I distribute my program to other centers?

Yes! We are fortunate to have several other PEG Access centers located in the Berkshires. NBCTC and Willinet in North County, CTSB in South County, and Dalton Community TV may be interested in airing your show. There are many others throughout the state and country.

First, you'll need to call the other access center and see what their rules are for accepting your program. Then, you can either deliver one of your DVD copies to the center, or utilize our “Berkshire Access” server to transmit the program electronically. Check with the Public Access Coordinator for details.

The Internet

Uploading to Internet Video Sites

PCTV currently provides a “Video On-Demand” service on our website, pittsfieldtv.org. Your show will be available shortly after your production, to visitors who wish to view it. It's a great service!

If you wish to upload your program to another service, such as YouTube or Vimeo, you'll need to get our permission first. Also, PCTV is not responsible for performing the uploading – you'll need to do that yourself.

PCTV does not allow members, or the public, to upload access programs that they did not produce. This includes other members' programs, and PCTV-produced programming such as government meetings.

Underwriting

What is Underwriting?

Underwriting is when a company or individual supports your production with money or other in-kind products or services. This must only take the form of a “PBS-style” spot at the beginning and end of your program, indicating support for the program has been given by an individual or a corporation.

Commercial advertising is not allowed on any access channels operated by PCTV.

What can underwriting do for my program?

An underwriter can help in many ways. For example, it could provide money to help buy set materials, donate items to be used on your set, or provide food for your crew.

Do I have to notify PCTV about underwriting?

Yes, PCTV must know if you have accepted money, grants, or in-kind contributions to your production. In most cases, this means notifying the Executive Director in writing about the nature of the support. In some cases, PCTV may ask you to contribute up to 10% of your underwriting back to PCTV.

Publicity

Since you’ve put all this work into your program, it would be a shame if no one watched it! PCTV lists scheduled programming on our channel bulletin boards, and on our website. But there are many more options that you can explore.

Press Releases

You are welcome to write a press release about your program, and distribute it to local media outlets. Here are a few ideas to start:



- Berkshire Eagle
- Pittsfield Gazette
- iBerkshires
- Local radio stations
- Social media: on your own Facebook page, or perhaps one devoted to your program

Whose program is it, anyway?

Remember that when you publicize your program, you are representing yourself as the producer. It is certainly fine to mention when and where viewers can watch your program. Just avoid saying that it is a PCTV program. We reserve that moniker only for programs produced by PCTV.

Outside Submitted

What is an Outside-Submitted Program?

This is a program that is not produced in Pittsfield by a PCTV full- or associate member, or in Berkshire County by a Berkshire County resident. Essentially, a program that originates outside our local area is considered outside-submitted.

Every outside-submitted program requires a qualified producer of record, a program contract, a disclaimer, and a video- and audio ‘wrap-around.’

Local Intent

PCTV is here to provide public access television to local individuals and organizations. That’s the main reason we’re here. When outside programs are aired on our channel, they could potentially take cablecast time away from local programs and producers. That’s why it’s so important that only local people are able to submit outside programs, and why they must take direct responsibility for the content they contain.

Producer of Record

If you wish to submit an outside-submitted program for air on Access Pittsfield, you do not need to be a PCTV member, but you must otherwise QUALIFY for membership. That is, live or work in Pittsfield, or in Berkshire County.

If this is the case, you will need to sign and submit a producer contract for your program, which makes you the ‘Producer of Record’ for PCTV’s purposes. Although you might not have produced the original program, we consider you the producer when the show airs on our channel. You are taking all responsibility for the content of the program, as if you had produced it yourself.

Disclaimer

In order for an outside-submitted program to air on Access Pittsfield, the program needs to carry a disclaimer at the beginning and end of the program, stating that the producer assumes responsibility for the content, and that the views do not represent those of PCTV. You will find the wording of this disclaimer in our Operating Rules and Procedures.

What is a ‘Wrap-around?’

A wrap-around is a short 30-second video inserted before and after an outside-submitted program, as it airs on Access Pittsfield. In the opening wrap-around, the producer of record appears in person to introduce him/herself, the name and nature of the program and the organization represented, if any. In the closing wrap-around, the producer appears again, and gives the producers’ name and contact information, where viewers can respond to the content of the program if they wish.

Checklist

Did you...

- Have an idea?*
- Become a member?*
- Read our rules?*
- Become a producer?*
- Submit a Producer Contract?*
- Reserve needed facilities?*
- Find a crew?*
- Get trained on equipment?*
- Design your set and graphics?*
- Create an opening and closing?*
- Produce your program?*
- Schedule air time?*
- Get your producer copy?*
- Share with other centers?*
- Arrange publicity?*
- See your show?*

Congratulations, you're a PCTV Producer!

Common Terms

PEG Access

Public, Education, and Government access television.

Producer

Person that is responsible for every aspect of a production at PCTV, and takes full responsibility for program content.

Producer Contract

Document that the producer must sign and submit in order to use PCTV facilities and get a program scheduled for air.

Graphics

A production element that displays names, titles, and other information at the beginning, closing, and during the body of a program.

Editing

Any production work that happens after the recording of a show or event, which transforms the footage into a finished program for air.

Dub

A physical copy of the finished recorded program.



