



15 January 2026

TO: Members of Vermont House Government Operations Committee

FROM: Lauren-Glenn Davitian, Public Policy Director for CCTV Center for Media & Democracy, davitian@cctv.org

RE: Community Media FY27 Budget Request

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of community media in Vermont. Vermont Access Network (VAN) is joining with Vermont's nine nonprofit radio stations to request \$1.89 million in base funding as part of the Secretary of State's FY27 General Fund Budget.

Informing + Connecting Vermonters: The Vermont Legislature recognizes the important role community media plays in informing, educating and connecting Vermonters. Members of the Legislature and the Secretary of State have encouraged us to build a working relationship to address shared challenges and opportunities to maintain local media access.

Community media is a general term that includes Vermont's public, educational and government (PEG) access management organizations (PEG AMOs) traditionally funded by cable TV subscribers plus community radio stations (non-profit FM) operated over the air, cable and online largely by volunteers (and in some cases operated by PEG organizations).

Vermont's 24 community media centers and nine community radio stations deliver a range of essential media services to Vermonters across the state, with live broadcasting and streaming of local news, public meeting and event coverage, weather reports and more. These media outlets are part of local emergency response, grease the wheels of local democracy, and preserve community history. Community media programming and services amplify the arts and culture of the state and teach everyday Vermonters how to be media makers, gaining valuable job and civic skills in the process.

The staff and volunteers of Vermont's community media organizations provide direct access to local information and programming that Vermonters want and need.

To recap, **community-centered and locally focused content includes:**

- Live hybrid meetings enable all Vermonters to be informed and participate in local decision making.
- Coverage of local news, weather and emergency response.
- Election forums and results programs help to keep voters involved and the wheels of democracy turning.
- Media education and hands-on skills for volunteers of all ages builds more critical thinking and job skills.
- Extensive preservation of local video/ radio archives preserves local culture and creates a legacy for future generations.

Covering all Corners of Vermont: Vermont community media covers 176 cities, towns and villages in the state and 13 counties—covering 94% of the state's population (according to 2020 Census Data). In 2025, we provided 35,000 hours of original, locally made programming. Hundreds of Vermonters are engaged in being media producers of this content, creating real time engagement with their municipalities and neighbors that is not possible in any other type of media.

Some quick stats:

- 70% of Vermont municipalities have access to live public meetings.
- 24 PEG centers operate 80+ cable channels + dozens of online outlets + a statewide channel (Vermont Community Television) - up to 15,000 hours a year of local TV.
- Community radio volunteers produce 300 regular shows and vital emergency messaging each year—amounting to 20,000 hours of locally made programming.
- Vermont community media is available over the air, on cable and online.

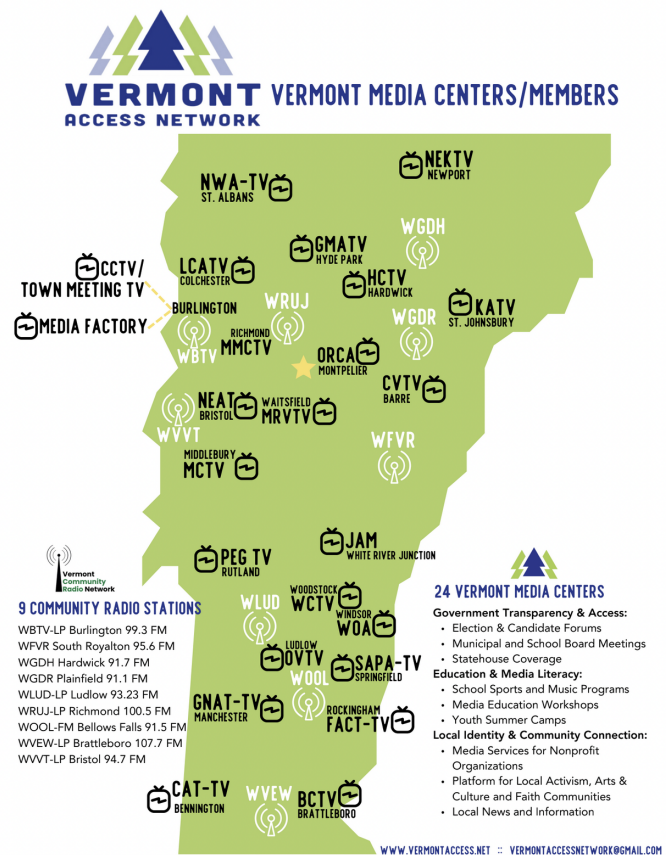
Case Studies show the numbers of people involved in media creation and the reach of viewers and listeners. For example, **Central Vermont Community Radio**, which includes WGDR/WGDH engaged 115 volunteers who helped to produce 135 programs each week, resulting in 8760 hours of live programming listened to by 12,000 broadcast listeners and 17,500 online listeners.

BCTV, based in Brattleboro, celebrating 50 years of community service, supported 44 community producers who, with the BCTV staff, produced 1295 programs, watched by 251K YouTube viewers.

CCTV in Chittenden County covered more than 500 municipal meetings, trained 65 interns and volunteers, and reached 536K online viewers + 500K views of its extensive community archive of 53,000 programs dating to 1984.

GNAT, serving part of Bennington county, produced 824 local programs and 110 news project segments, trained 140 community members, posted 957 events on their community calendar and had 311K online video views.

Northwest Access TV, serving Franklin county, produced 132 live streams (including municipal meetings and local sporting events) plus more than 1000 local programs, with online views of 162,264 and 10.5K social media followers.



Challenges Legislative Support Helps Vermonters to Overcome: Legislative funding helps to address economic and structural issues facing local media access in Vermont:

- Fewer local media options for Vermonters due to local newspapers closing and federal cuts in public media;
- Emergent times requiring us to get word quickly out to our communities on issues ranging from weather to government threats to our neighbors;
- Rapid decline of Cable TV revenue;
- Rising business expenses, including health care, labor and capital costs, and music licensing; and,
- The rise of AI/ Artificial Intelligence-generated news and information, making it harder to know what is true and reliable news and information.

Thank you for your consideration of VAN's \$1.89M FY27 Budget request.