



NORTH SUBURBAN ACCESS CORPORATION
February 2, 2017
5:30 p.m.
Roseville, MN

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK SESSION

A G E N D A

1. Call the Meeting to Order and Roll Call
2. Review and Discuss Consultant's Report
On Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
3. February 16 Stakeholder Meeting
4. Adjournment

*Dinner will be provided so please
call the office if you or your alternate are
unable to attend the meeting.*

Key Opportunities for Strategic Change

1. Funding – Diversifying funding is a critical issue and a goal for the organization, but it needs to be focused. Should the board select priority areas of exploration? Should there be a target such as 10% of revenue in 5 years, etc.? How funding from franchise fees gets determined and allocated to CTV is in flux. Is there a totally new approach to funding that can be implemented such as a membership fee for each resident – this ensures more participation, more equity in which residents are paying for services while all benefit, and ensures a sustainable and predictable funding stream.
2. Organizational Structure – What organizational structure will balance the tension between the needs/wants of CTV’s various constituents with its short and long-term program and funding realities? What can the board do to communicate the need for a different structure in a way that gains support from cities? Can the board be reconstituted to operate more like a full nonprofit organization representing a broader range of stakeholders with needed skills (fundraising, communication, marketing, engagement/outreach etc.) to achieve the strategic plan?
3. Primary (and secondary?) mission – Does CTV still need to continue to balance government, education, and public access as its mission? Public access per se may be less important given the tools residents have access to on their own (cell phone, cameras, computers, etc.) than it was in the past. It is a fairly passive program area, but still used by some program producers. A major theme of the input into the plan was a greater focus on community building/engagement through programming. Might the newer direction produce community programming that could better serve resident needs and priorities?
4. Community Engagement -- The plan suggests more engagement, more programming, more community building and programming with volunteers, more strategic recruitment of volunteers, more engagement with cities, and increased fundraising and communication and marketing. Can CTV gain the cultural and staffing capacity for this shift without changes in governance and staffing?

CTV Strategic Plan

Draft #6

Context

CTV North Suburbs (CTV) is a nonprofit corporation formed by the North Suburban Communications Commission (NSCC). NSCC is a joint powers agreement between Arden Hills, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Mounds View, New Brighton, North Oaks, Roseville, and St. Anthony. NSCC operates under state and federal laws to enforce cable TV franchises for use of city rights-of-way by cable providers.

CTV provides community programming and services including:

- Administration of CTV channels
- Production of community programs (both staff and volunteers)
- Provision of studio, production truck and portable video equipment
- Provision of video education and training to individuals and organizations in the community.

Franchise fees are paid by cable providers under negotiated contracts to the cities in the NSCC. (\$1,315,989 in 2015.) The cities then pay NSCC for cable franchise administration services based on an agreed formula -- \$300,000 in 2015. NSCC board members are representatives of the nine cities--either elected officials or lay people appointed by elected officials from each city. The board of NSCC serves as the board of CTV.

CTV has historically been funded by operating and equipment grants paid by the cable subscriber. This cost is passed through to cable subscribers (\$4.15 in 2015) collected by the cable providers and paid directly to CTV. The CTV budget--approved by the board was approximately \$1,388,000 in 2015.

CTV supports public/community, education and government programming with its funding. Its value to the NSCC communities is a state of the art media center that produces programs and provides community education and equipment and facilities for the individuals and organizations that want to produce video programming. Staff also provide technical assistance to the staff of each NSCC member city, ensure television and web coverage of government meetings (council and commissions), and provides up to 100 hours per year of technical and production services to each member city.

Current NSCC cities report value in being a part of the joint powers entity. They see economies of scale, technological support, and a level of equipment quality and flexibility that each city could not afford to maintain on its own. Although Councils have suggestions for improvement and ideas for program growth going forward, the group remains strong and cohesive even after one member withdrew from NSCC in 2014 to operate independently. Surveys and evaluation data indicate relatively high usage of CTV content and a 72.5% satisfaction with its services. Just as important is the value that community members place (69.8%) on ensuring that a public access service is available.

Since 2014, the NSCC has been in franchise renewal negotiations with Comcast -- the sole cable provider in the area for several years. Negotiations are making progress and

resolution. In the meantime, a second cable provider (CenturyLink) has entered the market. This additional provider will bring competition and perhaps be able to deepen the market penetration of cable customers in the area (45%), which leaves an opportunity for growth.

Planning Assumptions

Over the next 4 years CTV can expect to see the following trends and themes that will impact its decisions and critical issues for strategic planning.

1. Cable providers will likely be reluctant to continue the PEG fee arrangement, creating a need to re-design how CTV is funded. Funding will require more transparency, accountability, and demonstration of value to the members of the joint powers agreement.
2. CTV is a gem that is not as well known in the community as it needs to be in order to ensure ongoing growth and increase both its brand and the services it provides.
3. Cities will be seeking more collaboration and benefit from being part of the NSCC/CTV – not just in financial and technology benefits, but in programming, community building, and synergies regarding education and topics of interest to community members.
4. The residents of the NSCC and CTV service area will reflect the changing demographics of Minnesota overall since most of the members would define as first ring suburbs.
 - a. The Caucasian population will be aging.
 - b. There will be more cultural diversity, especially in young families.
5. Users will seek more diversity in their choices of access to programming (i.e., mobile apps and mobile devices.) Alternatives to cable (webstreaming, for example) will compete with traditional cable for viewers and potentially reduce use of traditional cable programming.
6. Technology changes will continue to force a need for staying current and continuous investment in capital improvements.

Critical Issues

Ensuring sufficient funding: The need for perpetual capital investment, resources for expansion of services, general operating costs, and changes in how cable providers bill and collect PEG fees will require a look to more sustainable and diverse funding options.

Continuing to Expand Access to programming: Changes in platforms, mobility, and venues for content will require more flexibility, some creativity, and expansion of current efforts regarding access and outreach. Leveraging the use of social media was an essential element of program access and expansion.

Expanding Programming: Everyone participating in the planning process offered ideas for expanded programming to engage and build community and to provide valuable information from city, county and other governmental levels. People also mentioned the [perception of] limited programming now available—creating an image of dull and old rather than vital, changing, and new.

Communicating value to the public and to NSCC members: Every entity faces growing challenges regarding being able to tell its story, engaging people in the activities of the organization, and establishing its services as a priority among growing competition for attention and dollars. CTV is not as known within the general public as it could be, has fewer volunteers than will be necessary to expand programming, and has council members (including board members) not optimally engaged.

Staying current with the industry and field: Staff seems to stay current, but it is not clear how that information is transferred to others or is used to influence decision-making. Strategic use of new technology and industry advancements are not in themselves a critical issue, but ensuring that these are aligned with and support achievement of our goals is an issue we want to address.

Enhancing the experience of joint powers consortium members: Most cities saw opportunities to enhance the value of the consortium – through greater partnerships, ability to view information across city boundaries, sharing ideas, and partnering on some initiatives. To what extent will all NSCC members:

- Agree to help subsidize other members in order to have parity in equipment or services throughout the network?
- Accept a leadership/coordinating role from CTV?
- Attend/participate in networking or other meetings required of a more engaged network?

Governance structure that ensures success. The board and Commission are the same at this point, and that structure made sense when we initiated NSCC. However, times have changed, as have the needs for CTV and its future direction. Should the CTV board now be comprised of a wider range of stakeholders, including schools, businesses, consumers, and others in order to achieve the strategic plan?

Strategic Goals

1. Diversify and expand revenue sources for CTV

CTV needs fund development capacity. This can be achieved through the establishment of a development committee and/or additional staff.

- The first steps are to identify priority funding options and goals and then develop a plan for achieving goals in each category of new funding. Ideas offered by stakeholders include:
 - Consider restructuring the funding model to include greater and more equitable participation by cities and residents in sustaining CTV over the long term.
 - Earned revenue from video production services. (CTV brought in \$75,500 in earned income in 2015.)
 - A resident-wide technology fee vs. just cable subscriber fee.
 - Change in franchise fees flow/structure to ensure CTV funding as/if PEG fee changes or is phased out.
 - Program sponsors.
 - Merger with other cable commissions? Or inclusion of an additional city into the NSCC agreement.
 - Grant writing and more sustained development activities.
 - Membership or equipment or fees for producers, especially for non-residents.
 - Marketing materials for new business initiatives and increased individual and business donations.

2. Continue to expand flexibility and access to programming

- Continue to expand use of YouTube and other social media vehicles to expand the reach of programming and ways to access it.
- Complete development of a mobile application.
- Gather data on effectiveness of website re-design in engaging people and easing access or recall of programming.
- Leverage social media for greater access and more programming.

3. Expand Programming and Community Engagement

A strong theme across all groups was an expansion of programming.

- Most understood that there would not be operating funds to greatly expand staff, so a stronger, more engaged volunteer program needs to be developed. This is an additional opportunity for support through a committee or reassignment of staff to strengthen the volunteer capacity of CTV and use volunteers more strategically. Suggestions from stakeholders include:
 - Expand volunteer program – recruiting volunteers for specific markets to match demographic changes and interests.
 - Expand school-based opportunities and volunteer recruitment/engagement – perhaps greater use of the truck as a mobile educational classroom.

- The 100-hour program for cities is almost sacred and each city had ideas about how to enrich and better use the resource. They also thought there was valuable information generated by other levels of government and opportunities for cooperative programming between cities. Suggestions include:
 - Encourage annual planning with Cities for events that have greatest impact—allowing them to maximize their 100 hours of additional programming.
 - Identify key issues relevant to more than one city and/or key content or events of interest to residents that would be generated by other entities, i.e., levels of government, community groups, etc.
- Community engagement and community building is a strong area for growth. This might be in contrast to a more passive approach to public access. All saw opportunities for a richer, more engaged programming that provides local news and highlights community-based interests. Some suggestions are:
 - Reinforce that community is both local and national/international by seeking ways to connect local people to a broader world (One example is local members of Olympics teams, but there are many.)
 - Use “down time” during live shots to provide shorts either for sponsors or school-related programming. (This was a particular opportunity for live shoots and could enhance school-based programming, engage more students, and make more efficient use of the truck and key staff when on shoots.)
 - Much more general education/communication and marketing of CTV, its services and programs.

4. Maintain a plan for capital investments

- Maintain a capital investment plan but also consider more coordinated and group purchasing for both CTV and NSCC member cities. The vision is of a cohesive network that grows, updates, and plans together.
- Articulate the changes in industry and current/future issues as a way to inform decision-making and tie these changes to budgeting and decision-making.
- Consider expanding joint purchasing pool or other ways to expand technology capacity throughout the network and network-wide standards/level of excellence.

5. Operational Excellence

- Governance
 - Reconstitute the board of directors to reflect all stakeholder groups and empower it to do what is necessary to achieve the strategic goals – greater communication/outreach, fundraising, enhanced volunteer and community engagement etc.
- Staffing/staffing pattern
 - An executive leadership transition plan needs to be developed for anticipated implementation within a couple of years.
 - Continue to maintain highly skilled staff—they are currently respected and trusted throughout the constituencies.

- Modify staffing pattern (or increase staff) to provide more volunteer outreach and support, more engagement with cities (not just a single point of access), sponsor (or other fundraising/development), support for any advisory groups, grant-writing, and increased communication.
- Engage staff and volunteers in decisions that affect them.
- Volunteers will serve as the foundation of expanded programming and will continue to be a key resource for CTV. This might require a shift in culture for CTV from transactional relationships to more proactive and engaged base of volunteers. Suggestions include:
 - Proactively identify key populations and actively recruit volunteers/producers for specific program ideas/markets.
 - Engage volunteer producers in strategies for new opportunities and create an even stronger sense of community between producers and production volunteers.
 - Consider using conference calls, media and other tools to address the time requirements of face-to-face meetings.
 - Seek efficiencies and streamlining of processes for more ease in participation by volunteers.
- General administration. Some cities are seeking administrative efficiencies and evidence of improved operations, in addition to the more engaged and active network of members and expanded programs. Suggestions include:
 - Articulate decision-making values and review the delegation structure to increase speed and efficiency of decision-making.
 - Increase points of contact between the NSAC board and city councils and greater visibility of board with CTV activities.
 - Establish advisory groups that can assist in program development, outreach, or planning—capitalizing on knowledge within the group but also engaging community members and businesses in being part of the organization.
 - Increase communication in every direction. Cities report they receive good information at annual presentations, but that is not the same as sharing information between/among members, or effective outreach to community about services/benefits, or fully engaging staff and volunteers as members of a “community,” etc.
 - A high level e-newsletter might be a good place to start—by assessing what information is most wanted or giving content options for more frequent communications.