



Legislation Text

File #: 10-0580, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to authorize City Manager to enter into an agreement with the Long Beach Community Foundation for a period of three years and commit Public, Education, and Government Funds reserved for Public Access television as a match to secure operational funding, up to \$200,000 a year, from the Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge Grant. (Citywide)

For the past several months, the City has been working closely with stakeholders from the community to identify opportunities to restore Public Access television in Long Beach. As you may recall, State legislation enacted in 2006 significantly changed the rules by which Public Access television is funded and administered in California. The primary challenge to restore Public Access television is the lack of funding to support Public Access operations.

Since November 2009, the Technology Services Department has been meeting regularly with a broad group of representatives from the digital media community, including Public Access producers, educational and job training institutions, community-based service organizations (YMCA, Long Beach Community Action Partnership), and the arts and culture community. The team has been developing a modern, expansive vision for Public Access television that transcends the traditional studio-based programming and contributes to the Digital City framework. In this context, a Digital City refers to a municipality that proactively engages in efforts to develop a skilled digital media arts workforce and partner with the business and creative communities to expand industry and job opportunities.

As part of developing the plan to reestablish Public Access in Long Beach, the team developed a unified vision for Public Access that was presented to the City Council in January 2010:

The vision for Long Beach Community Media (Public Access) is an exciting, state-of-the-art creative and cultural network that utilizes partnerships and collaborative resources to train content producers and distribute media that connects and empowers our community. This network is an innovative model for public access as it fosters dynamic engagement by giving voice to our residents, prepares young people for meaningful careers, and shares vital information that improves the quality of life in our community.

This statement extends beyond the restoration of Public Access programming. It incorporates other important objectives such as being inclusive and available to all, providing training and job skills to members of our community, particularly youth, and connecting our community through the exchange of information and ideas. It is important to note that these characteristics also reflect the core principles of a Digital City.

However, as highlighted above, many Public Access entities across the State have been unable to identify operational funding and have gone dark. As budgets continue to shrink in the public, private and nonprofit sectors, the prospects of finding a stable revenue stream have been limited. The team, however, has identified a unique funding opportunity that would not only support Public Access television operations, but would also serve as an important step toward establishing Long Beach as a

Digital City.

Public Access Operations Funding Opportunity: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (Knight) has earmarked \$24 million for a five-year initiative aimed at helping communities find creative ways to use new media and technology to keep residents informed and engaged. Knight's Community Information Challenge Grant, a matching grant program, is seeking projects that would help fill community information needs, foster community engagement, and enable residents to participate in the creation and sharing of news and information. These are attributes the team envisions for Public Access television in Long Beach.

Because the grant opportunity is only open to community foundations, the team sought out a partnership with the Long Beach Community Foundation (LBCF). LBCF was established in 1996 by a group of civic leaders under the guidance of Convening Chair, Dan Ridder, former Publisher of the Press-Telegram (a Knight-Ridder newspaper).

LBCF's relationship with the Knight Foundation dates back to the late 1990s when it served as a consultant for Knight's philanthropic efforts in Long Beach. In 2007, Knight appointed LBCF as its local granting agent and entrusted the Community Foundation with leading the charge for its transformational efforts and investment in Long Beach. A few examples of Knight-funded projects implemented by LBCF include the Connected Corridor, a project focused on transforming, connecting, and empowering the community around the Atlantic Corridor; and the establishment of YMCA Youth Institute's Change Agent Productions, a nationally-recognized job training and development program that uses the digital media arts to encourage kids to excel in school. LBCF has also taken a leadership role in bringing together key stakeholders for a discussion about how to establish Long Beach as a Digital Media Arts Center, or Digital City.

The team's grant proposal to Knight emphasized the desire to develop a dynamic digital media delivery system for Public Access that will inform, entertain, and engage residents using the latest technology for distribution on television, online, and on mobile devices. This vision would replace traditional central studio-based public access broadcasting with a more flexible, inclusive, and vibrant neighborhood-satellite format, which would utilize the services and facilities already being provided by established community organizations. A Public Access operator would coordinate overall operations of video programming and playback.

City Responsibility: The grant request seeks up to \$200,000 annually in unrestricted operating funds for three years from Knight, for a total of \$600,000. A three-year funding commitment enables the Public Access operator to establish its roots in the community and begin to nourish its own fundraising opportunities. Because this is a matching grant, the City Council is being asked to authorize the use of Public Access' share of the Public, Education, and Government funds as the required match for three years (2009, 2010, and 2011 PEG funds). This action speaks only to the "P" funds and does not contemplate using the education or government-access funds, and does not alter the intended use of the funds for Public Access television capital expenditures.

It is important to note that LBCF may not receive the award or may not be awarded the full \$200,000 annually; therefore, a lesser annual match may be required. The grant award announcement is scheduled for late summer 2010.

As the grant applicant, LBCF needs an agreement with the City authorizing the use of the PEG funds

as a financial match for the next three years. The proposed agreement also would require that LBCF would, upon receipt of the grant award, make those funds available to the selected Public Access television operator. This partnership is a great opportunity for our community, as it could potentially fund Public Access operations in an environment where there are limited existing resources, while also addressing many of the goals of creating a Digital City.

Not wanting to rely solely on this grant funding opportunity, the Public Access team continues to develop the operational requirements, such as a governance structure, policies and procedures, technical specifications related to video format and playback operations, and exploration of other funding opportunities. The goal of these efforts is to ensure that once selected, the Public Access operator is in the best position to serve the community.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Gary Anderson and by Budget Management Officer Victoria Bell on May 14, 2010.

City Council action is requested on June 1, 2010. Approval of this request will send a positive message of Long Beach's commitment to this project to the Knight Foundation's Board of Directors, who is meeting later this month to evaluate the grant applications.

This request seeks approval to commit up to \$200,000 in PEG funds collected by the City for three years (2009, 2010, and 2011 funds). Currently, the City has reserved the 2009 funds for use by the Public Access, or "P", operator. This request does not contemplate using either the "E" or "G" funds. By committing the "P" funds for the Community Information Challenge Grant, up to \$200,000 in annual operational support could be secured by the Long Beach Community Foundation for Public Access television.

Approve recommendation.

CURTIS TANI
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

APPROVED:

PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER