

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is public access television?

Public access television is local non-commercial programming created by a wide variety of individuals, groups, and organizations within a community.

Programs are aired on a first-come, first-aired basis, without editorial control except over unprotected speech.

What is Access Bellingham?

Access Bellingham is the name of a one-year pilot program to provide public access television services to residents of Bellingham, Washington. The pilot program will begin in October 2014.

Access Bellingham provides members of the Bellingham community access to BTV Channel 10 on Comcast Cable. This service is available for viewing from 6 p.m. to midnight every Sunday. The programs aired at that time will be created using the resident's own cameras and video editing equipment.

What kind of programming can air on Access Bellingham?

Producers may submit non-commercial programming on any topic of their choosing. Producers have editorial control over their programming and are solely responsible for content. Producers of programming on Access Bellingham are responsible for following all local, state and federal laws, including but not limited to copyright law. For example, Producers may not submit commercial programming, content related to lotteries, or programming containing obscenity. Producers accept all legal liability for programming that violates the law and agree to indemnify Access Bellingham, the City, and Comcast in the event of any lawsuits related to the content of their programming. Access Bellingham reserves the right to refuse to accept programming from Producers who violate its policies, procedures, or other applicable laws.

What are the format requirements for submitted material?

Programs must be submitted as video files on a flash drive or portable, USB connected hard drive or on a data DVD. Playable DVDs are not an acceptable format. Acceptable video file formats include: .mov, .wmv, .avi, .mpg, .mp4 .h264 and can be either standard definition or high definition.

If I submit programming on my own media, will my media be returned?

Yes. As soon as your program has been processed and scheduled to air for its first airing, you will be contacted so that you can return to City Hall to pick up your media.

What are the charges for submitting programs to Access Bellingham?

There are no fees to submit programs. This is a free service of the City of Bellingham.

What length should my program be?

Programs can be any length up to 1 hour, 59 minutes. Programs over 1 hour, 59 minutes will not be accepted.

What if my program is under 10 minutes in length?

Programs under 10 minutes will not show up on the Access Bellingham schedule but will play in a timeframe devoted to short programs.

When should I submit my program for scheduling?

Programs can be submitted at any time. They will be scheduled for the next available timeslot on a first-come/first-aired policy.

Can I promote my series or program?

Absolutely. You should promote your program in as many ways as you can through newspapers, radio, Internet, and any other means at your disposal.

Can you give me some more guidance regarding non-commercial programming? What about use by non-profits or political campaigns?

Non-profit organizations may not submit programs that ask directly for money or financial support. Programs submitted may announce fundraisers or events and may refer viewers to a web site for more information. Programs should not show prices or costs.

Political campaigns may not submit programs that ask directly for money or financial support. Programs may announce fundraisers or events and refer viewers to a web site for more information.

Are there any requirements for what must be included in a video program?

Yes. The producer's name must appear in the credits of every program they produce. See Procedures and Technical Specifications for more information.

What airs on cable channel 10 when Access Bellingham is not on?

Channel 10 on Comcast Cable, also known as BTV10, serves as a Government and Education channel at all times except starting at 6 p.m. (to approximately midnight) Sundays during Access Bellingham programming. There is a mix of programming from schools, colleges, government agencies and government funded organizations on BTV10 at all times except on Sunday evenings when Access Bellingham programming airs.

Does the City censor public access programs?

No. Public access television by its very definition is programming whose editorial content is exclusively controlled by the access producer.

What if Access Bellingham receives more than six hours of programming per week?

For purposes of starting this pilot project, six hours of weekly air time on channel 10 has been reserved for public access television. However, if we consistently receive more than six hours of programming per week, we will consider expanding the public access television pilot hours offered.

Why do I need to deliver my program myself?

Producers accept all responsibility, including legal liability, for their programs. By asking you to submit the program in person, we can also verify that you are a resident of Bellingham.

I'm very interested in Access Bellingham services and I'd like to be alerted as the pilot program evolves. Is there any sort of interest list that I could subscribe to?

Yes! Please send an e-mail to our e-mail address at Access@cob.org and ask that your e-mail address be added to our "Access Bellingham Stakeholder" list.

Why can't I submit my program multiple times? Will my program be aired more than once?

Note that this element of the program design has been updated as of December 2014.

We will accept a specific program one time. The program may be aired up to seven additional times after the first airing.

Note that there is no guarantee that programs will be repeated, but Access Bellingham may repeat programming based on the amount of new programming received. Repeat airing will be based on a first come, first served basis, with new programming taking a priority over repeat programming.

Producers will receive notice *of the first air time* for a submitted program. Producers should refer to the program schedule on the website to determine the scheduled time for subsequent airings.

How do I find out when a specific show is scheduled to play?

The Access Bellingham web pages, available at www.cob.org/AccessBellingham, will have a complete schedule of the following Sunday's program schedule.

How do I submit programming for Access Bellingham?

Residents of Bellingham can submit completed programs to Access Bellingham. Minors must have a resident parent or guardian submit their program.

Each program submitted must be accompanied by a Program Submittal Form signed by the program producer, or in the case of a minor, by that minor's adult parent or guardian.

Steps to submit programming, including forms, drop-off location, and hours, can be found on the Access Bellingham website at: <http://www.cob.org/AccessBellingham>.

I know how to make a basic video, but I'd like training to make it even better. Will there be a training program offered?

We plan to offer some training for members of the public in early 2015. Such training will be provided by contractors. Watch the Access Bellingham web pages to be alerted when that training will be offered.

Will there be a studio presence that the public can use? What about equipment rental services?

We do not have these services identified in the first phase of the pilot project. We are interested in considering suggestions from the community regarding lower-cost services that would contribute to

Public Access participation during our one-year pilot project. Please make suggestions by sending an e-mail to Access@cob.org.