

City of Lancaster
Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual

Subject: 6 Month Pilot Program: Broadcasting on the Government Access Channel

Effective Date: March 26, 2024

Index: Community Broadcasting

Supersedes: N/A

Staff Contact: communications@cityoflancasterca.gov

Pages: 5

1.0 Purpose

To establish guidelines for the use of the Lancaster Government Access Channel, L28, ("Channel"), including, but not limited to, defining potential users and establishing procedures for placing information on the Channel. The mission of the Channel is to inform the citizens of Lancaster about local government activities, services, and discussions, to provide public service information to the community; and to enhance the accessibility of local government.

2.0 Background

Pursuant to the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, channels may be designated for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) purposes. In Lancaster, the Government Access Channel is available to Spectrum subscribers via Channel 28 in Lancaster. This Channel is specifically designated for access by the City of Lancaster and is not mandated by law to provide access to individuals or entities other than the City.

3.0 Policy

Cable television administration falls under the function of the City Manager's Office. The City Manager's Office is responsible for the production of programming, overseeing the program schedule, and ensuring content aligns with city objectives. All programming decisions will be made by the City Manager in consultation with the City Attorney.

4.0 Goals

The goals for the Channel include:

1. Increasing resident access to local government and community meetings through various mediums, including live coverage of local government meetings via cable television;
2. Providing public information regarding governmental programs, services, projects, and public safety in Lancaster;

3. Informing residents about community activities and promoting upcoming community events;
4. Delivering information during local emergencies to assist and inform residents;
5. Provide access for nonprofit organizations on a pre-approved scheduled basis; and
6. Ensuring programming remains non-partisan and a-political.

5.0 Programing Categories

The City Manager's office shall be responsible for coordinating the production and broadcast of the various types of programming as described below. Programming viewed on the Government Access Channel is categorized as follows:

1. Public Meeting Coverage

Regular Lancaster City Council meetings will be broadcast live, with rebroadcasts scheduled as appropriate. Other public meetings may also be aired.

2. City-Produced Programs

Content related to community issues, local sports programming, lifestyle programming, news (local updates and special features), live streaming/rebroadcasting city events, informational programming of local interest (e.g. city services), and city-sponsored programs produced by city staff. The City Manager reserves the right to select appropriate programming as it relates to subject.

3. Pre-produced Programs

Content relating to government services, charitable organizations, or safety will be reviewed for broadcast suitability. Such content must align with the Channel's mission and city policies. Such programming will be screened by the City Manager for suitability and compliance with the policies and goals contained herein.

4. Emergency Message Programming

The Channel may be used to facilitate communications with residents during an emergency. In the event of an emergency situation, regularly scheduled programming on the Channel may be interrupted or cancelled in favor of an emergency override. Emergency broadcasts consist of live, taped, or text generated programming shown at any time as emergency situations dictate. The purpose of emergency programming will be to keep residents abreast of emergency situations, and to disseminate instructions relative to evacuation, detour and escape procedures. The content and scheduling of any emergency programming requires approval by the City Manager.

5. Other Programming

Other programming may be produced which does not fit into any existing program series. These programs will be considered “specials” and may be of any format. Special programs will focus on special activities, events, services, and issues pertinent to the community.

6. Paid Programming

During the pilot period, there will be no charge for programming of 2 hours or fewer. During the pilot period, one qualifying submission will be aired each week on Sunday for a duration of no longer than 2 hours. Scheduling is on a first come-first served basis. During the pilot period, staff shall track the time and resources needed to implement the program. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the program will be reevaluated and reasonable fees determined. The program will sunset on September 26, 2024 unless renewed by Council action.

All third party programming will be preceded and/or concluded with a disclaimer stating: "The following is third-party programming. Views expressed do not reflect those of the City of Lancaster, its officials, or staff."

6.0 Programming Requests

Internal and external users are eligible to request programming within the aforementioned scope of services. The City Manager is responsible for making all programming decisions in accordance with this Policy. Because the Government Access Channel is not a “Public Access Channel”, programming that is outside the scope of the Channel’s mission and goals will not be aired. The City has the sole right to determine the content and schedule of programming on the Channel and to edit or deny content that may be deemed offensive, obscene, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate.

a. Procedure for Placement of Information for External Users

External users wishing to utilize the bulletin board service must submit a request for information to be placed on the Channel by submitting the completed application and digital message a reasonable time prior to the proposed airdate. Requests must be submitted on the City-created application, available on the City’s website, and the message must comply with the production specifications outlined in the application. The City Manager’s Office will review the submission(s) for accuracy and completeness of information and to ensure that all content is in accordance with this Policy, if approved. The City Manager’s Office will schedule the message to air on the Channel. The date of input and the duration of the broadcast will be subject to staff availability and channel capacity. The programming will be aired once. Notwithstanding these procedures, emergency messages that affect residents’ health or safety may override other programming.

b. Approval Authority

The City Manager, or his or her designee, has the right and authority to deny any program request when it is determined, following review of a complete application and message submission, that the programming and/or bulletin board message does not meet the criteria set forth in this Policy, the applicant fails to provide all required information, or the applicant fails to provide truthful information.

7.0 Program Eligibility

To be eligible for production or broadcasting, programming must comply with the City's mission and goals for the Channel, as stated in this Policy, as well as meet all of the following criteria:

- a. The programming shall relate to the programs, services, and deliberations of local government and organizations that provide services to, or events for, the residents of Lancaster. The programming shall relate to community issues and events.
- b. The programming shall not express political views. The Channel shall not serve as a mechanism for building support for a particular policy, belief, viewpoint, or issue.
- c. The programming shall not include slanderous, lewd, obscene, indecent, or violent material or language. When questions arise as to the admissibility of material or language in this regard, the material will be reviewed subject to federal, state, and/or local law.
- d. The programming shall not include paid advertising material designed to promote the sale of commercial products or services, or any programming in which commercial appeals for funds are made. Grants for programming purposes shall not be considered as advertising. Paid advertising material includes, but is not limited to, advertising by or on behalf of a candidate for public office and paid messages for which the primary purpose is to promote a single service, product, trade, or business.
- e. The programming shall not include copyrighted material, unless clearances for use have been obtained and written proof of such clearance is presented.
- f. The programming shall not include programming prohibited by applicable federal, state, or local laws.
- g. The programming shall not include declared candidates for any elective public office and persons advocating any cause, viewpoint or policy, proposed or otherwise, except in a program or service where the format allows for all candidates or sides of an issue to be heard on an equal basis. A person is deemed to be a candidate for public office from the time that person takes out nomination papers for public office. Candidates for public office may appear on the Government Access Channel if the appearance of the candidate is (i) incidental to the presentation of the subject matter; (ii) in coverage of official city meetings such as City Council; (iii) as a participant in a ceremonial event; or (iv) as a participant in a City sponsored event.

- h. Opinions expressed on the Channel may not necessarily reflect those of the City of Lancaster, the Lancaster City Council, or the City of Lancaster staff.