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Each City Council and the County Commission appoints representatives to the MHCRC. These seven commissioners, supported by professional staff, commit hundreds of hours annually to deeply understand complex issues in an ever-evolving communications technology and policy landscape. Although this evolving landscape is disruptive in some respects, many community needs remain unchanged – needs for local authority over right-of-way and compensation; a consumer watchdog; platforms for community voices; affordable broadband networks for schools, libraries and local governments; and local solutions for addressing digital equity issues. The MHCRC consistently focuses on community needs as its keeps one foot firmly planted in today’s legal landscape to steward existing public benefits, while stepping out to explore possibilities and opportunities on behalf of the cities, County and communities it serves.

What We Do

- Advocate for and protect local authority and public benefits in the regulation of cable communications systems.
- Ensure communities are compensated for cable companies’ use of the public right-of-way.
- Help resolve cable subscriber complaints and provide consumer protection.
- Provide technology grants and broadband connectivity for community institutions and non-profits.
- Ensure a local voice through community media.

Who we are

STAFF
Julie S. Omelchuck
Program Manager
Rebecca Gibbons
Bea Bedard
Program Coordinators

COMMISSION MEMBERS
Leif Hansen
Commission Chair
Sue Diciple
Jeff Dennerline
Scott Harden
Carol Studenmund
Norman Thomas
Jacquenette McIntire

25th anniversary

By the numbers

$8.66 million Collected in cable franchise fees for MHCRC member jurisdictions

28 Active Grants

1,123 Local residents trained in media and digital literacy

THE MHCRC REGULATES AND NEGOTIATES CABLE FRANCHISES WITH FOUR COMPANIES:

- Frontier Franchise expiration 2022
- Reliance Connects Franchise expired June 2019
- Comcast Franchise expiration 2021
- CenturyLink Franchise expiration 2021

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2018-19 HIGHLIGHTS

Consumer Protection. The MHCRC enforces consumer protection and customer service standards under the cable franchises. Compliance approaches can include formal or informal resolution with the cable companies. Many are driven by customer complaints. Regulatory issues included company adherence to customer service standards (such as phone answering timetables and on-time appointments), information on subscriber bills, fees added to program packages (the Broadcast TV Fee and Sports Fee), and other consumer protection issues. In 2018, the MHCRC assisted in the resolution of 181 complaints.

Digital Equity. The MHCRC’s longstanding focus on digital equity through grants and low-cost broadband capacity for our public institutions continues to be bolstered by Portland and Multnomah County’s Digital Equity Action Plan (DEAP). DEAP creates a cohesive framework for our region to address digital equity for low-income individuals and families, older adults, people of color, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency. The MHCRC also actively participates in the Digital Inclusion Network (DIN), a consortium of local governments, nonprofits, businesses and others dedicated to reducing digital disparities in Multnomah County.

Affordable Broadband for Public Institutions. The MHCRC facilitates partnerships and network planning, and distributes funds, to provide affordable broadband connections for 308 schools, libraries, and public agency sites throughout Multnomah County and the Institutional Network (I-Net). Currently 16 public institutions participate in the I-Net partnership including the cities of Portland, Gresham and Troutdale, Multnomah County, State of Oregon court system, Metro, Home Forward, Multnomah County Library, Multnomah Educational Service District (including 7 school districts), Portland Public Schools, and Mt. Hood Community College. The MHCRC distributed nearly $170,000 to support network upgrades and connect new public agency sites to the network.

permitting, or other regulations. The MHCRC worked with Best, Best, and Krieger (BBB), a nationally recognized law firm in matters of local government authority, cable regulation and public policy, on the filings. The timeline is not known at this point for the FCC to consider the comments and reply comments and approve a final rule.

Investments to Advance Education and Community-Based Technology

The Community Grants Program, which provides funds for technology projects to community organizations, libraries, schools and local public agencies throughout Multnomah County. Funding opportunities within the Community Grants Program include the TECHSMART initiative and Community Technology Grants. The MHCRC oversaw implementation and compliance for 28 grant projects during the year. Funds for the program derive from the cable franchises negotiated by the MHCRC, Comcast, CenturyLink, and Frontier currently contribute to the Community Grants Fund.

Creating Technology Access and Training Opportunities

The Community Technology Grants provide funding, through an annual, competitive grant process, to nonprofits, libraries, and local governments to use technology resources to further their missions and services. Grants predominantly focus on supporting traditionally underserved, ethnically diverse, and special needs populations - such as communities of color, immigrants & refugees, low-income people, girls and women, youth, English language learners - in order to bridge the digital divide. In 2018, the program granted over $448,000 for 6 new community-based projects that will leverage nearly $2.2 million in matching resources.

2018 Community Technology Grants

Open Signal Black Filmmaker Fellowship $136,840
Six emerging Black filmmakers engaged in a yearlong fellowship are accessing transformative learning and career advancement through peer mentoring, practical experience and career support. By focusing on a small number of participants in a deep and meaningful way, the program aims to break down barriers to create greater diversity in the film and video industry and produce new media work that illuminates African-American experiences.

1 World Chorus: The Big Up Show $85,659
50 low-income students affected by poverty, gang violence, discrimination or gentrification gain filmmaking skills to become producers of the Big Up Program, a student produced television show used to teach the basic principles of peace and community building to pre-k and elementary school children.

Institutions

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Protect Local Authority and Compensation

The MHCRC continued its strategic focus on advocacy in the public interest amid an uptick in rulemakings at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which threaten local government authority. The MHCRC joined a coalition of 35 local government partners to fund and file comments and reply comments opposing a proposed rulemaking that could negatively impact our local communities and benefit cable companies. If the FCC were to adopt the proposed rule, the action would undermine public benefits negotiated in cable services franchise agreements. The rules would allow cable companies to deduct from franchise fees the value of certain services without additional compensation, potentially or other regulations. The MHCRC worked with Best, Best, and Krieger (BBB), a nationally recognized law firm in matters of local government authority, cable regulation and public policy, on the filings. The timeline is not known at this point for the FCC to consider the comments and reply comments and approve a final rule.

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Pacific Northwest College of Art $129,229
Women and people of color often face difficulty entering STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) career pathways without access and exposure early on and a sense of belonging. With grant support, PNCA is working to bridge this gap by producing videos that show women and people of color leading and engaging in STEAM education and careers.

NW Documentary Emerging Filmmakers $47,200
Providing an entry point into the world of short documentaries, funds will purchase state-of-the-art video production equipment to give 35 to 45 emerging filmmakers the tools they need to tell their stories in this increasingly popular medium.

Portland Community College Multimedia Program $39,324
As students prepare for careers in multimedia and video production, new camera and lighting gear will allow them to gain facility with the professional-grade technology that industry professionals expect prospective employees to be able to use in the field.

APANO Jade District Community Space $50,000
As part of a new affordable housing development, APANO is equipping its new community space with technology and digital literacy training opportunities to help reduce disparities in economic and education attainment for Jade District residents and Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

MHCRC COMMUNITY GRANTS
New Media Tools Boost Community Storytelling – And Career Skills

“VR creates a raw emotional response,” said Matt Henderson, “which is something you don’t get from regular video. VR has the potential to activate your empathy. That’s unique in this technology. It can make you say, ‘Oh, that’s what the people were feeling – I didn’t really get it until now.’”

A project with deep roots

The MH CRC has helped give voice to Vanport stories and storytellers over the past 13 years. In 2006, MH CRC grants to the Skanner Foundation helped build the North Portland Multi-media Training Center (NPMTC). In 2011, MH CRC grants to the NPMTC helped participants collect and record oral histories of Vanport flood survivors. In 2014, artistic director Laura Lo Forti began applying her storytelling maxixe to launch Vanport Mosaic, a new way to share survivors’ experiences. In 2015, MH CRC grants helped NPMTC train project participants to produce the Vanport Mosaic narratives.

Open Signal, building on the 35-year legacy as Portland Community Media, more recently partnered with Lo Forti to take the Vanport Mosaic project in a new direction. The MH CRC provides annual capital dollars which funds Open Signal’s studio equipment and more recently, innovative technology tools for virtual reality productions. “The MH CRC capital funding is the reason we are able to maintain state-of-the-art facilities and equipment,” said Rebecca Burrell, Open Signal’s director of strategy and development, “including the green-screen production studios we use for our latest virtual reality work.”

Oral histories of life – and death

This latest Vanport Mosaic effort tells a powerful tale. The City of Vanport, located between Portland and Vancouver, was one of the first planned, integrated communities in North America. Built to house workers for the Kaiser shipyard where World War II vessels were constructed. While some Vanport facilities were progressive – integrated schools, daycare, health care – racism persisted. Homes were constructed on vulnerable marshland. So when a berm collapsed in 1948, residents were at the mercy of the rushing waters.

Leaders insisted they were safe – up to the moment when 20,000 homes were destroyed and 15 people killed.

Virtual Reality puts you right there

The Vanport Mosaic oral history became even more vivid with the addition of a stunning virtual reality (VR) component. Lo Forti worked with Open Signal’s Matt Henderson, immersive media artist and educator, and Sharita Towne, an artist and new media fellow who specializes in telling African American stories, to create a VR element with uncanny authenticity. The simulation is based on Google Earth and Unity game development software.

Slip on the VR headset, grasp the handheld controllers, and zoom to the top of Vanport’s landmark water tower. Suddenly, it’s “Oh no, the water is rising all around me!” It’s a gut-punch, and it’s meant to be. Or, in another virtual scenario, stand on the only physical element of Vanport remaining today, a piece of concrete that’s littered with pictures. Pick up one by using your virtual hands and experience the picture coming to life as you learn with us, they’re gaining valuable skills they can apply in projects and jobs.”

The MH CRC’s investments have not only equipped community members to tell their own stories, but also shared their lived experiences through modern media tools and storytelling.

Bottom photo shows an image from the VR experience of the Vanport Flood. Inset is a historic photo of the actual flooded City of Vanport.
TechSmart Initiative for Student Success — $17 Million Over 8 Years

The MHCRC launched the TechSmart Initiative for Student Success in 2014 and, thus far, has granted over $11 million to six public school districts in Multnomah County. The MHCRC plans to strategically invest over $17 million through 2022 in local public schools to positively impact academic outcomes for all students in Multnomah County. The MHCRC TechSmart Initiative provides grants and evaluation resources for Multnomah County school districts to identify effective classroom instruction that uses technology to foster improvement in academic outcomes for all students and to share the successful strategies across the school districts. The TechSmart initiative aligns with the collective effort of the broader community engaged in the all hands raised partnership. The MHCRC invests in district efforts to close the achievement gap and make progress on the following academic outcomes key to student success: kindergarten readiness, third grade reading, eighth grade math, ninth grade credit attainment, high school graduation, English language learners’ annual progress. The MHCRC works closely with each school district as a planning and funding partner to develop a grant project plan tailored to each individual district’s priorities. TechSmart grants have touched on every critical academic benchmark...from kindergarten readiness to high school graduation.

Shared Learnings

Helping Underserved Students Succeed in School

The MHCRC is optimistic about continued learnings of the TechSmart Initiative. With multiple years of grant project implementation in each of the six school districts, the School Year 2017–2018 evaluation revealed some emerging instructional technology practices that have promise to reduce the achievement gap.

Supporting Individual Student Needs

Schools are effectively using technology to differentiate instruction among students according to their needs and tailor lessons for students with varied abilities. The TechSmart-funded equipment and other resources allow teachers to assign some students to independent work while others study in groups. Each can focus on learning that benefits them most. By the end of school year 2017–18, at least 85% of teachers reported confidently using student data to differentiate lessons for individual students. In addition, teachers across all districts highlighted the use of technology to address the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education (SPED) students.

Increasing Access to Technology

The evaluation identified differences between how grants affect access to technology between elementary-level students and upper grade level students. Teachers and leaders who have grants at the elementary level consistently reported that the TechSmart grant had elevated the playing field for their historically underserved students, giving them access to resources they might not have at home. These students benefited merely by having access to technology during the school day. Upper grade level teachers and leaders expressed more mixed results about how the grant had expanded access to technology for their students. Middle and high school students were expected to do more technology-related work outside the school and after hours; therefore, some students may actually be put at a disadvantage when expected to complete assignments at home using technology. This points to an expanded need to ensure upper grade level students have devices they can keep with them and broadband internet access at home.

Reduce the Achievement Gap

As TechSmart continues to identify effective instructional practices, data is emerging about impact on the student achievement gap. The evaluation is revealing some positive trends when focusing on the most at-risk student groups.

For example, results from Gresham-Barlow School District showed that in kindergarten and first grade, more students in the TechSmart classrooms performed at benchmark on reading assessments than the district comparison group. This trend held for ELL, SPED students, and students of color.

In the Reynolds School District, the TechSmart cohort overall attained significantly higher math credits in seventh grade, and significantly higher cumulative math credits by 9th grade than an historical comparison group.

But most promising to closing the achievement gap after three years of project implementation, at-risk student populations, particularly ELL, SPED students, and students of color, were showing significantly higher cumulative math credits in 7–9th grades relative to the historical comparison group.

Grant Funding School Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>SY 14-15</th>
<th>SY 15-16</th>
<th>SY 16-17</th>
<th>SY 17-18</th>
<th>SY 18-19</th>
<th>SY 19-20</th>
<th>SY 20-21</th>
<th>SY 21-22</th>
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<td>DOSD</td>
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<td>Parkrose</td>
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<td>Reynolds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centennial</td>
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Centennial

Current Grant

Pending Grant

TechSmart Grants Summary

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<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>FOCUS AREA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Douglas</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Kindergarten Readiness, Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Douglas</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkrose</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>9th Grade Credit Attainment, High School Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reynolds</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>8th Grade Math, 9th Grade Credit Attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Public</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gresham-Barlow</td>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centennial</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>Math &amp; Science, 9th Grade Credit Attainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All TechSmart Grants also focus on English Language Learners’ annual progress
**Un-audited budget report. For the MHCRC fund audited financial statements, visit the MHCRC website: http://www.mhcrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/fy18-mhCRC-financial-statements.pdf**

### FY 17-18 MHCRC Operating Budget*

(Admin/Regulatory/Compliance combined)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Portland Appropriation</td>
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<td>$295,827</td>
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<tr>
<td>East County Appropriations</td>
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<td>159,291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compliance Penalty Revenue</td>
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<td>2,500</td>
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<td>Interest Revenue Allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
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<td>$1,003,454</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Services</td>
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<td>Revenue Division – Fiscal Support</td>
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<td>MHCRC Fund Audit</td>
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<td>Contingency</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
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<td>$915,596</td>
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</table>

**Year-end Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$87,858</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Open Signal and MetroEast Community Media

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**Cable TV Subscribers**

- **Portland:** 210,000
- **East County:** 120,000

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**Cable Franchise Fees**

- **Portland:** $5.5 million
- **East County:** $3.0 million

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**Franchise Revenues Decline**

Due to cable franchise fees being paid by the companies based on their gross revenues derived from cable TV services, all jurisdictions experienced a decline in franchise fee revenue in FY17-18. Portland saw a decrease of nearly 7%, while the East County jurisdictions’ revenues decreased nearly 4% from the previous fiscal year. Portland’s sharper decline may be due to CenturyLink announcing in mid-2018 it would no longer market its cable TV product and the company has lost half its cable subscribers in this past year. The MHCRC reported on this anticipated decline in its prior annual reports. However, cable TV subscribers county-wide bounced upward in 2018 after hitting the lowest number in 12 years in 2017. It seemed as if the “cord-cutting” trend had finally taken hold, but Comcast in particular made gains in adding subscribers due, in part, to new alliances with streaming services now delivered over the cable system. The MHCRC is currently in process with a Comcast franchise fee review, which, most likely, will shed light on these numbers and trends.