

Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission



2021 & 2022 Annual Report



www.mhcrc.org

Introduction from the Chair:

The communications technology landscape is changing rapidly, spurred on by a desire to address disparities daylighted by the pandemic, and the recognition that much more must be done to connect our communities.

Federal funding for broadband expansion is creating an environment that resembles the Gold Rush of the 1800's, with policy and legislation lagging behind the unrelenting push of industry and the exponential growth of wireless, satellite, and broadband technologies.

Through all of this change there are a few constants: 1) the needs of our local communities must be represented at all levels of policymaking, 2) local authority over the public right-of-way must be retained, and 3) oversight is necessary to ensure everyone benefits.

Thank you for taking a moment to learn how the MHCRC supports our communities.

-Carol Studenmund, MHCRC Chair

Who We Are

We are eight volunteers who represent our communities' cable communications technology needs, and collaborate to ensure our whole region benefits from cable service franchise agreements. We are appointed by the six MHCRC Member Jurisdictions: Multnomah County, and the cities of Fairview, Gresham, Portland, Troutdale and Wood Village.

Commissioners

Carol Studenmund, Chair - Scott Harden, Vice Chair - Walle Brown - Jeff Dennerline
Jacquenetie McIntire - Kory Murphy - Richard Roche - Norm Thomas

Staff

Elisabeth Perez, Director - Rebecca Gibbons, Manager
Bea Coulter - Rana DeBey - Ava Hansen - Michael Wong

What We Do

- **Cable Franchise Negotiation & Compliance:** We conduct franchise negotiations, renewals, and transfers of ownership, and enforce cable company compliance with franchise agreements
- **Consumer Protections:** We monitor cable provider customer service data, and step in to support consumers with complaint resolution
- **Policy & Advocacy:** We participate in communications policy and legislative advocacy efforts to protect local control of the public right-of-way
- **Community Media:** We oversee community media organizations serving Portland and East Multnomah County
- **Community Technology Grants:** We administer a competitive grant program which allocates about \$1.5 million annually to libraries, schools, local governments, and non-profit community organizations
- **Digital Equity & Inclusion:** We promote digital equity & inclusion in our grants, policy, and advocacy work



Cable Franchise Negotiation & Compliance

MHCRC franchise negotiation, management, and compliance services provide Member Jurisdictions with economies of scale in:

- Franchise negotiations, renewals, and transfers of ownership
- Routine auditing of franchise fees to ensure Member Jurisdictions are accurately compensated under the terms of the agreement and statutes
- Monitoring of cable provider performance metrics including customer service standards, subscriber reporting, and fiscal reporting
- Customer complaint resolutions
- Enforcement of compliance with the franchise agreement, and the legal and policy frameworks set by federal law

Cable Franchise Negotiations

During the reporting period, the MHCRC began negotiation of renewal cable franchise agreements with **Comcast Corporation** and **Zipty Fiber** on behalf of Member Jurisdictions. Negotiations are ongoing, and expected to conclude at the end of 2022.

Consumer Protections: Customer Complaint Line

During the reporting period, the MHCRC **resolved 257 subscriber complaints** received via phone and email. Recent improvements in the MHCRC website will make the Complaint Line more accessible to cable customers in the coming year.





UNITED STATES
HOUSE of
REPRESENTATIVES



Policy & Legislative Advocacy

The MHCRC tracks and participates in cable communications-related policy and legislation that may impact our local communities, or that may impede our local governments from receiving fair compensation for commercial uses of the public right-of-way. This includes activities such as:

- Monitoring policy and legislation development at the local, state, and federal level
- Advocating on behalf of Member Jurisdictions with state and federal elected officials
- Providing comments and reply comments to policymaking bodies like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
- Participating on boards and committees to ensure local community needs are included in policy development
- Participating in local government coalitions to appeal policies that impede local government authority to manage the public right-of-way

Examples of issues championed by the MHCRC in this reporting period include:

FCC: Cable 621 Order - Legal Appeal

The MHCRC collaborated with similar Commissions and municipalities across the country to **successfully advocate in Court for changes to the Order** which mitigated potentially devastating cost impacts on local community benefits including: franchise fee payments to member jurisdictions, free cable services to schools and libraries, and major funding cuts to local noncommercial and nonprofit community media centers, Open Signal and MetroEast.

FCC: Improving Competitive Broadband Access to Multiple Tenant Environments (MTEs)

The MHCRC submitted comments on this issue when it was first raised in 2017, and again when it was revisited in 2021. Comments from local governments **successfully resulted in an FCC Order which reinforces renters' right to choose** service providers based on their digital communications needs, and enforces rules that prohibit MTE owners from entering into exclusive contracts with providers.



Community Technology Grants

The MHCRC awards grants to nonprofits, community organizations, libraries, schools and government agencies within the six member jurisdictions, through its Community Technology Grants program.

Grants are awarded on an annual basis to projects utilizing media creation tools and community media channels to address local needs, and increase local discourse, civic participation and communication. For more information on program goals, eligibility, and how to apply, visit: www.mhcr.org/community-grants.

Grantees' completed videos can be viewed on Open Signal and MetroEast cable channels on the Comcast and Zply cable systems. For more information on replay schedules, please visit Open Signal at www.opensignalpdx.org and MetroEast at www.metroeast.org. Below are highlights from the reporting period:



Community Technology: Grantee Projects

Following are some examples of grantee projects awarded, in production, or completed in this reporting period:

Resolutions Northwest: Moving the Equity Conversation

This project raises awareness and promotes action to dismantle white supremacist systems that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents through the production of 20 engaging videos with BIPOC equity practitioners.

North-Northeast Business Association: Black Rose Video Podcast Series

This project empowers 20 aspiring, young Black filmmakers through the creation of a series of video podcast episodes that showcase the stories of 20 professional, Black newsmakers within the Portland area.

ChickTech: Act-W+: Increasing Underrepresented Populations in Technology Careers Through Media and Technical Training

The project serves underrepresented populations in technology fields from high school aged youth to mid-career level adults within the Portland area. ChickTech will train 25 people (focused on girls and women, including female-identifying, non-binary, and transgender people, referred to as womxn) in the technical aspects of video production. Through the creation of videos from ChickTech events throughout the year, the participants will build their technical leadership and career development skills, connect with other like-minded womxn, and increase awareness of social justice issues related to diversity and inclusion in technology.

Slavic Community Center of Northwest: Slavic Immigrant and Refugee Stories/Video Series

This project benefits the underserved immigrants and refugees that came from Eastern Europe and former Soviet Republics within the Portland area. Through the creation of a video series highlighting 12 members of their immigrant community that have successfully crossed cultural barriers to become involved in community building, the Slavic Center of Northwest aims to increase civic engagement amongst Slavic immigrants and combat the current political climate surrounding immigrant communities.

David Douglas School District: Engaging Families Through Digital Equity

This project cultivates historically underserved families' and students' joint technology engagement. DDSD will engage about 15 families through three in-person, hands-on training sessions designed to increase comfort and confidence with technology, and further engage hundreds of families through three supplemental recorded 30-minute tutorials posted on the DDSD website. Families will be recruited by DDSD's bilingual Family and Community Partnership Coordinator who will work with principals, teachers, and key staff to identify the families most in need.

In addition, DDSD will create a documentary of the whole project highlighting candid interviews with participants and how increased comfort/expertise with technology will benefit their future plans to use technology alongside their children. Both the tutorials and the documentary piece will be shared out on both Open Signal and MetroEast.

Outside the Frame: Expanding Film Making Opportunities for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

This project supports 60 youth who have experienced houselessness through participation in production assistant bootcamps, apprenticeship film projects, freelance support programs, and a workforce development group.

Through these expanded and improved trainings on how to use professional-grade film equipment, youth will become certified as producers for community media centers,

increase their employable technical skills, and increase connections to internships and paid work.



Left and on Cover: Open Signal and Outside the Frame partnered to provide a 35-hour training for 360-degree media. Photo by Makayla Caldwell

For more information on the MHCRC Community Technology Grant Program visit:

www.mhcr.org



TechSmart Initiative: Grants to Schools

*The TechSmart Initiative sunsets in 2022 after awarding almost **\$16 million** in technology grants to local schools.*

The TechSmart Initiative launched in 2014, and sunsets in 2022 after awarding nearly \$16 million in technology grants to schools within the Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham Barlow, Parkrose, Portland Public, and Reynolds School Districts.

The TechSmart Initiative provided grants and evaluation resources for 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 aligned with the collective effort of the broader community engaged in the All Hands Raised Partnership.

Because of the TechSmart grants, which supported technology integration, curriculum development, and one-on-one coaching for teachers, students and teachers who had participated in the program were better prepared and adapted more quickly to the on-line learning environment mandated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To read about the history and success of the TechSmart Initiative, please visit the MHCRC website: www.mhcr.org/community-grants/techsmart-initiative/





Community Media Centers

Open Signal Community Media Center in Portland, and MetroEast Community Media in Gresham receive capital and operating funds from the MHCRC to provide the community with Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access to media creation tools and training, cable channel distribution, and a wide-variety of locally produced content which is viewable on cable television channels.

Open Signal and MetroEast provide live, gavel-to-gavel coverage of local government meetings, professional production service to nonprofits and government agencies, and low/no cost technology training and resources to the community.

Both facilities are dedicated to digital equity and inclusion, and communities who identify as Black, Indiginous, people of color; English language learners; people living with disabilities; people who are low income; and the nonprofits who align with these efforts.

In this reporting period, both facilities excelled in supporting local governments' transition from "live, in-person" to "live, virtual" meetings, despite facility closures and uncertainties related to the COVID-19 pandemic. They quickly pivoted operations to ensure services continued to be available through: online workshops, longer term equipment check-outs, remotely controlled technology, and thoughtful scheduling of resources.





Open Signal Labs: Black Filmmaker Fellowship

In 2018, the MHCRC made an investment of \$136,840 in Open Signal to support the “Black Filmmaker Fellowship” project to provide deep and transformative career advancement to six emerging Black Filmmakers based in the Portland metro area.

Six Fellows were selected to participate in the program which launched in July 2018. Over the course of the year, Fellows received training in mentorship and instruction, experience with industry standard equipment, and career guidance. Each Fellow created a new independent work to share publicly. In June 2019, Open Signal hosted a sold-out screening at the Hollywood Theater which several Commissioners and elected officials were able to attend.

In addition to independent work, the Fellows collaborated to complete three group productions: one for the nonprofit Portland African American Leadership Forum, a music video for Nettwerk Records artist SYML, and a trailer video for the screening. They also had the opportunity to participate in a production led by Ime Etuk, a nationally known Black film and television director, and to visit the set of ‘The Water Man’, a major motion picture directed by David Oyelowo and produced by Oprah Winfrey. The original Fellows have moved forward dramatically in their careers, and have demonstrated quantifiable improvement in technical skills due to participation in the program.

Building on the original cohort’s success, the program accepted six new Fellows in February 2020 through a competitive application process. Due to COVID-19, Fellowship staff organized a virtual program launch in May 2020 to introduce the Fellows to the community, along with a hosted conversation with LA-based producer Crystal Rose Holmes. Open Signal plans to continue to incubate new works created by Black filmmakers and provide monthly virtual convenings for the Black media community.



MetroEast Mobile Media Education Initiative

MetroEast Community Media’s “Mobile Media Education Initiative” Project was awarded a grant for \$200,850 in 2020.

In response to identified transportation barriers to participation, the project seeks to reach a minimum of 250 underserved youth through co-programmed workshops with schools and community organizations by bringing hands-on media experiences and educational programming, alongside a complete gear library in an outfitted mobile van, to various community sites.

In addition, MetroEast will reach additional community members by bringing the mobile van to targeted community event programming sites such as the I Heart Rockwood festival. The project seeks to increase skill attainment of media technology in youth participants as well.

Due to COVID-19 closures, the project’s progress pivoted to completely remote instruction. Despite closures and social distancing related to the pandemic, the flexible nature of the van and capital materials meant that MetroEast has been able to offer classes during this time. Basic Editing, Broadcast Journalism for Gresham High School students, and an Introduction to TikTok for Parents of Nepali and Rohingya families are examples of the classes offered.

As the project continues and COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, MetroEast plans to resume their original project plans and are on track to do so successfully with a newly outfitted mobile media education van.



FY 19-20 MHCRC Operating Budget*

(Franchise Administrative/Capital Compliance Combined)

Revenues	Budget	Actual
City of Portland Appropriations	\$ 294,418	\$ 294,418
East County Appropriations	\$ 158,533	\$ 158,533
FY 18-19 Year End Balance	\$ -	\$ -
Interest Revenue Allocation	\$ 147,608	\$ 22,058
Capital Compliance Allocation	\$ 530,232	\$ 448,804
Total Revenues	\$ 1,130,791	\$ 923,813

Expenditures	Budget	Actual
Personnel Services	\$ 580,553	\$ 464,264
Professional Services	\$ 284,000	\$ 262,887
External Materials and Services	\$ 37,975	\$ 21,657
MHCRC Fund Audit	\$ 15,000	\$ 12,432
Rent	\$ 38,076	\$ 31,635
Internal Services	\$ 59,677	\$ 41,721
General Fund Overhead	\$ -	\$ 100,000
Contingency	\$ 101,500	\$ -
Total Expenditures	\$ 1,116,781	\$ 934,596
Year-end Balance	\$ -	\$ (10,783)

* Un-audited budget report. For the MHCRC Fund audited financial statements visit the MHCRC website: www.mhcrc.org

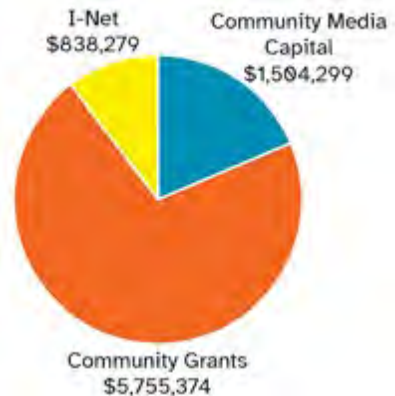
\$5,117,435

Total franchise fee disbursement to member jurisdictions

Percent of franchise fees spent on MHCRC Operations

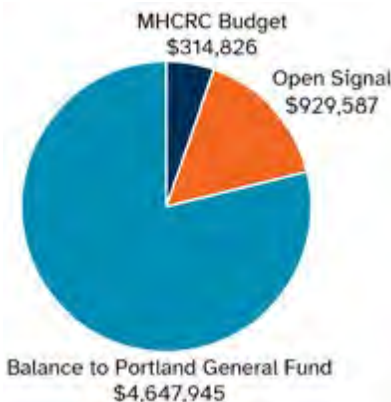
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Funding Support for Community Media, Grants, and I-Net

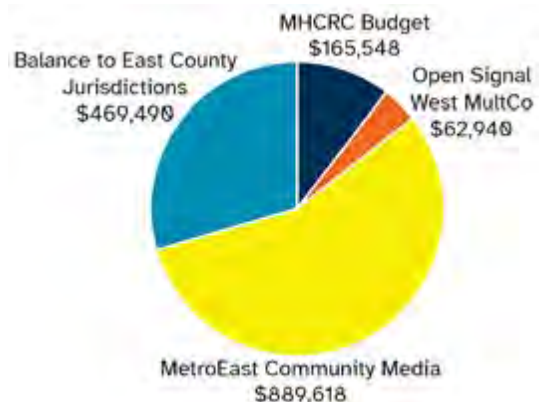


Cable Franchise Fee Disbursements

Portland



East County



FY 20-21 MHCRC Operating Budget*

(Franchise Administrative/Capital Compliance Combined)

Revenues	Budget	Actual
City of Portland Appropriations	\$ 314,826	\$ 314,826
East County Appropriations	\$ 169,522	\$ 165,548
FY 19-20 Carryover	\$ -	\$ 127,322
Interest Revenue Allocation	\$ 243,533	\$ 6,603
Capital Compliance Allocation	\$ 526,988	\$ 433,868
Total Revenues	\$ 1,254,869	\$ 1,048,167
Expenditures	Budget	Actual
Personnel Services	\$ 629,633	\$ 410,853
Professional Services	\$ 362,000	\$ 372,924
External Materials and Services	\$ 36,375	\$ 38,356
MHCRC Fund Audit	\$ 15,000	\$ 12,024
Internal Services	\$ 78,445	\$ 68,429
General Fund Overhead	\$ 25,000	\$ 9,609
Contingency	\$ 108,415	\$ 53,285
Total Expenditures	\$ 1,254,868	\$ 965,480
Year-end Balance	\$ -	\$ 82,687

* Un-audited budget report. For the MHCRC Fund audited financial statements visit the MHCRC website: www.mhcrc.org

\$4,874,215

Total franchise fee disbursement to member jurisdictions

Percent of franchise fees spent on MHCRC Operations

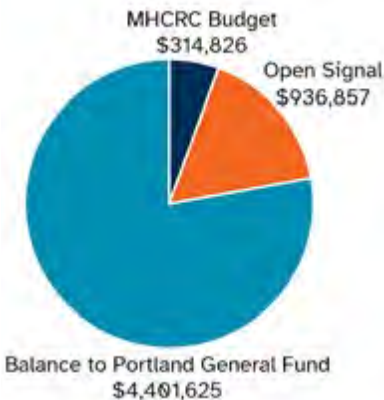
7%

Funding Support for Community Media, Grants, and I-Net

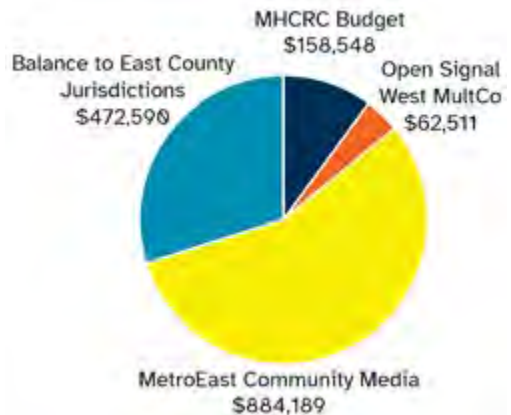


Cable Franchise Fee Disbursements

Portland



East County





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