



MT. HOOD CABLE REGULATORY COMMISSION

FY 21-22

ANNUAL REPORT



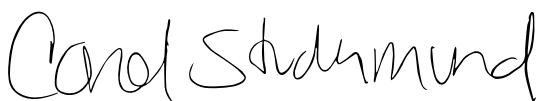
Introduction from the Chair

As the Portland Metro Area emerges from the pandemic, we face a pivotal moment. Decisions we make now will have long-term impacts on the evolution of cable communication technology, community media centers, and the many connected community organizations engaged in media content creation, digital inclusion and access, and more broadly - community building. As you look through this report, I'd like to highlight these challenges and opportunities:

- Technological change continues, and many new forms of telecommunications continue to expand. Film, video and television increasingly exist on multiple platforms.
- Government has significantly changed the way it operates and engages with community, with virtual and hybrid meetings becoming the norm.
- The business model of community media centers is shifting, as production equipment becomes less expensive, and human expertise becomes the critical ingredient.

Recognizing this, the MHCRC will launch a Strategic Planning process in 2023, which will be highlighted later in this report. This will be a dialogue with participating jurisdictions to discuss the work of the MHCRC and future needs of member jurisdictions regarding the cable and telecommunications system, to develop a long-term strategy, and to create recommendations for a refreshed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to achieve those priorities.

Despite all of these changes, the community media centers and other MHCRC grantees continue to innovate and deepen the ways they serve community - particularly low income communities and communities of color. Thank you for your ongoing support for our work, and for taking time to consider these challenges.



Carol Studenmund
MHCRC Chair

Who We Are

We are eight volunteers who represent our communities' cable communications technology needs and collaborate to ensure our 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; Julia DeGraw; Leslie Goodlow; Cherri Wagner; Scott Harden; Jeff Dennerline, Vice Chair; Richard Roche; Norm Thomas. For more information about your Commissioners, bios are found on the MHCRC Website: www.mhcrc.org/about-the-mhcrc/meet-the-commission.

Staff | Donnie Oliveira, Director; Eric Engstrom, Deputy Director; Andrew Speer, Franchise Utility Manager; Rebecca Gibbons, MHCRC Program Manager; Rana DeBey, MHCRC Community Grants Manager; Michael Wong, Finance Manager.

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 provide ongoing support to community media organizations serving Portland and East Multnomah County.
- **Community Technology Grants:**
We administer a competitive grants program which allocates approximately \$1.5 million annually to libraries, schools, local governments, and nonprofit community organizations.
- **Digital Equity & Inclusion:**
We promote digital equity and 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 continued negotiation of renewal cable franchise agreements with Comcast Corporation and Ziplly Fiber on behalf of Member Jurisdictions. Comcast negotiations are ongoing and are expected to conclude in 2023. Ziplly is expected to exit the cable market in 2023.

Consumer Protections - Customer Complaint Line:

During the reporting period, the MHCRC resolved more than 250 subscriber complaints received via phone and email.

Customers have three options if they wish to file a complaint. To speak directly with a representative, customers can call 503.823.5385. They will be prompted to leave a voicemail and an MHCRC representative will return their call as soon as possible. Customers can also send an email detailing their complaint to info@mhcrc.org. And finally, customers can fill out an online form on the MHCRC website at www.mhcrc.org/customer-support.



Community Technology Joins Planning and Sustainability

In 2022 the Office for Community Technology, which provides staff support to the Commission, joined the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS). With Portland voters approving City Charter Reform in 2022, the City of Portland is reorganizing in anticipation of a City Administrator arriving in 2025. BPS is a leader in land use planning and urban design, climate action, environmental stewardship, and community technology. BPS centers racial equity in its work and is dedicated to creating a future that is more equitable, healthy, prosperous, and resilient for all Portlanders.

Incorporation of MHCRC work into this larger portfolio brings several benefits to the MHCRC:

- MHCRC staff joined a bureau that is focused on equitable outcomes in the community. BPS brings expertise and systems that support community grantmaking, through several programs including the Portland Clean Energy Fund and the Smart City PDX Program.
- BPS provides support to several other commissions, including the Portland Planning Commission, and a new Climate Commission. This will bring a deeper level of administrative support to the commission's operations and program staff.
- MHCRC staff can now take advantage of a larger set of internal services resources, including robust finance and communications teams, dedicated people services and human resources support, and extensive technology and operations support.



THE BUREAU OF
**PLANNING &
SUSTAINABILITY**



Policy & Legislative Advocacy

The MHCRC monitors and advocates on behalf of the jurisdictions on legislation and policies that impact local authority and the provision of telecommunications services. 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.

A few of the legislation, policy, and legal proceedings monitored in this reporting period included:

- Congressional legislation clarifying franchise obligations, advancing 6G technologies, and addressing digital redlining.
- State legislation related to broadband funding.
- FCC activities, including President Biden's nominations for open seats, rules providing more competitive choice of communications services in multiple tenant environments, broadband consumer labeling rules, rules addressing cable and satellite price transparency, and rules aimed at digital discrimination.
- Court cases related to net neutrality, cable operators billing practices, applicability of franchise fees to over-the-top (OTT) video service providers, and FCC definitions.

Historically, broadband funding has yet to be available to urban areas to support broadband infrastructure or digital literacy services due to the use of inadequate measures of need. Large federal funding opportunities through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are headed to the State broadband office for project allocation to communities around the state. Yet, both federal and state requirements heavily favor rural communities for funding. Our policy work is focused on barriers preventing urban cities like Portland from receiving any federal funding for broadband infrastructure and digital equity work and to ensure that the needs of urban communities are not overlooked.



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.mhcrc.org/community-grants. Grantees' completed videos can be viewed on Open Signal and MetroEast cable channels on the Comcast and Ziplly cable systems.

In this reporting period:



Organizations were awarded grants



Total grants



Grants prioritize racial equity as a central element



Organizations are first-time grantees



Examples of grantee projects awarded



Curious Comedy Theater

\$255,620

Curious Comedy Theater's (CCT) "Amplifying Marginalized Voices" project will upgrade old equipment to ensure high-quality professional videos for performers and the community at large. The Curious Comedy Theater Annex will also be outfitted with video production equipment to allow for capturing and sharing our comedy performances. This grant will help more than 100 women and BIPOC comedians by capturing their performances which can be later used to promote themselves and build audiences on digital platforms.



Community for Positive Aging

\$66,920

Community for Positive Aging (CFPA) is committed to addressing the social, cultural, environmental, and economic needs that impact the health and wellness of older, low-income seniors in Multnomah County. The "Supporting Low-Income Seniors through Health Navigation Digital Media Content" project seeks to produce 8 to 12 informational videos about a variety of topics including healthy aging, food access, case management options, access to safe housing and more. The videos will be translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin and shared out via MetroEast Community Media (MetroEast), and displayed on large screens at the community centers and other gathering places.





Portland State University School of Film

\$85,675

Portland State University (PSU) School of Film’s “Fifty Years after Title IX: Portland Women in Sports” project seeks to tell a multi-tiered story about women in sports as experienced by Portland-area female and non-binary athletes. Approximately 96 undergraduate students in the School of Film will work with production professors across six courses to produce three 60-minute programs for broadcast on both MetroEast Community Media and Open Signal. The produced programs will include game play, studio segments, short documentaries, and athlete profiles from the Oregon Ravens football team, a small independent women’s football league.



Wild Diversity

\$26,619

Wild Diversity’s “Connecting with the Outdoors Video Series” project seeks to expand their reach to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ community members through the creation of at least 11 videos highlighting inclusive and diverse stories about nature, outdoor adventure, and the field of conservation. High school aged interns who identify as Black will learn how to produce, host, and film the outdoor exploration video series as a part of the “Tappin Roots Black Nature Educators Internship Program.” All of videos aim to diversify the conversation/environmental field by both educating viewers and recruiting new BIPOC community members to get involved, explore nature, and feel welcomed in wild, outdoor spaces.

Other grantees included: Day One Tech, ELSO, Northwest Alliance for Alternative Media and Education, Portland Community College, Somali American Council of Oregon, and The Lotus Seed. For more information on the MHCRC Community Technology Grants Program visit: www.mhcrc.org/community-grants

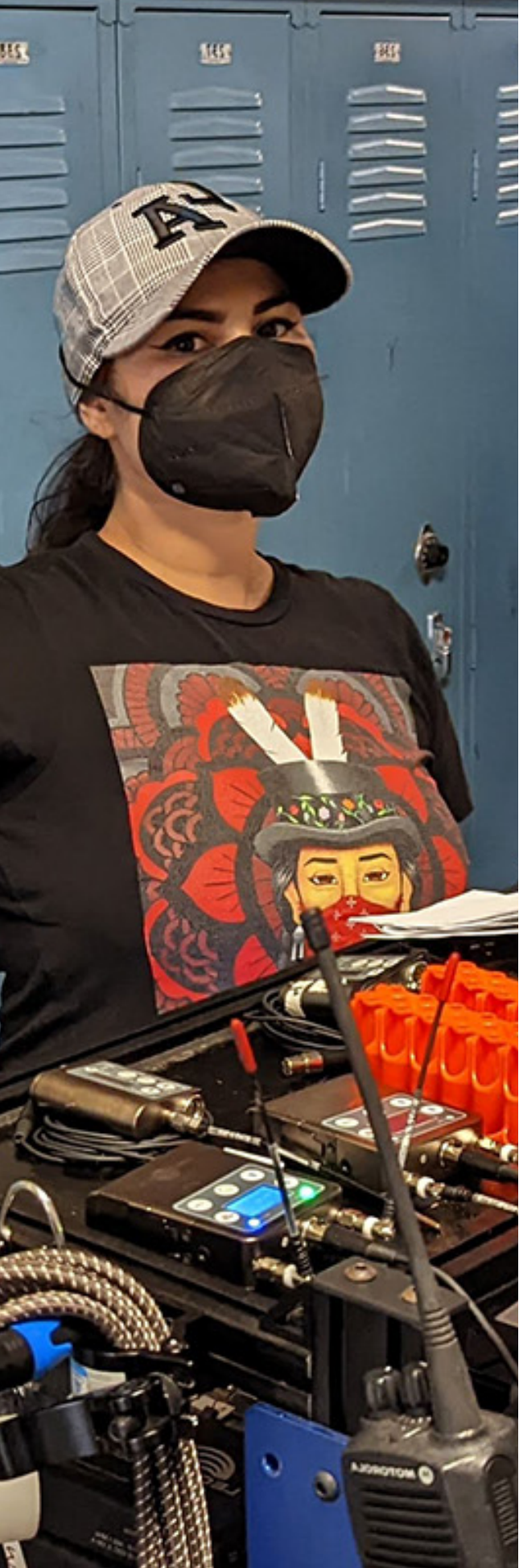


TechSmart Initiative for Student Success Impact Report

The TechSmart Initiative for Student Success officially wrapped up in 2022 after investing nearly \$16 million over eight years 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 Oregon All Hands Raised Partnership. Each year, grantees participated in a quasi-experimental student achievement study in order to understand the progress made towards closing the achievement gap. The studies tracked TechSmart cohorts annually and compared their progress. Prior to the pandemic, several promising student achievement findings emerged, which are detailed in the report. 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 online learning environment mandated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read the full TechSmart Initiative for Student Success Final Impact Report: www.mhcrc.org/community-grants/techsmart-initiative





Community Media Centers

Open Signal in Portland and MetroEast Community Media in Gresham received capital 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 also received operating funds from the City of Portland while MetroEast Community Media received operating funds from the MHCRC.

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

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

Government Meetings

- MetroEast produced 359 hours of live government meetings during this reporting period.
- Open Signal broadcast 119 Portland City Council meetings, 72 of which were hybrid meetings, totaling 535 hours.

Original Programming

- MetroEast cablecast 1,658 new programs and 1491 hours of original programming.
- Open Signal broadcast 9,737 new airings of work created by the community on its cable channels and online streaming network.

Workshops and Training

- MetroEast offered a total of 55 training workshops to 195 participants.
- Open Signal spent 923 hours facilitating/teaching people how to create content through its Cohort Program.





Spotlight on Open Signal

Labs Black Creative CO-OP Replaces Film Fellowship

2021/22 has seen a significant evolution in how Open Signal Labs an incubator for emerging African American filmmakers, engages with the Black creative community. After three years of effectively running a fellowship program, Open Signal has launched the Labs Co-operative. This is designed to bridge the gap between what was a more typical fellowship model and a values-driven studio model. Rather than working to develop six fellows through individual experience and skills-building projects, Labs will contract with four established creative producers to develop and complete projects already in the development/pre-production phase. This provides significantly increased support for producers to complete their projects. Labs will contract with the producers to allow them access to Labs resources including a project budget-adjusted stipend for the duration of the project's production period, access to workspace, equipment and staff support. The Co-operative Pilot is currently active with filmmaker/producer Kenny Hamlett and will conclude this fall at which point the selection of four new Co-op Members will be selected.

Other Labs work in 2021/22 included:

- Labs provided support for Bruce Poinsett's Blacktastic Adventure which brings to life characters Poinsette engaged with through the Urban League's State of Black Oregon project in 2017, as well as local characters who can speak to the Black experience in the Pacific Northwest.
- Open Signal Labs continues its partnership with Simple X to produce an ongoing video series to amplify Black professionals in Portland.
- Local nonprofit Imagine Black partnered with Open Signal Labs to welcome 2022 City Commissioner Candidates to an intimate discussion about the future of public safety in the city of Portland.
- Labs Executive Producer Ifanyi Bell partnered with local filmmaker Ime Etuk and his nonprofit Lionspeaks to produce an indie feature film, "Outdoor School". The film served as Etuk's feature directorial debut. Open Signal Labs worked with Outside the Frame to train 10 people to prepare them to work in various departments on the film.
- Open Signal Labs contracted with Talooka Studios to develop the upcoming Open Signal Labs standalone site. The new webpage will be a staging ground to articulate the vision of Labs work and sharing the work.





Spotlight on MetroEast

Mobile Media Innovation Lab

MetroEast Community Media’s “Mobile Media Education Initiative” Project was awarded a grant in 2020. The project responded to transportation barriers to participation and sought to reach underserved youth through co-programmed workshops with schools and community organizations. The workshops gave participants hands-on media experiences and educational programming by bringing a complete gear library in an outfitted mobile van to various community sites. In 2021/22 MetroEast completed outfitting the vehicle with a lift gate, awning, side mounted projector and battery array. They also purchased laptops, iPads, software and other equipment to better facilitate the workshops. The Lab is also freshly wrapped and branded, with an inclusive design representing the diverse East County community. They are now using the vehicle for workshops, Media Popups and cultural events. This included, for example, visits to Nadaka, Red Sunset and Gresham main city parks, appearances at Rosewood Initiative’s events, and The I Love Rockwood Festival.

The MetroEast Production team worked on a series of videos for the Clean Rivers Coalition. This included The Connection series, which brings the Native voice to the fore as our connection, disconnection, and reconnection to water is highlighted from various perspectives.

MetroEast also worked closely with Rosewood Initiative with its digital navigator’s program. Digital Navigators are individuals who address the whole digital inclusion process — home connectivity, devices, and digital skills — with community members through repeated interactions. Often at trusted community-based organizations, Digital Navigators are familiar with resources that relate to digital equity, and they help residents learn to use critical online services that guide food support, rent, education, employment, childcare, government benefits, and more.



Strategic Planning

This strategic planning process will be a dialogue with participating jurisdictions to discuss the work of the MHCRC and future needs of member jurisdictions regarding the cable and telecommunications system. The goal of the planning process is to develop a long-term strategy and create recommendations for a refreshed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to achieve those priorities.

Established in 1992 and amended in 1998, the MHCRC IGA outlines the Commission's purpose, powers, membership, meetings, rules of procedure, and officer structure. The IGA grants the MHCRC the authority to advocate for and protect the public interest in the regulation and development of cable communications systems within the Jurisdictions; to monitor and help resolve cable subscribers' concerns in these jurisdictions; and to participate in the planning and implementation of community use of cable communications technologies which make use of the public right-of-way. While the MHCRC has continued to expand its expertise as technologies converge, the IGA has not been updated in 23 years.

- Cable communications systems have evolved beyond cable television to include broadband, but the policy structure governing local authority has not kept pace.
- Over the years, the Commission has managed up to four cable franchises and now oversees two for the East County Jurisdictions and one for Portland.
- Companies that do not offer video service are no longer regulated by the cable franchise agreements or the 1984 Cable Act. Federal law does not provide the same legal framework to support local governments' work with telecom and internet companies.
- Some portions of the staff services agreement, which accompanies the IGA, have become obsolete.
- Changes in technology, changes in the structure of cable and telecommunications industry, and changing civic process (hybrid public meetings) are changing the business model of the community media centers: Open Signal and MetroEast Community Media. The member jurisdictions will need to consider the best way to support the long-term financial stability of these valuable community institutions.

The Strategic Planning process will occur over the course of 2023 and early 2024. The Commission is hiring a consultant to facilitate the process, which will include meetings and interviews later in 2023 with each of the member jurisdictions, and with the MHCRC's grantee community including the community media centers. Recommendations will be presented to the Commission and member jurisdictions in mid 2024. The MHCRC intends to update the IGA and staff services agreement to reflect current and future goals of the jurisdictions.

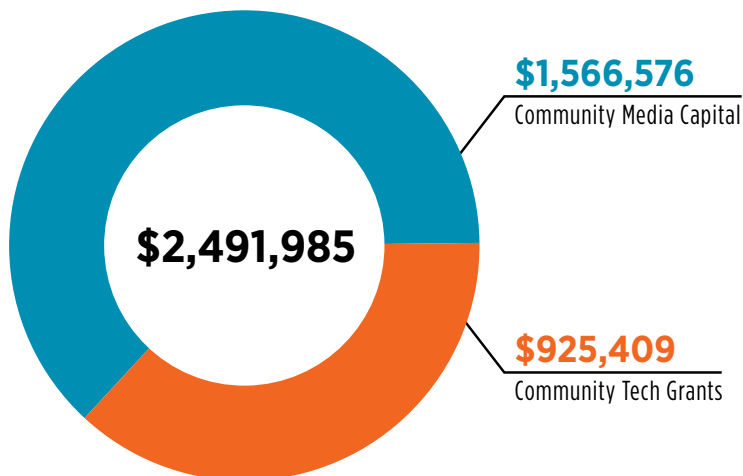


Fiscal Year 2021-22

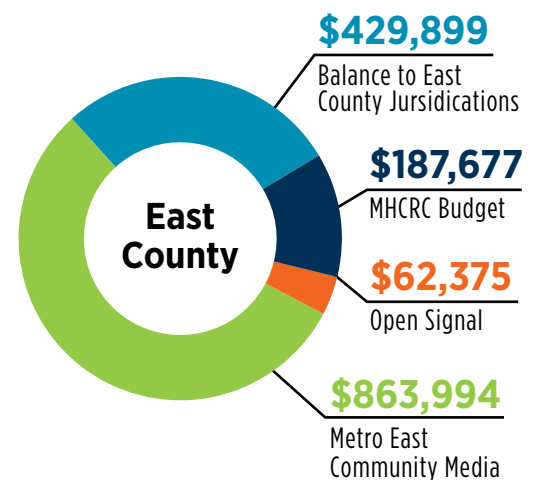
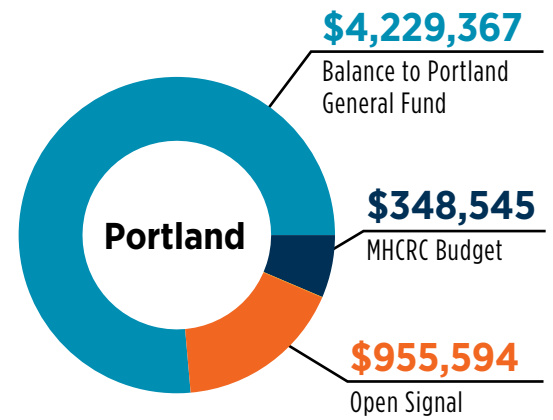
MHCRC Operating Budget

Revenues	Budget	Actual
City of Portland Appropriations	\$348,545	\$348,545
East County Appropriations	\$187,678	\$187,677
FY 19-20 Carryover	\$0	\$0
Capital Compliance Allocation	\$566,411	\$433,868
Interest Revenue Allocation	\$146,797	\$58,380
Total Revenues	\$1,249,431	\$1,028,470
Expenditures	Budget	Actual
Personnel Services	\$694,024	\$591,481
Professional Services	\$292,810	\$91,806
Other External Materials & Services	\$32,709	\$14,056
MHCRC Fund Audit	\$15,000	\$15,000
Internal Materials & Services	\$76,303	\$75,730
General Fund Overhead	\$25,000	\$25,000
Contingency	\$113,585	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$1,249,431	\$813,072
Year-end Balance	\$0	\$215,398

Funding Support for Community Media & Grants (based on PEG Funds)



Franchise Fee Disbursement

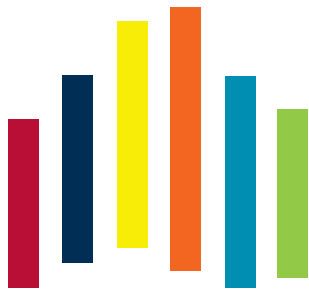


\$4,659,266
Total franchise fee disbursement to member jurisdictions

7.5% of franchise fees spent on MHCRC Operations



Photo Credit: 1 World Chorus



MHCRC

*Serving Multnomah County and the Cities of
Fairview, Gresham, Portland, Troutdale & Wood Village*

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This report produced by MHCRC staff and the City of Portland.



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**Traducción e Interpretación | Biên Dịch và Thông Dịch | अनुवादन तथा व्याख्या | 口笔译服务 |
Устный и письменный перевод | Turjumaad iyo Fasiraad | Письмовий і усний переклад | Traducere și
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