

EDITORIAL INTEGRITY for PUBLIC MEDIA

Principles, Policies, & Practices

Principles of Public Media

A Working Group discussion draft

Preface

These principles define the essential value of Public Media to U.S. society, the unique role they play within the global media environment, and the ways their editorial integrity is assured.

They are intended to provide the case for public and private support of Public Media, challenge Public Media organizations to earn that support, and safeguard the ability of Public Media to serve the public.

The four principles that follow address the *objectives* of Public Media, the range of *means* by which they *achieve* these objectives, their working *methods and practices*, and the needed working *relationships* among their varied constituencies.

While intended to guide the full range of Public Media, the principles are grounded in the traditions of public broadcasting in providing educational, cultural and public service to the citizens of the United States.

Editorial Integrity for Public Media is a joint initiative of the Affinity Group Coalition, the National Educational Telecommunications Association and the Station Resource Group.

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1. Objectives

The objectives of Public Media are to support a strong civil society, enrich cultural knowledge, extend public education and strengthen community life.

We are dedicated to developing and supporting a strong civic, educational and cultural life across the United States, as characterized by:

- Public access to information, resources and opportunities for life-long education, the cultural offerings of the arts, humanities and sciences, and forums and media for the expression of a diversity of voices, experiences and views
- Citizen access to means for expressing concerns, asking questions, providing answer and sharing viewpoints and ideas in ways that are heard and respectfully considered
- Civil discourse and interaction among citizens with varying interests and perspectives leading to greater shared knowledge and understanding of differences, constructive problem-solving and sustained community building
- An informed and engaged public that enables a strong and effective democracy
- Strong local geographic communities and communities of interest across geographic regions built on civic involvement and offering individual opportunity and a high quality of life

Our role in supporting this objective is in providing media capabilities, capacity and content that are:

- Based in the local community
- Inclusive and reflective of the demographic diversity of the full community
- Focused on the common good
- Trusted because of their integrity
- Accessible to all for free or nominal cost.

We exist as a public service in support of this objective as a necessary complement to other individual, commercial and non-commercial media focused on more private, ideological, political or profit-making objectives.

We see these objectives as a continuation and further development of the democratic principles and vital public life on which this country was founded.

2. Means

Public Media work to build strong civic, cultural, educational and community life through a variety of means, media and platforms suited to local communities.

We pursue our objective through a range of means based on community needs, interests and opportunities. These include:

- Engaging every segment of our diverse communities to ascertain real community needs
- Producing original content
- Acquiring, aggregating, curating and exchanging content from diverse sources
- Collaborating with others in the community to create content
- Convening community groups and forums for exchange, dialogue and interaction
- Providing spaces, virtual and real, for individuals to publicly express views and contribute content on subjects of community concern
- Using various forums, technologies and platforms to distribute content, convene groups and develop community
- Developing capacity and capability within the community to create and contribute to multiple forms of media, including facilities, technology and skill development.

Through these means we work to provide the information, knowledge, places, processes and tools that enable citizens to create and participate in a strong civil society and community life.

Through these means we also strive to serve and reflect the diversity of our communities in order to strengthen our work and further our objectives.

We recognize that within these means we are exercising judgment and making decisions on a daily basis as to the selection of content to include and platforms to use. We view these decisions as integral to effectively pursuing our objectives, reflecting our communities and exercising our responsibilities as a public service.

3. Practices

Public Media ensure the integrity of their work through established professional practices, transparency and accountability.

To be effective in achieving our objectives, we rely on a public reputation as widely trusted, reliable and community-grounded content sources and service providers. We build this reputation through practices that ensure the integrity of our work processes and products, including:

- Operating within a system of defined professional values and ethics, stated standards of honesty, accuracy and quality control, and transparent decision making processes.
- Holding others to these same standards as they participate in and contribute to public media work
- Knowing and understanding the diversity within our community and developing approaches to reach and serve that diversity of people
- Formally ascertaining community needs and interests to inform and guide editorial decisions, including ensuring that ascertainment processes are inclusive of the full community and a diversity of voices, experiences and views
- Broadly engaging the community, seeking out informed and experienced parties, and incorporating multiple perspectives
- Providing full transparency as to sources used, funding received, individual and organizational perspective held, and other factors of potential concern to users is assessing trustworthiness
- Providing additional context, background and sources for those seeking more in-depth views
- Taking full responsibility for content broadcast over licensed facilities, as required by FCC regulations.

Through these practices we hold ourselves publicly accountable for the integrity of our content, processes and relationships -- or for clearly stating the limits of such accountability when the content and action of other parties are involved.

Beyond these practices our accountability is also ensured through a multi-layered system of accountability including, as applicable:

- Compliance with the rule and regulations of the legal and regulatory structures under which we operate, including those of the FCC, IRS and state and local governments
- Compliance with the policies, procedures and performance requirements of major funders relating to fiscal responsibility, service levels, public access and related documentation and certification
- Direction and oversight by our community-based governing boards and community advisory boards
- Feedback from our users who personally holds us accountable for the quality, relevance and usefulness of our services through their decisions to make or withhold voluntary contributions.

4. Constituency relationships

Public Media rely on relationships of mutual respect, transparency and accountability with their various constituents.

We work within a network of important constituents and rely on mutually productive relationships with these groups to be effective. While the nature of the working relationships varies with constituent, common themes of respect, transparency and accountability run throughout.

Our principal constituents are users, content partners and providers, other media organizations, funders, governing boards, and legislators and regulators. We rely on each of these to variously:

- Share-in Public Media’s objectives of supporting a strong civil society, enriching cultural knowledge, extending public education and strengthening community life
- Share their own perspectives, experiences and knowledge while observing the standards and practices of public media
- Contribute informed content
- Provide feedback, questions and criticism
- Hold Public Media accountable to these principles
- Be equally transparent and accountable
- Respect and support Public Media’s standards and practices
- Safeguard Public Media’s standards and practices of integrity