



10 February 2026

**To:** Members of Vermont House Appropriations Committee

**From:** Paul Snyder, Executive Director, [www.northwestaccess.tv](http://www.northwestaccess.tv)

**RE:** Community Media FY27 Budget Request

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of community media in Vermont. New this session, Vermont Access Network (VAN) is joining with nine non-profit radio stations in Vermont to request \$1.89 million in base funding as part of the Secretary of State's FY27 General Fund Budget.

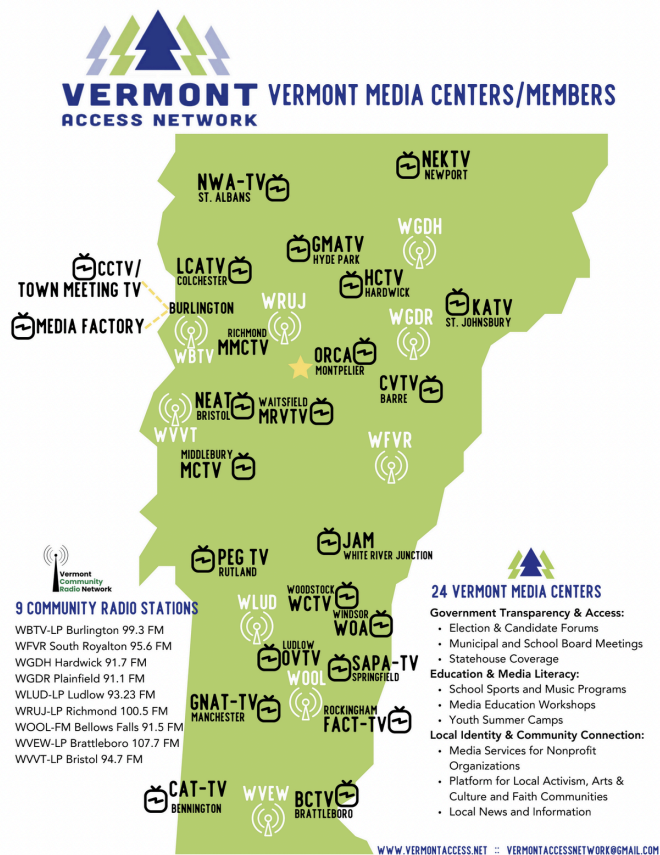
This new partnership was recommended to VAN by members of the Legislature and Secretary of State. While our goal to receive funding together may be new, our mission as community media organizations remains the same.

Community media is a general term that includes Vermont's public, educational, and government (PEG) access management organizations (PEG AMOs) traditionally funded by cable TV subscribers plus community radio stations (non-profit FM) operated over the air, cable and online largely by volunteers (and in some cases operated by PEG organizations).

**Informing + Connecting Vermonters:** The Vermont Legislature recognizes the important role community media plays in informing, educating, and connecting Vermonters. All of you have been involved in community media at your local AMOs or Radio Stations in some capacity. Whether it be through candidate forums during the campaign season or sharing your thoughts on Vermont politics while attending a delicious and community favorite Legislative Breakfast.

With great appreciation we note that the Legislature has awarded grant funding for community media since the COVID-19 health emergency. Thank you.

**Essential Services:** Vermont's 24 community media centers and nine community radio stations deliver a range of essential media services to Vermonters across the state. From live broadcasting and streaming of local news, public meetings and event coverage, to weather reports, live sports, emergency information, these media outlets are part of local emergency response, constantly greasing the wheels of local democracy, and preserving community history. Community media programming and services amplify the arts and culture of the state and teach everyday Vermonters how to be media makers, gaining valuable job and civic skills in the process.



**Covering all Corners of Vermont:** Vermont community media covers 176 cities, towns and villages in the state and 13 counties - covering 94% of the state's population (according to 2020 Census Data). In 2025, we provided 35,000 hours of original, locally made programming. Hundreds of Vermonters are engaged in being media producers of this content, creating real time engagement with their municipalities and neighbors that is uniquely possible through community media.

### Some quick stats:

- 70% of Vermont municipalities have access to live public meetings.
- 24 PEG centers operate 80+ cable channels + dozens of online outlets + a statewide channel (Vermont

Community Television) - up to 15,000 hours a year of local TV.

- Community radio volunteers produce 300 regular shows and vital emergency messaging each year—amounting to 20,000 hours of locally made programming.

Vermont community media is available over the air, on cable and online.

**Case Studies** show the numbers of people involved in media creation and the reach of viewers and listeners. Allow me to get specific to put a name with these numbers.

Central Vermont Community Radio, which includes WGDR/WGDH engaged 115 volunteers who helped produce 135 programs each week, resulting in more than 8,700 hours of live programming listened to by 12,000 broadcast listeners and 17,500 online listeners.

**BCTV, based in Brattleboro**, celebrated 50 years of community service, supported 44 community producers who, with the BCTV staff, produced nearly 1300 programs, watched by more than 250K YouTube viewers.

**CCTV in Chittenden County** covered more than 500 municipal meetings, trained 65 interns and volunteers, and reached 536K online viewers and 500K views of its extensive community archive of 53,000 programs dating back to 1984.

**GNAT, serving parts of Bennington County**, produced 824 local programs and 110 news project segments, trained 140 community members, posted 957 events on their community calendar and had more than 300K online video views.

My organization, **Northwest Access TV, serving Franklin County**, has been serving the sports loving community for more than a decade. In 2025, NWA-TV produced more than 130 live streams (mostly high school sports) watched by more than 160K people with a following of 10.5K social media members.

**Structural Funding Issues:** The Legislative funding we hope to achieve helps address economic and structural issues facing local media access in Vermont. The Governor's FY27 Budget recommends level funding at \$1.35M. This falls \$540,000 short of our original request of \$1.89M. The full request helps to close the gap of declining revenue from cable subscriptions, cost of living increases in expenses and additional operational support for Vermont's community radio stations.

**Challenges Legislative Support Helps Vermonters to Overcome:** Legislative funding helps to address economic and structural issues facing local media access in Vermont:

- Fewer local media options for Vermonters due to local newspapers closing and federal cuts in public media;
- Emergent times requiring us to get word quickly out to our communities on issues ranging from weather to government threats to our neighbors;
- Rapid decline of Cable TV revenue;
- Rising business expenses, including health care, labor and capital costs, and music licensing; and,

- The rise of AI/Artificial Intelligence - generated news and information, making it harder to know what is true and reliable news and information.

This funding we hope to receive is crucial for our media groups to keep Vermonters informed, educated, engaged, entertained, and connected. We fear that as cable revenue and secondary funding sources continue to rapidly dwindle, our communities will suffer to have a source of local media to call their own. We are a group of passionate media loving, democracy devoted, community minded individuals that are fighting to keep community media available for all Vermonters.

**Thank you for your consideration of VAN and Community Radio's \$1.89M FY27 Budget request.**