



Frequently Asked Questions

education

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MINNESOTA CHANNEL?

The MN Channel is a mission-driven, community service initiative of Twin Cities Public Television. Its purpose is to share the power of television with Minnesota’s finest nonprofit organizations, universities, governmental agencies, and other public service organizations - to amplify the impact of these organizations’ missions by helping them reach a broader audience.

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2. WHAT KIND OF PARTNERS WORK WITH THE MINNESOTA CHANNEL?

The MN Channel has co-produced more than 500 programs with more than 185 Minnesota partners, ranging from large organizations, such as the University of Minnesota and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, to very small groups.

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3. WHY WOULD A NONPROFIT OR PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATION WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

Our partners have found the MN Channel to be an innovative and cost-effective way to expand the visibility and awareness of their work in the community. Typical MN Channel programs are seen by 3,000 – 5,000 households over several broadcasts. Our most popular programs have amassed audiences as high as 70,000 households.

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Over 60% of MN Channel partners have returned for multiple projects.

history

4. WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS DOES THE MINNESOTA CHANNEL PRODUCE?

Programs can take many forms, including: speeches and lectures, town hall meetings, debates, concerts and performances, interviews, and documentaries. Likewise, the subject matter of MN Channel programs is wide ranging.

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We are governed by a set of editorial guidelines which prohibit projects that are primarily focused on self-promotion or lobbying, or that include an unbalanced presentation of controversial issues. For example, we would not pursue a partnership with a hospital to discuss the attributes of that hospital (self-promotion.) We *would* pursue a partnership with that hospital if the topic were "new developments in pediatrics" and featured the participation of multiple health care facilities.

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5. WHERE ARE MINNESOTA CHANNEL PROGRAMS SEEN?

The MN Channel is a full-time (24 hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week) statewide digital broadcast channel known as **tptMN**. As of the digital conversion on February 17, 2009, all television households in Minnesota will have access to digital **tptMN** through over-the-air broadcast, cable and satellite. New MN Channel partner programs premiere statewide on digital **tptMN** on Sundays (6pm – 10pm) with an additional broadcast in the Twin Cities region on **tptLIFE** on Sundays (11am – 2pm). The programs will then repeat in multiple time slots every 12 weeks or so. **tptMN** can be seen by nearly 100% of the population of Minnesota.

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In the Twin Cities area **tptMN** is available through over-the-air digital as channel 17-2 until February 17, 2009 and 2-2 thereafter as well as through Comcast and Mediacom cable services. PBS stations across Minnesota carry **tptMN** both over-the-air and through their local cable and satellite systems.

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6. WHO OWNS A MINNESOTA CHANNEL PRODUCTION?

Partners own all rights to the program they co-produce with **tpt**, including the right to sell or otherwise redistribute the program. Twin Cities Public Television gets the (non-exclusive) right to broadcast the program an unlimited number of times over an extended period.

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7. HOW ARE PARTNERS AND THEIR FUNDERS RECOGNIZED IN A MINNESOTA CHANNEL PRODUCTION?

MN Channel partners are recognized as co-producers of the program in the opening and closing credits. This recognition may include a logo and Web address on the screen as well as an announcement of the partner's name. Additional funders, who provided support to the partner or **tpt** for the specific program, may be acknowledged in similar fashion.

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8. HOW DO THESE PARTNERSHIPS GET STARTED?

First, **tpt** staff and the partner meet to better understand each other's goals and capabilities. Then **tpt** prepares a plan and budget that is discussed and modified during a second meeting with operational staff of both organizations. The television program is then produced, edited, evaluated, and scheduled for broadcast (at a time chosen in close cooperation between the partners).

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9. WHAT IS EACH PARTNER EXPECTED TO DO?

Twin Cities Public Television provides production expertise, equipment, staff, broadcast time, promotion support and limited production funding. Partner organizations provide content, subject-matter expertise, and core production funding.

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10. HOW IS "CONTROL" OVER THE PROJECT MANAGED?

In general, *tpt* and the partner reach early consensus on the overall design and focus of the project. In addition to project oversight, *tpt* provides production and broadcast savvy while the partner provides expertise on the show's content. If consensus proves difficult, the project does not move ahead. As in all programs, *tpt* is charged by the FCC with sole responsibility for all final broadcast decisions.

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11. HOW ARE PROGRAM SPEAKERS/HOSTS CHOSEN?

Again, consensus is key. In general we try to avoid using hosts who are closely associated with the partner because that can sometimes appear too self-promotional. A key exception would be when an employee is uniquely qualified to serve in that role.

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12. CAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES BE INVOLVED AS PARTNERS?

Yes, to the extent that *tpt* and governmental agencies share a mission of "citizen information." We have produced several "Citizen Briefing" projects (homeland security, mad cow disease, chronic wasting disease) to communicate directly between government agencies and the people of Minnesota. To assure completeness and fairness, these briefings were accompanied by Q&A's with a neutral group of citizens or journalists selected by *tpt*. We have also produced full documentaries with government agencies, such as *Invaders at Your Doorstep: Exotic Pests of the Midwest*, and *This is My Home*.

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13. DO YOU ACCEPT INDEPENDENT OR OTHER COMMUNITY PRODUCTIONS?

Yes, in certain circumstances. We have accepted a number of independent and community productions where the content is of benefit to groups that are otherwise underserved-by and/or underrepresented-in mainstream media.

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14. DO YOU WORK WITH FOR-PROFIT FIRMS AS WELL?

Yes, in certain circumstances. The project must be for the public benefit and not for the purposes of marketing, lobbying or other self-promotion.

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15. WHAT DOES THIS NORMALLY COST THE PARTNERS?

Each program varies widely depending on the requirements of the partner. The partner's share of straightforward speeches and lectures normally runs around \$6,000 to \$10,000. Studio-based specials normally cost \$8,000 to \$15,000 (less if part of an ongoing series). Short-form documentaries normally cost about \$30,000 to \$40,000 and long-form anywhere from \$35,000 to \$125,000.

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