



Standards and Practices

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Editorial Standards and Practices

Introduction

Twin Cities PBS (TPT) is one of the preeminent PBS affiliate stations in the country, producing and broadcasting public media programming in the Twin Cities and its surrounding areas, as well as creating broadcast programs and digital public media programming for PBS’s national audience. TPT believes that media is profoundly powerful – shaping how people and communities understand themselves and the world in which we live.

TPT’s content educates, entertains, informs, and facilitates conversations on challenging issues facing our communities by providing education, arts, culture, history, and public affairs programming on television, digital media, websites, and through community engagement.

As a public television station, TPT is a licensee of the Federal Communications Commission and, as such, bears a non-delegable duty to assure that its broadcast program services fulfill its statutory obligations. Also, as a community licensee, TPT is directly responsible for the quality and integrity of the broadcast services it provides to the people of the Greater Minneapolis- Saint Paul region, State of Minnesota, and neighboring states.

We fulfill our mission as a public media organization by providing our communities with high quality, trusted programming, and by communicating transparently about our organization’s operations, fundraising, and journalistic ethics. This Editorial Standards and Practices document outlines TPT’s commitment to integrity in all that we do and serves as a resource to both TPT staff and the public.

TPT acknowledges the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS’s) Editorial Standards and Policies which inspires and informs these standards and is used with the permission of PBS as a member station.

TPT’s Commitment

TPT is committed to advancing inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) across all levels of our organization. To do this, we are working to increase our representational diversity, create welcoming and inclusive environments for our staff and communities, ensure our content and programming is accessible, and include the voices and experiences of Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities of color, LGBTQIA+ communities, disabled communities, and other historically marginalized groups in all that we do.

We strive to be a trusted source of information, and we are committed to allocating the time, resources, and effort necessary to create a more equitable future for our organization.

Editorial Integrity Standards

TPT holds itself accountable to a set of rigorous, ethical, editorial standards in order to maintain the highest level of public trust in what we do. These standards apply to everything we do across all platforms, from content creation and selection to fundraising and engaging with community. The following Standards apply to original content that TPT produces and distributes as well as other content that TPT distributes that is produced by others. The content evaluation process requires professional judgments about the value of content in relation to a broad range of informational, aesthetic, technical, and other considerations. Throughout this process, TPT weighs the merits of potential content and assures that the content achieves the best balance among these considerations when viewed in its entirety.

Editorial integrity in public broadcasting programming means the responsible application by professional practitioners of a free and independent decision-making process, which is ultimately accountable to the needs and interests of all citizens.

TPT is committed to:

A. Editorial Independence

Editorial independence is essential to serving the public interest and preserving the public's trust. TPT will not be influenced by third-party funders, political interests, and other outside forces. TPT shields the creative and editorial processes from political pressure or improper influence from funders or other sources by ensuring that appropriate walls are in place between sponsorship/revenue and the editorial teams and maintaining editorial boundaries with our funders.

Additionally, we clearly and consistently identify all sponsors and funders. Video funding credits that are longer than 15 seconds include an early visual identification displaying a logo or text with the funder's name at the bottom of the screen.

B. Fairness

Fairness to the audience implies several responsibilities: TPT's content neither oversimplifies complex situations nor camouflages straightforward facts. In addition, TPT's content does not treat people unfairly or misrepresent their views, or contain unfair or misleading presentation of facts, including inaccurate statements of material fact, undocumented statements of fact that appear questionable on their face, misleading juxtapositions, misrepresentations or distortions.

C. Accuracy

The honesty and integrity of informational content depends heavily upon its factual accuracy. TPT ensures that content is presented accurately and in context by exercising extreme care in verifying the accuracy of information and content in its productions. TPT's commitment to accuracy includes a willingness to correct the record if persuasive new information warrants a correction and respond to audiences' feedback and questions.

D. Objectivity

Objectivity encompasses more than the neutral presentation of news and information. Objectivity also refers to the process by which a work is produced, including work that involves analysis or, as a result of reporting, arrives at conclusions. When controversy is anticipated, TPT

helps audiences understand editorial decisions, particularly regarding anonymous information sources. In the spirit of transparency, TPT explains the derivation of a point of view. One aspiration implicit in the idea of transparency is that an audience might appreciate and learn from content with which it also might disagree.

E. Balance

TPT presents, over time, content that addresses a broad range of subjects from various viewpoints. TPT considers the extent to which the content contributes to balance overall and the extent to which specific content is fairly presented in light of available evidence. For online content, links to credible, high-quality, related resources may be used to provide access to additional information or viewpoints.

F. Transparency

TPT creates and selects programming based on our mission. TPT seeks the highest quality content that is available for its services, requiring professional judgments about many different aspects of content quality. Criteria include, but are not limited to, deep knowledge, research and scholarship, excellence, creativity, artistry, accuracy, balance, fairness, timeliness, innovation, boldness, thoroughness, credibility, and the content's ability to stimulate, enlighten, educate, inform, challenge, and entertain. TPT also selects a range of programming that reflects our communities' diversity.

Transparency also guides in how content is produced in that it allows the audience the ability to evaluate the credibility of the work and determine for themselves whether it is trustworthy.

As stated under paragraph A, transparency also requires that we disclose to the audience all sources of funding for the production and distribution of content by clearly identifying sources.

G. Inclusiveness

TPT contributes to informed debate by presenting content that includes a broad range of ideas, information, and perspectives. Inclusive content reflects the views and experiences of people from diverse identities, including but not limited to Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities of color, LGBTQIA+ communities, disabled communities, and other historically marginalized groups in all that we do. TPT's content also amplifies the perspectives of people of all ages, geographic location, race, ethnicity, age, religion, political viewpoint, and income level. TPT hires and retains a diverse production staff both in front of and behind the camera and must include a diverse range of voices and perspectives to ensure our content is inclusive, accurate, complete, and reflects a broad range of identities, viewpoints, and experiences.

H. Accountability

TPT remains accountable to the audience. Accountability requires TPT to stand by its work, adhere to the highest professional standards of conduct, and diligently pursue and report the truth. Conflicts of interest are avoided, and any real or perceived conflicts that could have the appearance of influencing content are required to be disclosed to TPT.

I. Responsiveness to Public

TPT welcomes community comments via the Viewer Services contact page on tpt.org. TPT responds to relevant audience questions, feedback, and criticisms about programs and content.

Social media is emerging as an essential expression of the marketplace of ideas and is a powerful venue by which citizens interact and educate themselves. Therefore, TPT also welcomes community feedback on social media and participates in active and thoughtful digital engagement with the audience in that space. TPT uses commenting standards on social media to set the tone for conversation that isn't hostile and responds quickly and thoughtfully to comments across all platforms. TPT has zero-tolerance for hate speech and reserves the right to remove offensive, obscene, and derogatory comments from its social media platforms.

J. Courage and Controversy

TPT provides content that features courageous and responsible treatment of issues and honest reporting of social, political, and economic tensions, disagreements, and divisions. The surest road to intellectual stagnation and social isolation is to stifle the expression of uncommon ideas. The ultimate task of weighing and judging information and viewpoints is, in a free and open society, the task of the audience. Therefore, TPT assures that its overall content offerings contain a broad range of opinions and points of view.

K. Experimentation and Innovation

TPT provides content that is innovative in format, technique, or substance. The absence of commercial considerations accords TPT the freedom to experiment in ways not always tolerable in the commercial environment. Though standards of quality, substance, and public service always prevail, the innovation potential can be fully realized only if TPT is bold enough to take occasional risks.

L. Exploration of Significant Subjects

Unlike commercial counterparts, TPT does not sell time for profit and is, therefore, free from the constraints that compel commercial broadcasters to pursue the largest audience. TPT provides programming that explores significant subjects, even if those subjects or their treatment may not be expected to appeal to a large audience.

M. Unprofessional Conduct

TPT producers, contributors and collaborators (internal and external) adhere to the highest professional standards. TPT may reject content if TPT believes that a producer, contributor, or collaborator has violated basic professional conduct standards including: sexual harassment, plagiarism, fabrication, obtaining information by bribery or coercion, insensitivity to tragedy or grief, and real or perceived conflicts of interest such as accepting gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence the product.

N. Objectionable Material

Responsible treatment of important issues may sometimes require the inclusion of controversial or sensitive material, but good taste prevails in TPT's content. Morbid or sensational details, or material that is gratuitously offensive to general taste or manners (e.g., extreme violence, racial epithets, strong language, nudity, sexism), are not included unless it is necessary to an understanding of the matter at hand. Questions of taste are not answered in the abstract, but when specific problems arise, they are resolved in light of contemporary standards of taste, the

state of the law, and the newsworthiness and overall value of the material. If TPT concludes that the exclusion of such material would distort an important reality or impair the content's artistic quality, TPT may accept the content, provided it carries appropriate notice to the viewer. TPT's decision-making regarding objectionable material is also guided by FCC and other broadcast standards.

TPT Advisors

TPT seeks input on and is held accountable to its commitments to the integrity standards and practices listed above from a variety of advisors, boards, and others.

TPT welcomes community feedback via the contact form listed on the web page below:

<https://www.tpt.org/about/contact/>