

**FCC OPEN COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Industry and Community Organizations Reports**  
**on February 17, 2009 Transition and Future Plans**

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Thank you for the opportunity to present our work on the DTV Transition, what happened on February 17 and future plans. Allow me to begin with a bit of background.

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund has been working to inform Americans about the transition to digital television for over a year. We were a cofounder of the DTV Transition Steering Committee and developed close working relations with the NAB, APTS, as well as NTIA, and others such as AARP. For much of 2008 we conducted a national campaign enlisting many of the Leadership Conference member organizations including the National Council of La Raza, the National Urban League, the Association of People with Disabilities, the Southeast Asian Action Resource Center, the NAACP and others at conferences and through media outreach, including our website.

This national work continues.

As a result of an award from NTIA in late November we have been on the ground in seven markets: Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Portland, the San Francisco Bay Area, San Antonio, and Seattle/Tacoma.

We have hired one local coordinator for each of these markets. Our field department, especially Erica Swanson, Sonal Patel, and Whitney Gusby, is working with these local coordinators and dozens of local groups in all our communities, both through the 17 DTV ASSISTANCE CENTERS (about 2-3 in each market) and other partners on the ground (both paid and volunteer). Our DTV Assistance Centers and other partners help roughly 100 walk-ins and telephone callers every day. Much of our work in December and January involved training people. We have trained our local community based partners to help them provide a variety of services, from completing NTIA DTV coupon applications, to helping people donate and receive coupons, to assisting people identify and locate the converter box best for them, to answering questions about digital TV reception, to helping in their homes set up their converter box. And yes they track all of their work and make formal reports on a monthly basis.

Our materials include original LCCREF documents, as well as documents from NTIA, the FCC, the NAB, the Consumer Electronic Retailers Coalition, Consumers Union and others. We have also received generous donations of converter boxes from LG Electronics and have distributed those along with antennae we purchased for all our local partners.

We are also working with local and national mainstream commercial and public service media, and have strong relations with ethnic media through New America Media. Our local media partners are not just reporters, they have been actively engaged in our planning and our meetings to help us understand how best to proceed with each of the

communities we are trying to reach. They help us with tactics, cultural sensitivity and language. We have provided radio public service announcements and editorials in several languages. Our media work has generated a considerable amount of attention and created more for our local partners, attracting not only our target audiences of the poor, minorities, people with disabilities and senior citizens, but also attracting the larger general population.

Much of our work on the ground involves organizations that do not generally work on media issues, some of these groups have been overwhelmed by the response. Local organizations have been very pleased to meet with representatives from both NTIA and the FCC, and many of them have stronger ties now to their local commercial and public television stations because of this work. We are assured on a daily basis that we are making a positive difference in peoples lives.

Annie Chung of Self Help for the Elderly in San Francisco tells the story very well.

PLAY <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpiSyxM6Kv0>

Some of the local groups, like Annie's at Self Help for the Elderly, were already working on the DTV transition, most were not. We developed both national, and with our local partners, extensive unique local work plans geared toward a transition on February 17. A good deal of our time in January and early February was spent on answering questions about the government running out of money, the proposed delay, the defeated delay, the delay that passed but didn't quite mean that all the stations would delay.

All of our assistance centers were inundated with calls on February 17 and the two days that followed. Many of the calls were about reception problems, but for the most part they reflected a general confusion about the transition. The calls petered out after those first few days, but the confusion still continues.

We are now providing daily news updates to some 70 people working on our front lines. We cull news articles and reports that we get from our contacts here at the FCC, at NTIA, the White House, the Hill, and the DTV Transition Coalition. But we also provide a central hub for all of our different partners to learn and share with each other. These local community organizations are the ones who are hearing directly from community members the frustrations and challenges they're facing, and they're the ones in the best position to adapt the appropriate tools to get people the help they need.

A word or two about the FCC map. Our local organizations are using the online map. Identifying potential signal strength via zip code is helpful. We have also found DTV reception to be inconsistent not only within the same zip code, but within the same apartment building. Our local partners have been careful to say they can provide general guidance but cannot predict what channels a viewer should get based on the FCC data.

Our work as trainers, explainers, coordinators and grantors is all of one piece. There has been talk of providing grants of \$5000 to support local work. While local community groups need all the help they can get, you should know that our grants range between \$10,000 and \$20,000. These grant amounts were based on fairly comprehensive work

plans covering roughly four months of work. And all of our assistance centers tell us that they vastly underestimated the amount of staff time this effort would take. In other words, they need more money than we have been able to provide. We believe that a key to our work has been to locate trusted partners in each of these communities, but we also hear from them that our role as a hub, as on-going trainer, explainer, coordinator and grant manager is vital.

Our award from NTIA ends on May 1. While we were looking forward to winding this work down this month, and focusing in April on evaluating and reporting our activities – we are now revising our plans through this grant period, and making plans to continue work both nationally and in the seven communities we have engaged in through the new transition deadline of June 12.

We believe the work of identifying marginalized communities before the transition is vital, but we have also long called for a rapid response plan to identify and serve those households which, for one reason or another, fell through the cracks. We believe this work will continue in the weeks past mid-June. But as of today, we are all up in the air as to whether we will be funded and as to whether we will be able to continue to play our role as a vital hub and continue to fund our partners.

We believe free over the air television service is a vital lifeline for all Americans. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our work. I look forward to your questions.