

## **PBS North Carolina Editorial Integrity Guidelines**

The North Carolina General Assembly directed the University of North Carolina Board of Governors (BOG) to establish the University of North Carolina Center for Public Television (PBS North Carolina) (N.C.G.S § 116-37.1[a]). The stated functions of PBS North Carolina are to provide research, development, and production of noncommercial media programming and program materials; to provide distribution of noncommercial media programming through broadcast facilities licensed to the University of North Carolina (UNC); and otherwise to enhance the uses of media for public purposes.

Our purposes are to support a strong civil society, increase cultural access and knowledge, extend public education, and strengthen community life through electronic and digital media and related community activities. Further, our purpose is to extend the educational reach of the larger University. The public's trust in our organization, content, services, and relationships is fundamental to achieving these purposes.

Our mission is to connect North Carolinians with each other, the world, and endless possibility; to create and share our stories of place, progress, and pride; and to provide quality content and services of consequence for our audiences.

We strive to earn the public's trust through the quality and excellence of our work, the inclusion and reflection of the diversity of our communities, and a commitment to defined professional standards and practices as articulated herein.

We take specific steps to ascertain and understand community needs, issues, and interests; to assure respect and civility in our forums and discussions; to practice impartiality and objectivity in our coverage of complex and controversial matters; and to be accessible, accountable, and transparent to those who use our services and the community as a whole.

The standards set forth in this document apply to all of the content we produce and present, regardless of subject matter, including public affairs, science, history, information, cultural, and most importantly, children's content. They apply across all of the channels and platforms we use—broadcasting, online, social media, print, future technology, and community events.

### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

We govern our activities in ways that reflect our commitment to integrity and trustworthiness. These obligations supersede personal and institutional agendas.

### **IDEAS, CULTURE, AND FORUMS WITH RESPECT AND CIVILITY**

We contribute to the civic, educational, and cultural life of our communities, including the larger UNC community and our audiences, by presenting a range of ideas and cultures and offering a robust forum for discussion and debate.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING THAT REPORTS EVENTS AND ISSUES WITH ACCURACY AND INTEGRITY

We pursue facts about events and issues in our communities and other important matters that affect people's lives with accuracy and integrity.

## INCLUSION AND REFLECTION OF OUR COMMUNITIES' DIVERSITY

The integrity of our work is strengthened by incorporating the diversity of demography, culture, and beliefs in our communities, our state, and the nation into our work and our content.

## TRANSPARENCY IN PROGRAM SELECTION AND CONTENT CREATION

We share with our audiences and the public the mission-based and practical reasons for our content choices. We seek to be transparent in how we gather, create, and distribute content. We protect intellectual property rights and are generous with attribution.

## TRANSPARENCY IN FUNDRAISING

We aim for respectful relationships with our donors and clear understanding among donors and others about our fundraising operations. We exercise care in seeking and accepting funds, setting careful boundaries between contributors and content creators. We acknowledge the sponsors of our programming and disclose the terms on which we obtain such support. We comply with all FCC, CPB, and PBS regulations and guidelines governing fundraising. We make best efforts to hold the producers of acquired content to the same standards.

## PREVENTING UNDUE INFLUENCE

We assure that our editorial process is free from undue influence. We take care in deciding from whom we seek and accept funds and in setting boundaries with respect to those who contribute.

## CONSISTENT EDITORIAL STANDARDS IN PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

We bring our standards into editorial partnerships and collaborations through which we expand our capacity to serve, add to the perspectives we share with our audiences, and enhance the timeliness and relevance of our work. We retain final editorial control for all of our coproduction partnerships distributed by PBS North Carolina.

## EMPLOYEE ACTIVITIES BEYOND THEIR PUBLIC MEDIA WORK

We expect our employees to operate openly, with full accountability to the public. The actions of our employees, even when "off the clock," affect public trust in our integrity, credibility, and impartiality. We expect employees to uphold our integrity in their personal as well as their professional lives.

## ETHICAL CONTENT CREATION

Public media managers, producers, editors, and other content creators have many ethical standards essential and unique to our profession. Ethical decision-making should occur at every step of the content creation process, including story selection, newsgathering, editing, production, presentation, and distribution. Practitioners of ethical content creation seek diverse and even opposing opinions in order to reach better conclusions that can be clearly explained and effectively defended or, when appropriate, revisited and revised.

PBS North Carolina content creators:

- Strive for truth and accuracy above all.
- Verify facts, provide relevant context, tell the whole story, and acknowledge the absence of important additional information.
- Shall not use deception in newsgathering, including surreptitious recording.
- Challenge assumptions, reject stereotypes, and illuminate—even where it cannot eliminate ignorance.
- Resist false dichotomies—either/or, always/never, black/white thinking—and consider a range of alternatives between the extremes.
- Shall not make commercial endorsements of any kind.
- Refrain from political activity and active advocacy that can undercut the real or perceived independence of our content creation. Content creators do not give up the rights of citizenship, but our public exercise of those rights can call into question our impartiality, which can then detract from our value as a PBS North Carolina employee. Any exercise of or restraint of political activities shall be consistent with UNC Policy 300.5 relating to the political activities of employees.
- Seek editorial partnerships and collaborations to enhance capacity, perspective, timeliness, diversity, and relevance, and apply the standards set out in this document to these arrangements.
- Demand the highest editorial standards of fairness and accuracy in all public affairs and information programming.
- Share the opinions of our audiences and encourage all citizens to express their views about programming to the boards, UNC president, and staff.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND BOARDS

### Responsibilities of the UNC Board of Governors

The broadcast licenses and facilities, licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to UNC, are held in trust by the BOG. PBS North Carolina's relationship as an affiliate of UNC General Administration (GA) makes the BOG PBS North Carolina's governing board. As such, PBS North Carolina is subject to all BOG and GA policies, regulations, and guidelines. Because UNC is a public university, PBS North Carolina is also subject to most state statutory and regulatory requirements including, but not limited to, personnel, procurement, public records, open meetings, real estate transactions, and travel policies, among others.

## Responsibilities of the PBS North Carolina Board of Trustees

Because PBS North Carolina is a public university licensee, the Communications Act's requirement that a Community Advisory Board (CAB) be established does not apply. However, N.C.G.S. § 116-37.1(b) directed the BOG to establish a Board of Trustees (BOT) and to delegate to the BOT such powers and duties as the BOG deems necessary or appropriate for the effective discharge of the function of PBS North Carolina; provided, that the BOG shall not have the authority to delegate any responsibility it may have as licensee of the broadcast facilities of UNC. In establishing the BOT (UNC Policy 1200.1), the BOG delegated the following duties and responsibilities to the BOT:

- a. To review, on a continuing basis, the status of public television in North Carolina;
- b. To advise the president and Board of Governors with respect to whether the programming and other activities of PBS North Carolina are meeting the special educational and cultural needs of the state;
- c. To recommend to the president ways through which public television can improve and expand its service to potential viewers;
- d. To assist, as needed, in the raising of non-state funds for the support of the activities of PBS North Carolina;
- e. To give advice to the president on the structure and organization of PBS North Carolina;
- f. To help define, on a continuing basis, the program goals of PBS North Carolina;
- g. To advise on program standards for PBS North Carolina;
- h. To help coordinate the efforts of volunteers and community interest groups who are concerned with public television;
- i. To advise on and assist with the public relations of PBS North Carolina;
- j. To assist, on request of the president and with the president's leadership, in the development and maintenance of good relations between PBS North Carolina and appropriate state and federal agencies; and
- k. To advise and assist in the development and maintenance of long-range plans for PBS North Carolina.

These duties and responsibilities mirror many of the duties and responsibilities of CABs and effectively establish the BOT as a voluntary CAB.

## Accountability for Consequences

PBS North Carolina accepts full responsibility for our content, articulates our reasons, and opens our processes to public scrutiny.

Our obligation is to pursue truth and share it with the public. Avoiding tough or sensitive content can be a disservice to the public.

All PBS North Carolina staff and volunteers are held to the standards articulated in this document.

*Inspired by the codes of ethics created in 2015 by Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) and by Public Media Code of Editorial Integrity, created by Editorial Integrity for Public Media, a joint initiative of the public broadcasting Affinity Group Coalition and the Station Resource Group.*