

<b>AGENCY NAME:</b>	<b>South Carolina Educational Television Commission</b>		
<b>AGENCY CODE:</b>	<b>H670</b>	<b>SECTION:</b>	<b>008</b>

## AGENCY'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### **Agency overview**

SCETV and Public Radio amplify South Carolina voices, provide educational experiences, and strengthen communities. The network is well-known and respected in South Carolina and nationally for locally-driven content, quality educational services, and support of transparency among state government entities.

The origins of SCETV and Public Radio trace back to 1957 when the South Carolina General Assembly passed a concurrent resolution calling for a study of the use of television in public schools. Starting as a small pilot project at a Columbia high school, SCETV and Public Radio now operate a statewide network of 11 non-commercial and educational television stations and eight radio stations housed at the headquarters in Columbia and at regional studios in Beaufort, Sumter, Spartanburg, and Rock Hill.

The SCETV Commission governs the work of the network and must comply with state and federal regulations and requirements. Through the relationship with the ETV Endowment of South Carolina, SCETV and Public Radio engage with audiences and donors around programming to generate financial support.

SCETV is both a public media organization and a state agency with a legislative mandate. That means the agency has the responsibility to tell stories that connect people, while also supporting transparency in government, advancing education, and serving as a trusted voice in times of emergency. To meet the mission set out for SCETV and Public Radio, the agency must be solvent, resilient and relevant.

#### **Fiscal stability**

When discussions began in January 2025 in Washington about the possibility of cuts to federal funding for public media, the team at SCETV and Public Radio had already started preparing. Thanks to consistent support from the South Carolina General Assembly, the members of the ETV Endowment, and a diverse mix of other revenue sources, SCETV has a solid foundation and the flexibility to adapt. As federal funding challenges continue on the national level, the leadership at SCETV and Public Radio are making real-time, data-driven adjustments to remain financially strong and well-positioned to continue serving South Carolinians with minimal interruption.

Over the course of the year, the agency leadership worked on a state budget re-alignment that resulted in an increase in department level accountability for budgeting and increased automation for many financial and Human Resources functions. A state budget proviso prompted an in-depth evaluation of funding sources for FTE positions resulting in a plan to request a move of the remaining 75 FTEs in other funds back to state funding in 25-26. These positions were left in "other funds" following a move in 2022 to return SCETV funding to its own budget section after being moved to EIA funds in 2011.

#### **New approaches to mission alignment through increased internal collaboration and data driven decisions**

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When SCETV’s president arrived on the job in August of 2023, the agency was functioning in a relatively traditional siloed work environment. While this type of org chart and management approach had worked well in the past, the rapidly changing media landscape coupled with lightning-fast technology advances, shifting funding sources and new approaches to education in the state, the agency’s focus has moved to a leadership approach of mission alignment through internal collaboration supported by data to ensure measurable decision-making at every level.

An example of this new internal collaboration is the new content strategy shared by SCETV and Public Radio that shines a light on local stories, expands educational reach, and builds deeper relationships in communities across the state. These efforts support the fact that SCETV and Public Radio are not just a broadcaster, but a trusted partner for South Carolina.

In FY24-25, SCETV and Public Radio made strategic changes to expand local programming focused on increasing government transparency and expanding local news and public affairs. Hiring decisions in the news and public affairs area reflected these priorities that were driven by research and data that indicated South Carolinians count on SCETV and Public Radio as a trusted source of news and information about their communities and wanted more programming to meet those needs.

In addition, funding from the General Assembly in FY24-25, SCETV made a major step possible around government transparency with additional equipment and staffing for Blatt and Gressette meeting rooms to further expand the public’s access to legislative proceedings.

In FY24-25, SCETV doubled down on its focus on data-driven decision-making by hiring a dedicated research analyst who has worked with every agency department and program to identify realistic accountabilities and long-term metrics that guide the agency’s priorities for budget and programs. This approach becomes even more important as the agency looks to the future to strengthen and expand its role to ensure transparency in government, support new education services, and serve as a trusted voice in times of emergency by building on a legacy while adapting to the needs of today’s audiences.

In FY24 – 25, SCETV and Public Radio also updated its organizational structure as part of realigning its budget and re-evaluating its FTE funding sources to better support the goal of collaboration among departments, programmatic areas, and job functions.

## **Newly aligned programmatic areas**

The newly aligned programmatic areas are outlined below with highlights as examples to illustrate the year’s many successes:

### **Education/Content**

In the past, the Education and Content areas have functioned in silos without day-to-day collaboration to ensure maximum intersections of all content produced. In FY24-25, both of these areas are reporting to the agency’s deputy director who is laser focused on ensuring all content is produced and formatted for the widest possible audiences in the most cost effective ways.

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These two areas are now in lockstep to ensure all content – whether it is audio or video, for news or classrooms, for TV broadcast or community engagement – gets maximum exposure across all platforms. Data dashboards are now in place to measure engagement, reach and results.

Examples of internal education/content collaborations include the following:

**Expanded news, public affairs and transparency** - SCETV and Public Radio made strategic changes to expand local programming focused on increasing government transparency and expanding local news and public affairs. This success was the result of collaboration across all programmatic areas. Hiring decisions due to this expanded service reflected agency priorities that were driven by research and data that indicated South Carolinians count on SCETV and Public Radio as a trusted source of news and information about their communities and wanted more programming to meet those needs.

**Launch of the new MediaScope studio located in the ETV headquarters building in Columbia** - This studio is a hands-on interactive learning space for South Carolina students to explore the world of television and digital production. The studio features a large screen, podcast suite, production equipment, greenscreen, and so much more. This intersection of media and education is a prime example of how SCETV’s mission alignment between content and education is making a difference for South Carolina students and teachers. This space also illustrates a financial partnership as the space was funded in partnership with the K-12 Technology initiative funded by the General Assembly.

**Never Forgotten: The Emanuel Nine** - In honor of the 10th anniversary of the tragic shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SCETV and Public Radio led a comprehensive, multimedia initiative branded as *Never Forgotten: The Emanuel Nine*. Through stories, education, community events and media programming, the initiative aims to ensure the victims are remembered, the impact is recognized, and community healing continues. Components include the following:

- A television special on June 19
- A community storytelling initiative, *Voices Collected*, to preserve the voices and memories connected to the Emanuel Nine and place emphasis on healing, legacy, and impact. SCETV invited South Carolinians and others around the country to share reflections and memories online or in-person at scheduled events.
- News reports and features through programs like *This Week in South Carolina* and the *South Carolina Lede* honored the lives lost and explored the continued work of justice and reconciliation.

## **Outreach/engagement**

Keeping a pulse on what audiences want and identifying ways to reach them where they are in their communities has been a priority this year. Working closely with the Content and Education Teams, the Outreach and Engagement teams are using multiple platforms including strategic social media, digital storytelling, community events, and partnerships to ensure SCETV and Public Radio services are reaching every South Carolinian in their own communities.

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Examples of outreach/engagement activities include the following:

**Newly re-activated Community Advisory Council** - The Council is a group of community leaders, multidisciplinary experts, and interested citizens who support the ETV Commission and staff in carrying out the mission of South Carolina ETV and Public Radio. SCETV’s enabling legislation requires the establishment of advisory councils. The council of 23 members meets quarterly to provide valuable insight and direction across business sectors from all over South Carolina.

**Ken Burns educational and outreach visit** - In May, PBS documentarian Ken Burns visited Charleston ahead of the debut of his much-anticipated documentary about the Revolutionary War. SCETV partnered with SC 250, the College of Charleston and the ETV Endowment to host Burns for a day of engagement with local middle and high school students before a public event that included a Burns presentation at the College of Charleston followed by an interactive discussion that was later used for public programming and educational content.

**Be My Neighbor Day** - SCETV hosted its second Be My Neighbor Day on March 15 at the SC Children’s Theater in Greenville, SC and engaged more than 325 members of early learning families. Performing partners included Greenville County Library System, SC Department of Natural Resources, SC Children’s Theater, Goldfish Swim School, and the Family Drum Circle. In addition to live performances and engagement, attendees participated in a community care project, coordinated in collaboration with United Way of Greenville. Via the project, more than 50 families who had been re-housed after experiencing homelessness received Welcome Home kits, consisting of hygiene items, household items, school supplies, children’s books, educational toys, and a note of encouragement.

### **Engineering/IT/Facilities**

These three areas support all agency functions and are now intentionally integrated into every content or education project that is created. These areas provide infrastructure and technology support to ensure the efficient functioning and safety of staff and visitors.

This progress toward collaboration and agency-wide integrations demonstrates how closely interconnected departments are in advancing the mission. For example, Engineering’s efforts to acquire, install, and modernize technology directly support content creation teams, ensuring that programming reflects the voices and stories of South Carolina. Aligning infrastructure upgrades with production needs strengthens collaboration across regions and creates a unified pathway to deliver high-quality, statewide content.

In FY24-25, the facilities team completed the second of three phases of replacing the aging network HVAC system. This was possible due to a commitment by the General Assembly to fund this project over three fiscal years.

Thanks to one-time state funding, updates to the network’s regional stations are underway. The Engineering team continued to move ahead with plans to relocate the Sumter station to a new facility

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in downtown Sumter thanks to a state appropriation, a partnership with USC-Sumter and land arrangement with the City of Sumter. Working with the state engineer, the Joint Bond Review Committee and other state agencies, the approval process continues to move this project to reality.

The ETV Lowcountry (Beaufort) update is complete. ETV Carolinas (Rock Hill) installation has begun. Once ETV Upstate (Spartanburg) construction work is completed, equipment will be installed.

### **Admin (IT/Finance)**

Budget re-alignment and FTE re-evaluation were at the heart of a new approach to fiscal solvency in FY24-25. Over the course of the year, SCETV and Public Radio closely re-evaluated its budget structure and took on a major budget re-alignment to better reflect the realities of the agency’s services to South Carolina.

In addition to this re-alignment of state funds, the agency also re-evaluated its approach to on-air fundraising. Entrepreneurial revenue increased by 5 percent year-over-year, offsetting state appropriations and diversifying the agency’s financial base. The agency implemented new budget tracking tools and reporting practices, ensuring clearer alignment between appropriated funds and outcomes.

Savings from re-alignment will be redirected to mission-critical areas such as emergency alerting partnerships, statewide content expansion, and digital innovation. New approaches to on-air fundraising were piloted that emphasized community engagement and digital giving, resulting in an increase in first-time donors and more sustainable revenue models.

## **Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies**

SCETV’s greatest risks that could impact the public are primarily related to technology failure – both physical plant failure and cyber risks. While the agency has multiple back-up plans in place to continue service if a technology failure occurs, the potential loss of transmission capacity due to a technology failure could impact public safety during an emergency. Over the past five years, SCETV’s legislative budget request has included priority items that will allow the agency to upgrade old and failing equipment and increase both physical and cyber security at all sites.

Another significant risk facing SCETV is the potential reduction or loss of state funding, which currently plays a crucial role in sustaining its operations. If those appropriations decline or fail to materialize, the network could face interruptions in services, hindering its ability to deliver educational programming, emergency communications, and public media across the state.

## **Conclusion**

Based on performance measures, SCETV has met and exceeded the agency’s goals.

SCETV and Public Radio are a valued and trusted resource in the state of South Carolina. The network looks forward to continued service to South Carolina to support the state in education, emergency

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communications, public safety, and civic leadership. SCETV and Public Radio are recognized as a center of distinction for the region and the nation, providing crucial information and education to the communities it serves.

Descriptions of SCETV and Public Radio’s specific content accomplishments in FY24-25 are available in the agency’s Local Content Report available at the QR code below:

