Preamble

PBS SoCal’s purposes are to support a strong civil society, increase cultural access and knowledge, extend public education, and strengthen community life through electronic media and related community activities. The public’s trust in our organization, content, services, and relationships is fundamental to achieving these purposes.

We 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.

We take specific steps to ascertain and understand community needs, issues, and interests; to assure respect and civility in our forums and discussions and 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.

Our standards apply to all the content we produce and present, regardless of subject matter, including news, science, history, information and cultural content. They apply across all the channels and platforms we use – broadcasting, online, social media, print, and in-person events.

Governance and Management for the Common Good
We govern our activities in ways that promote the common good and the public interest and 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 by presenting a range of ideas and cultures and offering a robust forum for discussion and debate.

Journalism 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 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 program choices. We seek to be transparent in how we gather and report news and create other content.

Transparency in Fundraising
We aim for respectful relationships with our donors and clear understanding among donors and others about our fundraising operations. We acknowledge the sponsors of our programming and disclose the terms on which we obtain such support.
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.

Employee Activities Beyond Their Public Media Work
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.

Policy

1. Background
PBS SoCal is a nonprofit corporation serving Southern California as a primary source of content for lifelong education, cultural offerings of the arts, humanities and sciences, and news and information. PBS SoCal is distributed through television, as well as through digital and social media. To maintain the integrity of its noncommercial educational license and the trust of its viewers, donors and community, PBS SoCal must operate its station in conformance with all applicable laws, including rules issued by the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”), and in a manner that reinforces the trust that the public places in PBS SoCal. PBS SoCal's Board of Trustees, Management, and the Community Advisory Boards all play important, separate and distinct roles in ensuring both compliance with applicable rules and in formulating, implementing or evaluating PBS SoCal’s programming policies.

2. Policy Purpose
PBS SoCal Management faces an array of editorial decisions. These include deciding which programs are broadcast on television, which issues to cover in digital media (including television), and when and how all such content will be made available. As PBS SoCal’s role as a trusted source of news, information, education and culture has become more prominent, its focus on original journalism has increased, and the frequency and character of editorial decisions have changed. Often, the decision of how to cover and distribute a story must be made on a moment’s notice.
PBS SoCal recognizes that it must exercise diligence and discipline in order to maintain its reputation as a trusted source of news, information, educational material, cultural and entertainment offerings (“Programming”). For purposes of this policy, “programming” refers also to content created or distributed by PBS SoCal for promotional or engagement purposes.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that PBS SoCal:
- adheres to the highest professional standards,
- complies with its mission statement,
- has the ability to maintain its independence and creative freedom with regard to creating and disseminating content, and
- is not faced with undue influence from either internal or external sources.

3. Undue Influence
For purposes of this policy, “undue influence” shall mean intentionally coercive behavior undertaken by any source – including but not limited to governmental agencies, private corporations, funders, audience members, news or content sources, powerful individuals, or special interest groups – that seeks to influence or interfere with the accurate, impartial, professional creation of content for news coverage or programming.

(This policy is not intended to diminish or prevent internal editing or quality control practices designed to ensure the maintenance of professional journalistic and/or program production standards.)

4. Editorial Quality
   a) Programming should be consistent with PBS SoCal’s mission statement – to interactively educate and enlighten our community.
   b) Programming should be of a high professional quality and, in its totality, represent a well-balanced diversity of views.
   c) Programming should be credible, accurate, fair, valuable, stimulating and relevant to PBS SoCal’s audience.
   d) Programming decisions should be made in compliance with all legal requirements and applicable industry ethical guidelines.
   e) At all times, PBS SoCal should strive for transparency regarding its Programming and funding decisions.

5. Goals
   a) PBS SoCal should maintain editorial independence in the creation and distribution of all Programming.
   b) Decisions of editorial and programming staff should remain independent from the undue influence of any internal or external source.
   c) All content creators and production personnel should be aware of and strictly comply with FCC rules and PBS SoCal policy relating to payola and plugola.
   d) Editorial and journalistic functions should operate freely from any undue influence from business, marketing, or funding functions within PBS SoCal.
   e) PBS SoCal journalists should conform their activities to the most current ethical guidelines of Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.

6. Oversight
   a) PBS SoCal Management will be responsible for day-to-day editorial and Programming decisions.
   b) PBS SoCal Management will establish detailed procedures and guidance to staff as necessary on the use of social media, information technology resources, and employee conduct to ensure compliance with this Policy.
   c) PBS SoCal Management will ensure that staff is aware of and complies with PBS SoCal’s conflict of interest policies.
   d) PBS SoCal Management will use care in the selection of Programming subject matter and the manner in which it is expressed so as to protect PBS SoCal’s reputation and the trust placed in it by its audiences.
   e) PBS SoCal Management will exercise appropriate oversight to ensure that the above goals are met and that PBS SoCal staff complies in all material regards with this Policy.
   f) PBS SoCal Management oversight will include regular reports to the Board of Trustees.
g) In the event that a particular editorial decision may have a significant public impact or could potentially result in material harm to PBS SoCal, PBS SoCal Management will consult with the Board of Trustees in advance of the Programming being distributed to the public, if advance notice is possible; otherwise PBS SoCal Management will notify the Board within a reasonable period of time.

h) PBS SoCal Management and the Board of Trustees will consult on a regular basis with the PBS SoCal Community Advisory Board for advice and community feedback regarding PBS SoCal Programming.

i) The oversight of the Board of Trustees with regard to PBS SoCal Management’s editorial decisions and practices will be exercised in a manner that is consistent with the Board’s fiduciary duties to PBS SoCal.

j) This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.