

How to Evaluate Programs on Public Television

Weekend Lifestyle programming on public television



Most public television stations air cooking, how-to and travel shows in blocks on Saturdays and Sundays. Often, agencies and marketing decision-makers are approached by producers and sales representatives seeking corporate sponsorship support for series that air during in this block. How do you decide if these opportunities meet your brand's needs? We're here to help with some guidance.

Where do public television stations get their content?

People generally think of the entire public television system as "PBS." However, The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is not a network (like NBC or FOX), but rather a member-based association of 350 public television stations that receive their content from a variety of sources.

PBS is the largest distributor of public television programming, and provides nearly all primetime and children's programming. Most PBS-distributed programming during prime and children's daypart have at least 90% household coverage through this "network" of local stations.

American Public Television (APT) is the second-largest distributor of public television programming, followed by other distributors such as NETA (National Educational Telecommunications Association) and ITVS (Independent Television Service). **The weekend lifestyle programs on public television are typically distributed by APT, NETA, etc., and not PBS.** You can think of this as similar to syndication: while the main source of a public television station's content is PBS, they also air "syndicated" lifestyle content from other providers, typically on the weekend, at the discretion of the local station. If you purchase a sponsorship of these programs, you will be working with the producer and distributor, and not PBS.



How do I determine which weekend Lifestyle public media program is right for my brand?

Below are some key questions you can ask these producers and sales reps about the public television series they are presenting:

Is this program currently on air?

If **YES**, you should ask...

1. Who is the distributor?

- They may say PBS, because, in reality, they don't always understand the distinction between PBS, APT, and NETA, nor fully appreciate why understanding the distribution is important to your decision.

2. What is the coverage of US TV households, and the source for this information?



3. How many Primary PBS channels (the largest public television station in the market) are carrying the program? How many are in the Top 25 Markets? How many are in the Top 50 Markets?

- Understanding the number and market size of public television stations airing the program will help you accurately evaluate its potential reach. Many lifestyle programs will air on a cable network called Create TV. While this coverage will technically provide a series nearly 90% US household coverage, it's not a vehicle that will drive significant viewership and ratings.



4. What ratings are available for this series (and the source)?

- TRAC Media Services is a research company that measures viewership on public television stations only. It uses local Nielsen data to help public television stations understand carriage, carriage, ratings and scheduling strategies.



- National Nielsen National NPOWER ratings can be purchased by a series, but this is costly, and may not be available for the series under consideration.

5. When does the series air (day/daypart)?

- While most lifestyle series will air daytimes Saturday/Sunday, it is possible some will air late night or overnight during the week.

If **NO**, you should ask...

1. Who is distributor of the series?
2. Will this series air whether or not there are corporate funders?
3. If not, how much funding is needed to get this program greenlit?
4. Are there other corporate sponsors already committed, and whom?
5. Is there foundation funding already committed, and whom?
6. What is the track record of the producer? What other programs have they produced?
What type of sponsors did they have for that series?

Contact Us

The **Sponsorship Group for Public Television** represents the best sponsorships on PBS across all genres, including some of the most popular lifestyle series on public television:

- **Born to Explore:** Host Richard Wiese travels off the beaten path to visit all corners of the globe, celebrating the beauty and diversity of cultures untouched by modern civilization
- **Classic Woodworking:** Master craftsman Tom McLaughlin shares his passion and know-how for woodworking
- **Lidia's Kitchen:** The quintessential culinary masterclass on television, with beloved chef, Emmy® winning TV host, Italian ambassador, restaurateur, and author Lidia Bastianich as your private chef instructor
- **Simply Ming:** Chef Ming Tsai shares his signature East-meets-West recipes for simple but delicious weeknight meals

For more information contact the Sponsorship Group for Public Television at 800.886.9364, email sgptv@wgbh.org, or visit sgptv.org.