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New York Times
Netflix Is Betting Its Future on Exclusive Programming

Los Angeles Times
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New York Times
Box, Provider of Cloud-Computing Services, Faces Make-or-Break Moment

Minneapolis Star Tribune
Op-ed: State cuts would hamper rural access to Internet

New York Times
As a Cable Network Dispute Plays Out, Dodgers

Though Comcast is known internationally, it supports entrepreneurs locally by helping fund the tech needs of local businesses and investing in local startups. The global media and technology company also hosts events such as meetups and hackathons, which give technologists the opportunity to hack solutions, win prizes and receive mentorship. "The team at Comcast NBCUniversal is looking to innovate everything we do and we welcome new business partners — ranging from the latest customer service solutions to new media technologies that complement the X1 experience," said Comcast Chief Business Development Officer Sam Schwartz.

Comcast invests in local startups through Genacast Ventures, a partnership between investor Gil Beyda and Comcast Ventures that helps fuel early-stage companies in the area, including LeadID, Invite Media and Packlate.com. One past success is a seed investment in Divide, a bring-your-own-device enterprise security company formerly known as Enterpriod. Divide eventually sold to Google. "Our passion has always been to turn great ideas into powerful businesses — and that starts with finding talented entrepreneurs," said Beyda, who leads Genacast Ventures. "Comcast Ventures, with the help of the Genacast and Catalyst funds, has provided unparalleled strategic and financial support for entrepreneurs just getting started. Identifying innovative leaders is the mission of all our partners, and the ability to support them with the assets from Comcast and NBCUniversal provides startups with a distinct advantage."

Comcast has also collaborated with DreamIt Ventures to invest in minority-owned startups, including Philly outfits ROAR and LIA Diagnostics. Another initiative from Comcast, Innovations 4 Entrepreneurs, invites entrepreneurs of all kinds — tech or not — to apply to win a grand prize of $30,000 toward tech expenses. The competition, which is in its second year, accepted applications until March 15 and will announce this year's grand prize winners June 1. Even a sandwich shop needing new computers, smartphones or internet access would qualify, reflecting the need for tech infrastructure across vocations. Last year, Wilmington's entreDonovan, a women's boutique that uses 3D scanners to recommend business attire, won a national grand prize for "Improved Customer Experience."

"Technology plays a vital role when starting a new business and the Innovations 4 Entrepreneurs program is designed to recognize and assist business owners, here in Philadelphia and across the country, who are best using technology to make a difference for their customers and employees," said Kathy Hickey, executive director of marketing for Comcast Business. "We've seen a huge uptick in entries in our second year of the program, especially from here in our hometown, and we're excited to highlight their great

[Fans Scramble to Pull Up a Chair] ***Associated Press*** **[Wolf, GOP leaders have plenty to chew over on budget table]** ***pennlive.com*** **[AG Kathleen Kane will return to court Apr. 27 in firing case]** ***Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*** **[The holding pattern surrounding Kathleen Kane]** ***pennlive.com*** **[Charlie Gerow op-ed: Want to be relevant in 2016, Pa.? Change the primary date]**	work when the winners are announced later this year." Comcast has also upped its commitment to offering mentorship opportunities. The company has partnered with coworking spaces, including Philly's Benjamin's Desk, Chicago's 1871, Washington, D.C.'s 1776, to support local tech ecosystems. Comcast also provides national speakers and experts to help startups with their strategic development. Then there is actual code itself. Comcast has contributed 36,000 lines of code to an open source project called OpenStack. Last month, the company hosted an OpenStack community meetup, drawing over 150 developers to Rittenhouse Square for a two-day hackathon. – ***philly.com*** ——————————————————————————— Comcast Corp. and Time Warner Cable Inc. are slated to sit down for the first time on Wednesday with Justice Department officials to discuss potential remedies in hopes of keeping their $45.2 billion merger on track, according to people familiar with the matter. The parties haven't met face-to-face to hash out possible concessions in the more than 14 months since the deal was announced. Staffers at both the Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission remain concerned a combined company would wield too much power in the broadband Internet market and give it unfair competitive leverage against TV channel owners and new market entrants that offer video programming online, said people with knowledge of the review. One of the options that the FCC is considering is to designate the merger for a hearing, people familiar with the agency's thinking said. A hearing order would put the merger in the hands of an administrative law judge, a move which would be seen as a sign that the FCC isn't convinced the deal would be good for the public. "Mergers are never put to hearing in order to approve them," said Robert McDowell, a former Republican FCC commissioner. "They are designated for a hearing in order to kill them." Combining the nation's two largest cable and Internet providers would create a company with control over roughly 30% of the pay-TV market and 57% of the market for broadband service, now defined by the FCC as 25 megabits-per-second speeds and above. The companies have presented the deal as a straightforward cable merger that doesn't reduce consumer choice since cable operators don't overlap geographically, but the increased market share in broadband Internet has been under more intense scrutiny, people familiar with the reviews have said.

Comcast has argued that the Time Warner Cable deal isn't anticompetitive and is necessary for the company to compete against an array of emerging threats to the traditional pay-TV model, including technology competitors like Apple Inc. and Netflix Inc. "We continue to believe that our transaction with Time Warner Cable will bring substantial benefits to consumers without any competitive harms," Comcast spokeswoman Sena Fitzmaurice said in a statement. "We will continue to engage in our productive discussions with the government and do not see any value in commenting on rumors and speculation."

The Justice Department, which evaluates antitrust concerns, and the FCC, which must decide if the deal is in the public interest, are nearing the final stages of scrutinizing the acquisition. Both agencies are continuing to ask media companies for more information regarding their dealings with Comcast, people familiar with the talks said. Discussions on potential remedies would be an indication that the agencies haven't yet made a firm or final decision on the merger. The Wednesday meeting with antitrust officials could be the first of many, but it isn't clear whether the companies can offer concessions that will satisfy regulators.

Looming over any discussion about merger remedies will be the concessions Comcast made in 2011 to win approval to acquire control of NBCUniversal. People familiar with the current review process say the Justice Department and the FCC have been examining whether Comcast has fully complied with those earlier commitments. Specifically, the Justice Department is looking closely at Comcast's role in Hulu, the streaming service it became a part owner of through the NBCUniversal purchase, people familiar with the matter said. In return for approval of the NBCUniversal takeover, Comcast agreed to have no management role in Hulu and be a silent partner.

The department is said to have asked questions in the past few weeks about that arrangement, particularly with regard to the aborted effort by co-owners Walt Disney Co. and 21st Century Fox Inc. to sell Hulu in 2013. Comcast rivals DirecTV and AT&T Inc. were among the bidders at the time. Hulu ended up being taken off the sale block.

(News Corp, owner of The Wall Street Journal, and 21st Century Fox were until mid-2013 part of the same company.) A spokesman for the Justice Department declined to comment. An FCC spokesman declined to comment.

Staff attorneys at the Justice Department's Antitrust Division were leaning toward a recommendation to block the acquisition, Bloomberg reported on Friday, citing people close to the matter. The attorneys could submit their recommendation as soon as this week, according to the report. Such input by department staffers marks an initial milepost in the final decision-making process. Senior Justice Department officials will be the ones to decide whether to challenge the transaction.

One potential concession that could be up for discussion is the divestiture of more of the roughly 30 million customers the combined company will serve if the deal closes. The companies have already agreed to deals with Charter Communications Inc. to sell or spin off systems serving 3.9 million customers if the Time Warner Cable purchase is completed.

Another factor is the FCC's decision to impose utility-style regulations on Internet service earlier this year to make sure broadband providers treat all Web traffic equally. If regulators require Comcast to live under the new "net neutrality" policies regardless of whether they are held up in court to win deal approval, Comcast may walk away from the acquisition, people familiar with the matter said. Comcast wouldn't owe Time Warner Cable any breakup fee if it were to abandon the deal.

Comcast's planned purchase of Time Warner Cable has been dogged by regulatory delays, and the most recent expected closing date was bumped to the middle of the year. Meanwhile, Wall Street has remained cautious about the potential for the deal to be approved. After Bloomberg's report, Time Warner Cable shares fell 5.4% to $149.61 on Friday, and Comcast slipped 2.1%. The stock drop left Time Warner Cable trading 11% below the value of Comcast's all-stock bid, signaling skepticism among traders that the deal will close. – ***Wall Street Journal;*** **also see *Los Angeles Times***

Sports juggernaut ESPN is raising objections to Verizon FiOS's plans to break up the traditional TV bundle and offer customers more choice in constructing their package of channels. The new offering from Verizon FiOS, which was made available to customers Sunday, will allow people to buy a slim package of channels including major broadcasters and cable networks like CNN and AMC, along with at least two channel packs of their choice in genres such as kids, news and sports. ESPN and ESPN 2 notably aren't in the core package, but are offered in a separate sports tier.

In a statement late Friday, Walt Disney Co.'s ESPN said such packages "would not be authorized by our existing agreements." ESPN said that Verizon doesn't have the right to place ESPN or ESPN 2 into separate sports tiers that aren't part of the core package. The plan threatens to reduce the number of subscribers to some networks if customers of Verizon FiOS, which is owned by Verizon Communications Inc., opt to buy packages that don't include their channels. Major and minor channels alike have already experienced a dropoff in their reach into American homes over the past few years, as more people have opted to "cut the cord" or "shave the cord"–downgrade to a skinnier, cheaper package. Big channels like ESPN typically stipulate in their contracts with distributors that their networks have to be made available in the most widely distributed tiers or have to reach a certain percentage of the customer base.

A person familiar with ESPN's thinking said Verizon may have released details about the new offering before contractual details were fully hammered out between the parties. Verizon FiOS President Tami Erwin said in an interview Thursday that the company designed the packages such that it wouldn't violate its content contracts. But ESPN's issues raise questions about whether other channels will also object or seek to negotiate new contracts as the TV landscape rapidly shifts and traditional pay-TV providers increasingly have to compete with new, cheaper online streaming services. Other popular channels like Time Warner Inc's TNT and TBS and Comcast Corp.'s USA Network are also relegated to tiers. – ***Wall Street Journal;*** **and in *USA Today*: Verizon new plan not as cheap as advertised**

State and local governments are starting to play an important role in getting broadband Internet access to the American public. And that's highly commendable considering that many people still do not have access to high-speed connections at affordable prices.

Connecticut is working on a program to bring high-capacity fiber-optic lines to homes and businesses in a way that could lower costs and increase competition among Internet providers. New York's recent budget includes $500 million for programs that make broadband available across the state by the end of 2018. Having access to high-speed connections is important because work, education and entertainment are increasingly moving online. But the average speed at which Americans connect to the Internet is a relatively slow 11.5 megabits per second, according to a recent report by Akamai, a technology company. The Federal Communications Commission recently defined broadband as connections that have download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second, which it says is necessary for members of a hypothetical family to participate in an online class, download files and stream a movie at the same time. The world's best networks, including a few in the United States, offer speeds as fast as 1 gigabit per second — 40 times the capacity of a 25-megabit connection. (A megabit is a million bits — the zeros and ones that make up digital information. A gigabit is a billion bits.)

In most places in the United States, broadband is provided by cable and phone companies. Those businesses and others like Google have invested billions of dollars in upgrading or building new networks. But because they face little competition, they have not always been quick to offer advanced services. That's where state and local governments come in. In Chattanooga, Tenn., a government-owned electric utility spent $330 million to build a fiber network to reach homes and businesses. Universities and local governments in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina are working with AT&T, which already provides local phone service in that area, to upgrade its network there. Near Salt Lake City, a group of towns have commissioned a private company to build a fiber-optic network for that area.

In Connecticut, the Office of Consumer Counsel, which represents residents in utility rate cases, is working with cities like New Haven, West Hartford and Stamford to develop a project called CTGig. Officials say local governments will contract with a private business to build and operate a fiber-optic network. The private company will invest its own money and make a profit by allowing other businesses to use the network to sell Internet service to users.

The goal is to develop 1-gigabit speeds. If done right, Connecticut could end up with a state-of-the-art network at a lower cost for users than traditional Internet service delivered by cable and phone companies. But the project is at a relatively early stage, and even if everything goes perfectly, building a network that reaches every home and business would take several years. New York, is relying on 10 regional economic development councils to come up with plans for bringing faster Internet services to their parts of the state. That means officials upstate and those in New York City could choose very different approaches to meet their needs. The councils will use the state money to entice the private sector to invest at least $500 million of private money in broadband.

New York wants most residents to have access to connections of at least 100 megabits per second. While that's slower than the speed Connecticut has set, it would still be a huge improvement over the connections most New Yorkers have now. The state estimates that 38 percent of Manhattan residents did not have access to 100-megabit connections as of July 2014. Separately, on Thursday, Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city was seeking ideas from the public to increase broadband access. For most Americans, broadband is quickly becoming a must-have utility like water and electricity. That's why it makes sense for cities and states to get involved. – ***New York Times editorial***

The race to offer faster Internet service is heating up. Comcast said Friday it will be offering some of its customers in the San Francisco Bay Area and the state 2 gigabits-per-second Internet service, surpassing the speed offered by its competitors, AT&T and Google Fiber. The two companies offer an Internet connection at a speed of 1 gigabit per second.

Comcast said it won't disclose the cost of the lightning-fast service until closer to June, when Gigabit Pro will launch in California. Internet service at that speed is so fast that it would allow customers to download an entire high-definition movie in 12 seconds or 100 songs in 2.4 seconds. "Comcast is trying to get a jump on Google Fiber and others like AT&T who are rolling out gigabit services. There's that threat to at least be able to offer a speed tier that's competitive," said Teresa Mastrangelo, an analyst with the market research firm Broadbandtrends.

Comcast said the service will be launched first in Atlanta in May and then will be available to nearly 3 million California homes starting in June, including in the San Francisco Bay Area. Other areas include Chico, Fresno, Marysville/Yuba City, Merced, Modesto, Monterey, Sacramento, Salinas, Santa Barbara County, Stockton and Visalia metro areas.

The company also said Friday it was offering a new 250 megabits-per-second Internet service called "Extreme 250" in May for California customers, but also did not disclose a price for that service. A Comcast customer's home would need to be at most one-third of a mile from Comcast's fiber network and would require installing certain equipment to get Gigabit Pro. Bryan Byrd, a spokesman for Comcast, said that the company is trying to provide a range of speeds for customers based on their needs. For example, a higher-speed option might be more attractive to customers who transfer large files, stream a lot of videos or play games. "Some people are very excited about the higher speed because it allows them to get the best performance online," he said.

In California, most Comcast customers subscribe to 50 megabits-per-second or 105 megabits-per-second Internet service, according to the company. Mastrangelo said that Comcast's price for the gigabit Internet service will be a key part of whether it will appeal to customers. "I don't know if anyone will know the difference between 1 and 2 gigabits," she said. "It's going to be fast period." – ***San Jose (CA) Mercury News***

Atlantic Broadband announced this week the expansion of its services into Barnwell County (SC). The company will offer residential and business Internet speeds of up to 120 mbps – faster download speeds than before, according to the company's press release. Atlantic Broadband's new Starter Plus, Express and Unleashed residential Internet speeds are available with 12 months of promotional pricing for as low as $29.99 per month. Pro Internet services are available in Atlantic Broadband's business Internet and phone bundles for as low as $79.99 per month. Atlantic Broadband is one of the largest cable operators in the country. The company provides TV, Internet and phone services to more than 230,000 residential and business customers. Atlantic Broadband is headquartered in Quincy, Massachusetts. – ***Aiken (SC) Standard***

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