



EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING

April 21, 2023

9:30 A.M.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Marta S. Bechtol, Executive Director

Advocacy

March was Advocacy Month for public media. Heather Reese and I worked jointly with our staff (aka The "A" Team) to coordinate both federal and state in-person events and meetings. We would like to express our thanks to Jason Butler, Megan Bellini, Eva Yonas, Sam Haack, Kayleigh Steinback, Toni Bartolutti and Marike Stucky for managing the logistics. And to Jordan Siegler, Heather A. Reese, Jeffrey Potter and Grace Lorenz for designing the [video](#) and print materials.

Federal Budget

Heather Reese and I, accompanied by Dan Mueller and Mark Foley from Milwaukee PBS, attended America's Public Television Stations (APTS) Public Media Summit at the end of February, followed by a day of federal advocacy on Wednesday, March 1. We encouraged our Wisconsin delegation to sign on to the appropriation letters that provide funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in FY 2024, which closed at the end of March.

The first letter was addressed to the Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee and requests the following for:

- \$575 million for CPB's two-year advance funding in FY 2026 – a \$40 million increase.
- \$60 million for Interconnection – flat over FY23
- \$31 million for Ready To Learn – flat over FY23

The second letter was addressed to the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. It requests continued funding of the \$56 million granted last year:

- \$56 million for the second year of funding of the Next Generation Warning System – flat over FY23.

The conversations were friendly and upbeat, although unlikely to alter the current distribution of support. Senator Baldwin has been named the chair of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Services (aka "Labor-HHS-Education") appropriation (which is where the Corporation for Public Broadcasting receives most of its federal funding) where she has pledged ongoing advocacy for public media.

CPB funding accounts for just over 10% of our annual budget. This money enables us to maintain our statewide presence regardless of population size served by any of our signals.

State Budget

[The Governor's budget](#) released on February 15 supports ECB's "flat" request for the FY23-25 biennium. This includes "standard budget adjustments" only and represents costs to continue:

General Purpose Revenue	\$ 5,754,600
Program Revenue	\$ 15,512,800
TOTAL	\$ 21,267,400

Our State Advocacy Day was held on March 21, which was rescheduled from February 16 due to a snow event. A cadre of volunteer advocates and board members from ECB, WPRA and the Friends of PBS Wisconsin joined us at the state capitol to meet with members of Joint Finance, the Education committee and freshmen members of the legislature to encourage their support of the Governor's recommendation. Our goals were to help them understand the value of our services to their constituencies; and to teach them about the structural importance of the networks for public safety. We generally received positive receptions and heard from many that our flat request was commendable.

The legislature is holding budget listening sessions across the state in April prior to releasing their recommendations. The legislature and governor will then begin negotiations aiming to arrive at a final budget agreement by the end of the fiscal year (June 30).

State funding accounts for just over 25% of our annual operating budget and covers about half of our agency's salaries and all utilities, debt service (i.e. capital budget repayment) and DOA assessments.

Milwaukee PBS

As I informed you at the end of January, the integration of Milwaukee PBS to our master control is now complete. Not only did we successfully execute the State of the State address on the first day of go-live, we have now completed the first ever "double" membership drive event during the second week of March. Al Ritchie, the OC manager, had this to say: "The team seems to be adapting nicely to the additional workload. I think everyone is kinda energized by the challenge, and it's been nice to see some folks learning new skills, and teammates teaching teammates." How nice is that?

Broadband Access

The Task Force is now cycling a county-by-county survey to gather information on broadband activity, along with the identification of committees, people and structures that could be involved in expanding broadband access. Initial drafting has begun on the Year 3 report of the task force.

Equity & Inclusion

The State Bureau of Equity and Inclusion is guiding state agencies in creating new Equity and Inclusion Plans. The ECB Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) is working to gather data and staff input to draft this new plan which will be shared with the board upon completion. In addition to the EIAC's work on the new plan, they are also continuing to review ECB policy with an equity lens and providing feedback; proposing topics for ECB quarterly staff Equity and Inclusion conversations; and working on this year's staff engagement survey.