
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Marta S. Bechtol

Fall Tower Visits

Over 20 ECB Board members, sitting legislators, Friends of PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio Association board members have recently joined us for tours of ECB and WPM facilities. September and October are arguably the prettiest and have the most reliable weather for enjoying these field trips. The goal of these meetings is to give the people that contribute to our funding an accurate picture of the work that we do and how the money is spent. In-person experiences have proven to be a great way to share ECB's expertise and to illustrate the work of the agency. Staff enjoy the opportunity to meet with folks they rarely encounter, and attendees enjoy learning more about the physics of broadcasting.

State Funding

The Division of Facilities Development notified ECB in early September that \$5.6M in capital funding has been allocated to ECB for small projects during this biennium. Replacement projects in queue for this cycle include:

- tower lights at WLEF and WHWC
- corroded guy wire at WHWC
- generator system at WHWC
- damaged FM antenna at WHLA
- new transmitter at WHSA-FM

Federal Funding

Shortly after the last meeting of the board, President Trump signed the Rescissions Act of 2025 into law on July 24. This act eliminated Congressionally approved funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) that was intended to provide operating grants to stations in fiscal years 2026 and 2027. For ECB, this has meant program revenue losses of \$2.7M in the current fiscal year – a 12% reduction in the agency's overall budget.

Efforts to gain support for Congressionally allocated funds through the annual federal budgeting process have been unsuccessful. After 58 years, CPB wound down its operations on September 30. ECB received a final distribution of \$28,721 as CPB parsed out the remaining money in its accounts to stations. These funds will be spent this fiscal year.

The \$1.5M Next Generation Warning System grant from FEMA that was in limbo has now been closed. No work was ever undertaken under this grant and no financial transactions ever occurred between FEMA and ECB.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

After a protracted review process, a renewable 5-year contract has been reissued between NOAA and ECB for the 13 federal National Weather Service sites in Wisconsin.

Federal Communications Commission

The FCC has announced that it will accept applications for new TV translator stations in the new year, an extremely rare opportunity that has not been available for decades. We are actively reviewing our statewide footprint to determine the best possibilities for increased service at the lowest possible cost to take advantage of this window. Should the State be granted any new licenses, ECB would have three years from date of issuance to complete their construction.

WPM Leadership

The search for the new Executive Director for the Division of Wisconsin Public Media at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been [announced by the Provost](#). Jordan Siegler is currently filling this position in an interim capacity which was formerly held by Heather Reese. I am serving on the search committee.