
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Marta S. Bechtol

Staffing Updates

Office Administrator: This meeting marks the completion of Lenin Quintana's first month as the agency's new Executive Staff Assistant/Office Administrator. After six months without support, it's wonderful to have a welcoming and helpful human again at the front desk!

Lenin has recently retired from 20 years of military service providing Army healthcare operational and administrative support. He has worked on everything from health systems software data analysis to emergency room management. He holds a B.A. in Security Studies from the University of Texas – El Paso.

Public Relations Director: Jordan Siegler and I have recently hired a public relations director that will work across the WPM-ECB Partnership to amplify public media's impact with state and federal lawmakers and their staffs, state and university administrators and other influential groups important to the health and sustainability of our WPR and PBS Wisconsin services. We have hired Erik Ernst to fill this important new role.

Erik has been a part of PBS Wisconsin for 21 years, where he has been instrumental in leading communication and marketing efforts most recently as Communications Associate Director. In addition to the marketing, promotion and communications responsibilities of that position, Erik has been involved in our advocacy work for more than a decade. He has created and provided communications strategy for our annual state and federal advocacy efforts, has engaged with stakeholders across the state and is an active leader in the national public media system.

State Funding

The agency is pleased to have received our full flat budget request when Act 15 was signed into law on July 3, 2025. We appreciate the support of the Joint Committee on Finance and Governor Evers in keeping the statewide communications networks in good health and repair.

	General Purpose Revenue (GPR)	Program Revenue (PR)	Total
FY 2025-27	\$12,645,100	\$31,558,900	\$ 44,204,000
FY 2023-25	\$ 13,024,500	\$ 31,014,400	\$ 44,038,900

Federal Budget

At the time of this writing, the President has sent a package to Congress to rescind funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) that was approved in fiscal years 2024 and 2025 under the two-year advanced appropriation mechanism. The House approved the package on June 12, but the Senate has not yet taken a vote. That vote will likely take place in the days before our meeting. CPB funding accounts for around 10-13% of the agency's annual funding (with slight variances from year to year). The federal FY26 budget is still in development. CPB will seek annual funding via that route should the rescission package be successful.

You might recall my note last quarter about the challenges we experienced with the \$1.5M in grant funds that were approved for the Next Generation Warning System (NGWS) program. Interestingly, it is this pot of funding for public media (through FEMA) that has been included in the initial FY26 budget markup.

Broadband Access

The [2025 report](#) of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access was released in late June. Over the past year 93,000 locations that were previously unserved now have high speed internet access. Internet service providers have added 163,000 new fiber connections to homes and businesses. Nearly 90% of Wisconsin households now subscribe to internet service.

The remaining 10% of Wisconsin households face continued issues of access, affordability and adoption. To that end, the 2025 report focuses on the areas of deployment, partnerships, functional adoption, and future preparation to achieve complete statewide service under the national Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program for which Wisconsin was granted over \$1B in federal funding.

In early June, shortly after the final meeting of the task force, the federal agency that administers the BEAD program, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), changed the parameters of the funding requirements on which the task force had been based. The Wisconsin Broadband Office is now revising their processes to align with these new policies. Nevertheless, the Governor released the annual report as a public record of the discussion and collaboration among the advisors and stakeholders that spanned the year.

It has been a privilege to serve on the task force alongside people who are actively working to achieve statewide service and adoption. The report and the data within it speak to the real issues and outlook for broadband expansion in Wisconsin. It is my hope that the collected wisdom of the members will remain useful in driving the successful implementation of high-quality broadband service to all Wisconsinites.