



**Educational
Communications
Board**

2015 – 2017 Biennial Report

Gene Purcell

Executive Director

3319 West Beltline Highway

Madison, WI 53713-4296

To: The Honorable Scott Walker, Governor of Wisconsin
Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature
Citizens of the State of Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB) has the mission of providing a statewide telecommunications system and assistance in the diffusion of advanced technologies in support of public safety, public broadcasting, education and media. As part of that mission, public radio and television services respond to and reflect the educational and cultural interests and needs of the residents of the state.

While there have been many changes in technology since the founding of the ECB in the early 1970's, the essential mission of using technological platforms to deliver non-commercial public media remains unchanged. In fact, the history of public media in Wisconsin dates all the way back to 1917 with our first radio broadcasts, marking 2017 as the centennial of the oldest public broadcasting station in the nation.

During 2015-2017, the ECB provided its safety and education services with 55.18 FTE, a reduction of 1.5 FTE from the 2013-2015 budget. Also in the 2015-2017 budget, the agency saw its GPR reduced by nearly 20% with the loss of two appropriations that supported K-12 media for Wisconsin students and teachers.

2015 – 2017 Budget Goals and Performance

Here is a link to ECB's budget details for the 2015-2017 biennium (see pages 53-54):

<http://www.doa.state.wi.us/Documents/DEBF/Budget/Biennial%20Budget/2015-17%20Executive%20Budget/2015%20ACT55%20SB21.pdf>

Together, WPR and WPT were utilized by nearly one-million people in Wisconsin on any given week during the past two years as well as by thousands of educators. We continue to have success in our efforts to broaden the base of financial support for both public radio and public television and take pride in the measurement of our performance over the 2015 – 2017 biennium.

- Wisconsin Public Radio was successful in meeting its membership goal for the biennium, slightly exceeding its fundraising target.
- Wisconsin Public Television also achieved its membership goal and surpassed its underwriting target.
- K-12 instructional media use also exceeded its viewership goal over the biennium.
- Network reliability continued to meet industry standards for 24/7 broadcast operation.

Agency Goals and Activities established for FY17-19 include the following:

Goal 1: Realize the Wisconsin Idea by producing, acquiring and delivering high-quality Wisconsin Public Radio programming to a statewide audience that serves public needs for cultural enrichment, intellectual stimulation and discussion of issues that matter to individuals and the statewide community.

Objective/Activity: Provide cultural enrichment through music programming in formats not served by commercial radio stations; generate intellectual stimulation through programming designed to instruct, inform or educate the audience; and stimulate discussion and increased awareness of issues through in-depth news analysis, public affairs programs and call-in programming with guest speakers.

Goal 2: Acquire, produce and deliver high-quality Wisconsin Public Television program, production, community outreach and education services to statewide audiences. These additional noncommercial services will provide all viewers with access to educational, informational and entertainment programming produced nationally and locally.

Objective/Activity: Acquire nationally-produced programming purchased for delivery over the state network and provide locally-produced programming aired over the state network.

Goal 3: Improve and enhance the learning experience for Wisconsin's K-12 teachers and students by providing high-quality, standards-based instructional media that respond to the state's specific educational and content area needs.

Objective/Activity: Acquire, produce and deliver high-quality K-12 media designed for current classroom technologies; provide user support and outreach services to Wisconsin educators.

Goal 4: Provide access to Wisconsin Public Radio and Wisconsin Public Television to all citizens of the state. Utilize the reach of the state network for public safety purposes.

Objective/Activity: Build, maintain and operate the broadcast interconnect which delivers signals throughout Wisconsin. Build, maintain and operation the various transmission facilities necessary to operate WPR, WPT, and National Weather Service transmitters. Utilize ECB facilities for Emergency Alert System/Amber Alert needs as outlined in the Wisconsin EAS plan. Assure all ECB facilities function at a high level of reliability necessary for broadcast and public safety purposes.

Public Safety

ECB engineering staff is responsible for the efficient and reliable distribution of the state's broadcast-based Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Amber Alert, as well as operating and maintaining the 28 National Weather Service Transmitters which serve Wisconsin. In total, the ECB is the steward of 64 Federal Communications Commission licenses for public radio, public television, satellite uplink and

downlink, All-Hazards Radio, Educational Broadband Service and other telecommunications facilities which serve Wisconsin.

Here is a link which will provide you with more information about ECB's public safety responsibilities: <http://www.ecb.org/services.html>

Public Broadcasting

ECB continues its commitment to its long-standing partnership with the University of Wisconsin – Extension to operate Wisconsin Public Radio (www.wpr.org) and Wisconsin Public Television (www.wpt.org).

Even as WPR and WPT both endeavor to bring the outside world to Wisconsin through affiliations with NPR (www.npr.org) and PBS (www.pbs.org), the past two years have also seen WPR and WPT increasing their efforts to bring Wisconsin topics to the people of Wisconsin in ways that no other media can.

Whether it's the daily talk show coverage produced on the "Ideas" network of WPR, a focus on election coverage online at WisconsinVote.org; "Here and Now" with Frederica Freyberg on WPT; the "Wisconsin Life" series on WPR and WPT; or a unique glimpse of our state with "Wisconsin Winter From the Air", WPR and WPT strive to bring high quality educational programming with a "Wisconsin" sense of place to the state's citizens.

ECB's specific functions related to public broadcasting are focused on guaranteeing efficient and reliable transmission to state residents via the Broadcast Interconnect system and transmitters located throughout Wisconsin.

In addition, by partnering with our public broadcasting colleagues at Milwaukee Public Television and WDSE-TV in Duluth Minnesota, ECB is able to ensure broadcast delivery of its Wisconsin-based programming to the entire state.

You can learn more about the work of those broadcast partners here: Milwaukee Public Television (<http://www.mptv.org/>) and WDSE-TV (<http://www.wdse.org/>)

K-12 Educational Media

2015 Wisconsin Act 55 repealed statutes that marked appropriations related to the production and distribution of Wisconsin-specific K-12 instructional media.

Prior to Act 55, ECB's impact on Wisconsin K-12 educators and students had been substantial, particularly in the era of electronic media delivery. In partnership with teachers and the state's Department of Public Instruction (DPI), ECB/Wisconsin Media Lab materials had been made available for use by public, private and home schools in Wisconsin through DPI's *WISElearn* portal. The ongoing need for Wisconsin-specific educational media available at no cost to educators and students continues to be

demonstrated by a steady increase in usage of Wisconsin Media Lab content. As school budgets have tightened, the resources provided by Wisconsin Media Lab have become even more critical.

Therefore, following Act 55, ECB reconfigured Wisconsin Media Lab and its services through partnership with Wisconsin Public Television via the University of Wisconsin – Extension. Although the funding that sustained ECB’s education unit staff and provided for K-12 media production and licensing was lost, the agency prioritized the relationship with DPI and was able to maintain the existing distribution of educational content to Wisconsin teachers and students.

As finances allow, ECB will continue its partnership with Wisconsin Public Television and membership in PBS to provide Wisconsin’s education community with access to high quality, vetted, and trusted instructional programming from public media sources throughout the country and around the world.

The new home of Wisconsin Media Lab and classroom content can be found here:

<https://wpt.org/education>

Agency Workforce

The ECB has compiled many years of experience with flexible work patterns since the agency implemented its policies and procedures in the early 1980s. The ECB has also implemented policies on telecommuting and work-at-home. To better equip the agency for COOP responsibilities, the Agency continues to offer its employees permanent part-time positions, job sharing, flexible-time work schedules and other alternative employment arrangements.

Our agency is pleased to have found significant talent among those who voluntarily serve our state and nation in the military. At the close of FY17, veterans comprised over 15% the ECB’s classified workforce.

All of us at the ECB are proud to be part of the fabric and culture of Wisconsin and believe our services are things in which the residents of Wisconsin can all take pride.

As you have seen, this report is augmented by web links which will provide you with much more information about ECB, its services and its partners.

I encourage you to spend a few minutes exploring these resources and learning more about the important work of the Educational Communications Board.

Sincerely,



Gene Purcell
Executive Director