

**Ohio Government Telecommunications FY 2020-2021 Budget Testimony**  
**House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education**  
**Dan Shellenbarger, Executive Director, OGT**

Chairman Carfagna, Ranking member Sweeney, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Dan Shellenbarger, and I serve as Executive Director of Ohio Government Telecommunications. I am here today in support of the budget submitted to you by Broadcast Educational Media Commission and endorsed by the Alliance for Public Telecommunications. Our state support is included in the overall BEMC budget.

An appropriately funded agency and strong stations are key factors in our ability to serve the state by reaching out to the citizens of Ohio.

I would like to focus on the OGT request, but first some background.

There are a lot of abbreviations here and I would like to walk you through them. OGT was formed in 1996 to broadcast live coverage of the House and Senate. In 2002 OGT was moved from being a state organization to become part of the PBS family--we are currently managed by the PBS station in Cleveland, ideastream. The PBS stations in Ohio are collectively known as Ohio Educational Television Stations (OETS) they represent the 11 PBS stations across the state. When we became part of PBS, we created the Ohio Channel and were given a digital subchannel on local PBS stations. We became one of only 3 channels in the nation with a 24-7-365 over-the-air broadcast channel dedicated to state public affairs. If you look at the Statehouse correspondents' offices, they are emptier from way back when they were created. We are dedicated to covering the work you do here. BEMC (which has gone through a lot of name changes in its history: from OEB to OET to ETech to now BEMC) is the entity that disburses funds to the PBS stations and to OGT. They also handle all of the distribution and serve as a joint master control for The Ohio Channel and Ohio's public TV stations. We are all interconnected. We are part of a network that has many vital parts.

Back in 1996, OGT was created to assist state government with its multimedia needs and to provide greater access to and understanding of state government. We have greatly expanded our service since then. As part of its major duties, OGT:

- Provides audio/video coverage to all 3 branches of state government
- Broadcasts and web streams all events
- Programs and manages the Ohio Channel, Ohio's 24-hour public affairs channel on PBS
- Manages OhioChannel.org
- Coordinates all media services for state elected officials
- Produces videos for all state agencies mostly at no cost

OGT is now 23 years old. When we started in 1996, we had 5 full time workers, covered only the legislature, were available only for 12 hours a week on cable, and had a budget just shy of \$2,000,000. Now we have 16 full time employees, cover all three branches of state government

(soon including all House Committees) and are broadcast, over-the-air 24/7 across the state. And, we are doing it for less money than when we started...we are truly doing more for less.

How have we done this? Technology, efficiency and partnerships.

The cost of making television costs less, an example is when in 1996 we installed cameras in the House and Senate Chambers the cameras cost \$125,000 *each*! Now, the cameras we are installing in the committee rooms cost just a bit more than \$2,000. Another important aspect is how we leverage distribution with our PBS family. When you meet in session, we are available across the state on all visual mediums: air, cable, and streaming. Our relationship with Ohio's PBS stations has allowed this. There are so many benefits to our partnership with PBS Stations and BEMC that are not quantifiable.

The PBS brand is continuously voted as America's most trusted source of public affairs information. OGT and subsequently, the state, benefits from this brand identification. BEMC has been instrumental in helping us program the Ohio Channel and keep us on air. We have also partnered with the Legislative Information Service to provide all of our web development and streaming. Capitol Square Board provides us our facility space and its required maintenance.

Other states with operations like ours are spending millions more for these services. As we have been helped with our partnerships, we continue to help other state agencies with their video and streaming needs. We usually do not charge for these services to them. This is another way OGT saves the state hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars.

Our reach is significant. We are available, in some form, in every single household across the state. All of our official coverage is immediately archived forever and readily accessible to anyone with a computer or mobile device--all text searchable. We have more than 13,225 hours of footage archived, indexed, and readily available online.

The administration's budget only provided flat funding for OGT. However, we are requesting an optimal budget which provides **\$1,783,526** for OGT in **FY 2020** and **\$1,783,526 for FY 2021**. This request includes **a requested increase of \$375,000 per year** to account for the additional resources needed for expanded committee coverage, increased maintenance costs to maintain our online storage system, and for additional staff. This request amounts to a 27% increase but it adds a minimum of 8 additional control rooms, 34 cameras, and will provide the capacity for us to cover up to 16 simultaneous events on line.

I hope you feel the continued investment in OGT is worth it both for you as legislators and for your constituents. Thank you for your consideration.

## **Additional Ohio Government Telecommunications Information**

### **OGT Stats**

<b>Yearly over the air &amp; Cable viewers:</b>	<b>1.6 million</b>
<b>Yearly online views:</b>	<b>2.6 million</b>
<b>Ohiochannel.org views (all time):</b>	<b>38.9 million</b>
<b>House video only views (all time):</b>	<b>4.8 million</b>
<b>OGT total video hours:</b>	<b>13,223</b>
<b>OGT total videos:</b>	<b>14,983</b>

### **OGT Services**

#### **The Ohio Channel**

OGT in conjunction with Ohio Public Broadcasting, OGT manages the Ohio Channel which is distributed on the available digital broadcast signals from public broadcasting stations statewide through the BEMC facility. This is the only channel dedicated to Ohio government, public affairs, culture, and history.

#### **OhioChannel.org**

Through its web site, anyone can watch Legislative events, Supreme Court sessions, and Governor's events live. All footage is archived and is searchable. The site also features educational programming, including *Remarkable Ohio*, which tracks the more than 1,200 historical markers around the state, vast programming archives from the Ohio Channel, hundreds of interviews with Ohio veterans, outdoor enthusiasts, artists, and writers and links to all parts of state government.

#### **OGT Facilities**

OGT just completed the fiber optic connections between Capitol Square, OGT Master Control, the Riffe Center, Rhodes Tower, and the Ohio Judicial Center. Elected officials can "go live" from anywhere on the Statehouse campus and be connected to anywhere in the world. OGT also aids with member's programming, *Ohio In Focus*, which is a public affairs show produced and hosted by legislative members and distributed to cable access stations around the state.