

Alliance for Public Telecommunication Request for the Broadcast Educational Media Commission Budget

The Alliance for Public Telecommunication represents the 11 full-power public television stations and translator stations, the 32 public radio stations and repeater stations and the six radio reading services in Ohio. We provide services available in to Ohioans in every legislative district of the state.

Over the past few years, the Alliance has reviewed both the budget and the operation of BEMC and are in support of the agency’s request for additional funds to cover the increased costs of modern technology and the essential delivery of efficient, reliable program service. The Alliance also supports the request for a small, inflation-related increase for the Statehouse News Bureau and the request by Ohio Government Telecommunications.

The most important request from the members of the Alliance is that the legislature restore its support for content creation, returning to the levels provided in FY 2008 that were lost to challenges on the state budget during the great recession. These are the funds needed to allow us to “Invest in Ohio’s Future,” by creating and distributing programming as well as supporting content and services in an ever-changing media world. We will use the money to address the educational needs of young children, expand opportunities for our low-vision citizens, support the state’s focus on creating the workforce of the future and increase our support of public safety and essential communications.

Conservatively assuming a population of 11.5 million, our request would average out to less than 14 cents per Ohioan, a small investment in comparison to our ability to benefit so many people.

In making our case, we provide the following information with detail on what we are asking for in GRF funding and why that increase is justified and provides a good investment for the state.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2020	FY 2021
GRF	935430	Broadcast Educational Operating		
		Payroll	\$ 353,000	\$ 353,000
		Personnel Services	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
		Equipment > \$1,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 200,000
		Equipment < \$1,000	\$ 52,000	\$ 50,000
Annual Total:			\$ 1,025,000	\$ 623,000

The BEMC Network Operating Center at 2470 North Star Road in Columbus has experienced much-needed physical and technological upgrades in the past few years, with the redefinition of both the media and distance educational missions now informing the requirements for a staff that is highly-trained in technology, as well as the costs of maintaining the new technology infrastructures.

PAYROLL:

With the requirement of maintaining fully-staffed operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week with trained personnel to avoid the programming feed to the television stations accidentally going dark, BEMC is requesting funds to add an additional engineering staff member at an estimated \$80,000. This will help in maintaining overnight engineering coverage with less standby and overtime pay.

The request includes one FTE to support the growing Video Conferencing Network operation and fiscal operations not covered by state CSA services and preparing for a retirement from the fiscal staff this fall.

The category also includes \$140,000 for overtime, \$53,000 for salary increases, and an additional \$20,000 for variance.

PERSONNEL SERVICES:

This is in anticipation of the increases in personnel services, including the expected 10% increase in DAS/OIT services and fees.

EQUIPMENT:

The increases include funds to cover FY 20 and FY21 Broadcast Technology capital spending to purchase maintenance services and upgrade obsolete technology cycling out in FY 20 (with \$400,000 and \$52,000, in 520 and 530). The increase of \$200,000 in FY/2021 for Broadcast Tech related operating expenditures DOES NOT include FY21 Capital Spending, in that BEMC is awaiting direction from the Office of Budget and Management.

The Alliance believes that additional support is required in the coming biennium for both annual operations and deferred maintenance to protect the state's investment. Our observation is that the agency was underfunded for its mission when it was first created six years ago and has not received increases since that time. Its mission and the importance of its role have evolved as we move through an era of technological change. We feel it is an appropriate time to bring state support into alignment with what the agency is now being asked to do and the support services it supplies.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2020	FY 2021
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau	\$ 15,203	\$ 15,203
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Telecommunications Services (Ohio Channel)	\$ 375,000	\$ 375,000
Annual total:			\$ 390,203	\$ 390,203

With a very small staff and tightly squeezed budget, the Statehouse News Bureau is requesting a 5% increase in support to allow it to make replacement equipment purchases and provide salary increases that it could not otherwise afford.

OGT is requesting an additional \$100,000 to cover regular operational and staff costs, with \$275,000 for equipment and staff directly related to the leadership mandate to cover additional hearings and other activities in the House and Senate.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2020	FY 2021
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution		
		Radio and Television	\$ 1,245,596	\$ 1,245,596
		Radio Reading Services	\$ 138,395	\$ 138,395
		Multimedia Projects Grant Program	\$ 222,144	\$ 222,144
Annual total:			\$ 1,606,108	\$ 1,606,108

A decade ago, the great recession created long-term challenges for the state budget that resulted in a dramatic decrease in direct state support for public television, radio and radio reading services. Despite partial restoration four years ago, the relative level of support is still well below the FY 2008 level.

Despite the impact on Alliance members, much has changed since that time. Digital television technology has allowed the educational affiliates to multiply their service to the public many times over through additional channels, increased classroom activities, teacher training and on-line services. In just the past two years, every public TV station in the state has added the 24-hour PBS Kids channel, giving every child in Ohio preparing for school access to a free, over-the-air educational resource, available at any hour. Other stations are increasing broadcast hours for the Ohio Channel, but will require additional support to respond to the expanded mandate for distributing additional coverage of government activities.

During those last two years, the television stations have stepped up our efforts to keep the public safe with the creation of a cyber-safe public safety communications program in partnership with the Ohio EMA. We use our signals as a communications backbone to transmit emergency messaging to other broadcasters. It has become a national model.

Even with all of these additional services for Ohioans, support from the General Assembly is still estimated to represent less than 2% of the combined budgets of the radio and TV stations. The Alliance approaches you requesting that complete the task of restoring state support for public radio, public television and radio reading services to the relative level of ten years ago for the benefit of all citizens of the state.

While the requested increases may appear small when divided among the many stations and services, they are essential in planting the seeds of collaboration that result in state-wide programs, such as the *American Graduate: Getting to Work* initiative and the partnerships in creating the *Ohio Digital Emergency Alerting System*. (OEAS). Additional funding will be needed to expand that technology to assist in providing future support for the growing needs of Ohio's first responder community

Multimedia Grant funds allow public television stations to leverage their governmental and community investments to utilize their unique core competencies in creating compelling short and long-form video content for educational use. Today, stations use these funds to collaborate with the Ohio Department of Education to support career programs and other initiatives tied to local and state needs. The focus today is introducing young people to well-paying careers in alignment with Ohio's workforce development efforts. Again, the additional funds will be used to help us grow these initiatives, benefiting students in every school district and at every economic level utilizing the television operations' media and educational expertise.

Again, based on an estimated population of 11.5-million Ohioans, the increase requested in the Content Development line are less than 14 cents per person per year, a very effective use of funds for the number of people of all ages who use our educational and cultural programming and a link to the larger world.

NON-GRF BUDGET LINES

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2020	FY 2021
4F30	935603	Affiliate Services*	0	0
4T20	935605	Government Television/ Telecommunications Operating*	0	0
5FK0	935608	Media Services*	0	0
5VB0	935650	Facility Rental	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,000
Annual total:			\$ 30,000	\$ 32,000

While BEMC is not requesting additional appropriations on the Affiliate Services, Government Television and Media Services lines, the agency has requested new budget language allowing for an increase in spending authority for those lines to make better use of the available funds.

Affiliate Services: to \$ 25,000/annually
 Government Telecom: to \$ 50,000/annually
 Media Services: to \$140,000/annually

The new Facility Rental line is the result of a new property lease contract for the BEMC headquarters with The Ohio State University. These figures are new but have already been recommended in the executive budget proposal and as such are not counted as additional requests.

Total Budget Impact

Fund	ALI	ALI Name	Estimate Final	Executive Budget Recommendation		Additional Request over Executive Budget		Total Annual Request	
			FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2021
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau	314,797	314,797	314,797	15,203	15,203	\$ 330,000	\$ 330,000
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Telecommunications Services (Ohio Channel)	1,408,526	1,408,526	1,408,526	375,000	375,000	\$ 1,783,526	\$ 1,783,526
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution (Radio-TV-Radio Reading Services support)	3,838,381	3,838,381	3,838,381	1,608,108	1,608,108	\$ 5,446,489	\$ 5,446,489
GRF	935430	Broadcast Education Operating (Agency)	3,699,224	3,699,224	3,699,224	1,025,000	623,000	\$ 4,724,224	\$ 4,322,216
GRF Subtotal			9,260,928	9,260,928	9,260,928	3,023,311	2,621,311	\$ 12,284,231	\$ 11,882,231
4F30	935603	Affiliate Services*	4,000	4,000	4,000	0	0	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
4T20	935605	Government Television/ Telecommunications Operating*	7,000	0	0	0	0	\$ 0	\$ 0
5FK0	935608	Media Services	95,000	95,000	95,000	0	0	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000
5VB0	935650	Facility Rental	0	30,000	32,000	0	0	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,000
Internal Service Activity & Dedicated Purpose Subtotal			106,000	129,000	131,000	0	0	\$ 129,000	\$ 131,000
TOTALS			9,336,829	9,389,928	9,391,928	3,023,311	2,621,311	\$ 12,413,231	\$12,187,538

*BEMC is not requesting increases in appropriations in these three non-GRF areas.

However, the agency is submitting language changes that would increase spending authority from existing money in these funds:

Affiliate Services to \$10,000 annually, Gov Tele/Telcom Operating to \$55,000 annually, and Media Services to \$140,000 annually.