

Ohio Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee

FY 2018-2019 Budget Testimony, May 9, 2017

Testimony from Thomas Rieland, General Manager of WOSU Public Media in Columbus on behalf of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications.

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Tom Rieland, and I serve as General Manager of WOSU Public Media. Like other noncommercial public media organizations in the state, WOSU provides a range of educational services to the citizens of Ohio.

From multiple channels of noncommercial public television and radio to educational technology training and media creation for Ohio's teachers, plus hundreds of instructional workshops for early childhood caregivers.

Ohio's public media organizations are deeply involved in education and in their communities and act as conveners encouraging citizen involvement in dialog about vital issues. All of Ohio's stations create local programming that brings our communities together.

At WOSU, that means programs like our nationally recognized COLUMBUS NEIGHBORHOODS cultural documentary and engagement project; our BROAD & HIGH arts series, the IN THE KNOW high school quiz programming, now in its 34th year on WOSU, and our public affairs series COLUMBUS ON THE RECORD.

You likely know something of the programming provided by your local public station, but I wanted to outline three nationally recognized projects that are renowned well beyond the state's borders.

First -- over the past year, Ohio's public television stations have become a part of Ohio's overall public safety backbone. The newly created OEAS Public AlertNet network uses all of Ohio's public television stations to embed emergency alerts and messaging into our digital TV signals. This innovative system, developed in partnership with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and BEMC, provides a cyber-safe avenue for delivering messages from the EMA to public and commercial broadcasters for delivery to the public. It's now a national model that is endorsed by FEMA.

Second, you are likely aware of how public stations provide on-going support, including airtime for the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau and The Ohio Channel. The Ohio model of providing news and information about state government is much admired across the country and continues to be emulated in other states.

Finally, as you know, the Broadcast Educational Media Commission is the State of Ohio agency with responsibility for public broadcasting and distance learning. The agency is doing a fabulous job providing both operational support and important grant funding for Ohio Government Telecommunications, the Statehouse News Bureau, and Multi-Media Educational programming.

BEMC is engaged in an exciting and important operational modernization project that impacts all of public television in Ohio. This centralization of public channels for distribution using the state's fiber infrastructure is an exemplary activity that is being replicated by public media at only two other locations across the country.

The BEMC requires a team of quality staff to properly operate this complex facility and deliver 24/7 public television programming the citizens of Ohio. While the agency's capital plant is being upgraded for this project, operational support is at historically low levels. State support for public media remains below what it was in 2008. While the vast majority of funding for public broadcasting comes from viewers and listeners like you, the operational support provided BEMC and important funding from the State of Ohio assures that all citizens and schools have access to the same quality programs and services no matter where they are located.

Noting all of this, the Commissioners of the BEMC asked BEMC leadership to develop an optimal budget. The Commission approved that budget unanimously and the Ohio Alliance of Public Telecommunications respectfully requests that you do all you can to assure that optimal budget is included in the upcoming budget of the State of Ohio.

The breadth and quality of programming and services offered by public media stations in Ohio would not be possible without this vital operational and funding support from the State. On behalf of the citizens of the state, we thank you for your past and continued support.

This concludes my testimony.

**Senate Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
BEMC and ODOE Budget Request Detail
Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications**

On behalf of the Ohio Alliance for Public Telecommunications, this document provides detail in support of the BEMC Commission request for funding to operate the agency efficiently and support the affiliate organizations. The Alliance will be happy to respond to any additional questions.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935430	Broadcast Education Operating Formerly: General Operations (935408), Technology Operations (935409) & Information Technology (935412)	\$ 727,755	\$ 770,756
Annual Total:			\$ 727,755	\$ 770,756

The BEMC has simplified budgeting at the agency by aggregating the general operation budget lines at the request of OBM.

The BEMC his providing details on this increase, which includes Personnel, Contracted Services and Maintenance Contracts.

This increase is consistent with the additional requests for the agency advocated by the Alliance two years ago and approved by the House and Senate.

Of particular concern to the Alliance members is the *agency's ability to fund the increase in operating and personnel costs required to maintain and operate the brand-new, IP-based, North Star technology hub* as it assumes the new role in creating 42 broadcast programming streams required to serve all of the 12 educational television station (eight licensees). As was anticipated in the previous budget cycle (but not funded in the final budget), BEMC now requires additional staff to nominally and efficiently operate the new content delivery system that is going into operation in early 2017, ensuring that the state's public television stations to continue to operate 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau (SNB)	\$ 9,734	\$ 19,762
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Television (OGT, Ohio Channel)	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000

The Statehouse News Bureau and Ohio Government Television are requesting additional funding to respond to changing needs in the digital communication world.

The Statehouse News Bureau is requesting an additional \$9,734/\$19,762 over the biennium to support the cost of operation and growing additional costs related to its video, audio, and social media services.

The Ohio Government Channel is requesting an additional \$50,000/\$100,000 each year to maintain its storage system in connection with the BEMC, and to increase coverage of official state events utilizing capital resources provided by the state.

Fund	ALI	ALI Category/Purpose of Request	Additional Request	
			FY 2018	FY 2019
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution		
		Telecommunications Operating Subsidy	\$ 483,319	\$ 483,319
		Multimedia Projects Grant Program	\$ 192,000	\$ 192,000
		Annual total:	\$ 675,319	\$ 675,319

During the “Great Recession”, subsidy funding for programming and related costs for Public Radio, Public Television and Radio Reading Services was reduced due to pressures on the state budget. Despite a much-appreciated increase in the current state budget, we have still not returned to the support levels provided before the recession.

During the past decade, the additional costs of providing multiple channel service (including OGT carriage) for radio and TV (and increased overall costs) mean that support from the General Assembly is down to an estimated less than 3% of the funding required to maintain the stations. During that time, the Federal Government and the State have both eliminated funding to support expensive capital needs that are becoming critical, putting even greater pressure on station operating budget and forcing them to divert over sources of support away from content to allow them to stay on the air. Maintaining the station’s physical transmission assets is also essential in allowing them to provide the growing public safety services afforded by the new OEAS system.

The radio and TV stations use the subsidy money to create local content that is delivered to the public through both broadcast signals and through the internet. This funding supports both enhanced news coverage on both radio and TV, and projects such as the award-winning, now weekly, Columbus Neighborhoods series that has introduced central Ohio residents to their history in both long and short-form programs.

The increase in the Telecommunications Operating Subsidy is requested to simply return funding to the FY 2008 levels.

Multimedia Grant funds allow public television stations to leverage their governmental and community investments to utilize their unique core competencies in creating compelling video content for educational use. BEMC and the stations are partners with the Ohio Department of Education in creating videos, classroom materials and teacher guides consistent with educational needs and state priorities, such as jobs programs.

While the addition funding will allow for the expanded creation of videos and educational support materials, the requested funding will also allow the partners to take advantage of more efficient distribution achieved in the past two years. The DOE, the BEMC and the stations are working to promote usage of the uniquely Ohio-centric content, creating greater value for the investment.

In addition to station and DOE-designated websites, all of the content created in the state under the grant program is also posted on the national PBS Learning Media site.

THE FULL REQUEST IS PROVIDED IN TABLE FORM ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

FY 2018-2019 BEMC Executive Budget Recommendation and Additional Requests

Fund	ALI	ALI Name	Final	Executive Budget Recommendation		Additional Request		Total FY 2018 Annual Request	Total FY 2019 Annual Request
			FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2019		
GRF	935430	Broadcast Education Operating (new)	\$ -	3,793,006	3,793,006	727,755	770,756	\$ 4,520,761	\$ 4,563,761
GRF	935408	General Operations	\$ 495,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
	935409	Technology Operations	\$ 2,743,962	-	-	-	-	-	-
	935412	Information Technology	\$ 500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
								\$ -	\$ -
4F30	935603	Affiliate Services	\$ 4,000	4,000	4,000	-	-	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
4T20	935605	Government Television/Telecommunications Operating	\$ 7,000	7,000	7,000	-	-	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
5FK0	935608	Media Services	\$ 95,000	95,000	95,000	-	-	\$ 95,000	\$ 95,000
GRF	935401	Statehouse News Bureau	\$ 324,533	324,533	324,533	9,734	19,762	\$ 334,267	\$ 344,295
GRF	935402	Ohio Government Telecommunications Services	\$ 1,452,089	1,452,089	1,452,089	50,000	100,000	\$ 1,502,089	\$ 1,552,089
GRF	935410	Content Development, Acquisition and Distribution	\$ 3,957,094	3,957,094	3,957,094	675,319	675,319	\$ 4,632,413	\$ 4,632,413
BEMC Totals			\$ 9,578,678	\$ 9,632,722	\$ 9,632,722	\$ 1,462,808	\$ 1,565,837	\$ 11,095,530	\$ 11,198,558



OHIO EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION STATIONS



Public Media Means Public Safety and Awareness

Reliable State-Wide Broadcast & Webstream



A service of Ohio's Public Media Stations

Emergency Briefings

In addition to our comprehensive coverage of the Legislature, Judicial and Executive Branch events, the Ohio Channel stands ready to distribute state emergency information from anywhere to everywhere.



As the "pool feed" for state information, we're in position to provide content to all commercial outlets covering state emergency briefings.

Delivering Emergency Alerts to All Broadcasters



FEMA
Endorsed



Stations Coverage Map

In late 2016, Ohio's Public Television stations used our statewide broadcast network to create OEAS (Ohio's Digital Emergency Alerting System). OEAS Public AlertNet is a cyber-safe communications backbone that uses our TV signals to deliver critical messaging from the emergency managers who issue alerts to the broadcasters who distribute them to the public. Ohio's first-in-the-nation system is already being adapted for use in North Carolina and California.

Partnerships for Public Safety Response



While OEAS represents a partnership with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and the Broadcast Educational Media Commission, we're also actively exploring new relationships that will utilize our existing technology. We're offering use of the video-capable system to other state agencies in support of first responders and public safety needs, and focusing on ways to utilize our current and future digital broadcast capabilities to support emergency communications to keep Ohioans safe.