



**Educational
Communications
Board**

2011 – 2013 Biennial Report

**Gene Purcell
Executive Director**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to present the 2011-2013 biennial report from the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board.

The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB) was formed in 1971 with the mission of providing a statewide telecommunications system in support of education and public media. The ECB does so in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin and a variety of other partners.

In addition, the ECB plays important roles in acquiring, producing, and distributing educational media for K-12 education and in supporting public safety activities in the state such as the NOAA/National Weather Service transmitter network, the Emergency Alert System and Amber Alert.

This report covers activities from 2011 to 2013 and is augmented by a variety of web-based links throughout that will provide the reader with much more information about the work of the ECB.

In summary, the ECB operates four Divisions

- 1) Wisconsin Public Radio – ECB oversees the operation of this statewide public radio service which provides public broadcasting services in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Extension. WPR provides a wide variety of programming including news, entertainment, and cultural material to most of the state of Wisconsin. WPR operates three networks and also provides internet based service. Within the last two years, WPR has also developed an “app” which allows the networks to be accessed through a smartphone.

- 2) Wisconsin Public Television – ECB oversees the operation of this public television network in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Extension. Wisconsin Public Television serves much of Wisconsin with three separate streams of programming including instructional and educational programming geared towards K-12 students, extensive news, public affairs, entertainment, and cultural programming. ECB cooperates with Milwaukee Public Television and WDSE-TV to ensure statewide broadcast delivery of educational media.

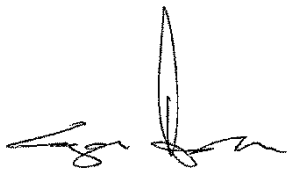
- 3) Wisconsin Media Lab – Wisconsin Media Lab is the Education Division of the ECB which acquires programming rights to vetted educational media content for K-12 educators and students in the state. In addition to rights acquisition, Wisconsin Media Lab staff also produces programming content which is specific to the unique needs of Wisconsin educators and students. Wisconsin Media Lab staff members work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and other educational organizations in the state.

- 4) The Delivery/Operations Division – This division of the ECB is charged with the responsibility of building and maintaining the technical infrastructure necessary to deliver public media programming throughout the state. ECB engineering staff oversee the Operations Center in Madison and maintain public television and radio transmitters and associated equipment and infrastructure throughout the state. In addition, engineering staff maintain the 28 station NOAA/National Weather Service transmitter network and ensure the reliable operation of the state’s broadcast Amber Alert and Emergency Alert System (EAS).

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to highlight the important work of the ECB.

If you have questions or comments regarding this report or any of the work of the Educational Communications Board, please contact me at 608-264-9666. You can also find additional information regarding the ECB’s work, its partners, and its goals at www.ecb.org.

Sincerely,



Gene Purcell
Executive Director

The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board has the unique mission of delivering high quality educational and public media to the citizens of Wisconsin. While there have been many changes since the founding of the ECB in the early 1970's, that essential mission remains unchanged.

The goal of the ECB is to produce, acquire and deliver public media programming designed to support K-12 education as well as to advance the cultural and intellectual enrichment of all Wisconsin residents.

Here is a link to ECB's budget details for the 2011-2013 biennium:

<http://www.doa.state.wi.us/debf/docview1113.asp?budid=15>

ECB meets this goal by utilizing a variety of technologies including public radio, television and internet based platforms. The ECB will strive to provide programming to residents in a format which best meets the demand of truly promoting the "Wisconsin Idea."

As part of that effort, ECB undertook a project during the past two years to enhance the visibility of its Education Division with educators by rebranding the Division as Wisconsin Media Lab.

Wisconsin Media Lab has continued the work of the ECB in the evolution of digital platforms, particularly in the area of PK-12 educational media as many schools throughout Wisconsin work to put more technology into the hands of their students. A good example of this is the increasing use of tablet technology in the schools which has required ECB to provide media that can be accessed by these types of portable devices.

The Wisconsin Media Lab production of "The Ways" (<http://theways.org>) an ongoing series of stories on culture and language from Native Communities around the central Great Lakes is an excellent example of ECB's commitment to providing these essential digital resources.

In addition, ECB's membership in PBS (www.pbs.org) also provides the Wisconsin Media Lab with access to the high quality, vetted, and trusted instructional programming from public media sources throughout the country and from around the world.

In partnership with state educators and the state's Department of Public Instruction, ECB's impact on Wisconsin K-12 educators and students is substantial. And, it is important to note that ECB/Wisconsin Media Lab materials are also available for use by private schools and by homeschoolers in Wisconsin. During the past two years, that impact has been demonstrated in part by a steady increase in web usage of Wisconsin Media Lab educational content.

And, as budgets for schools have tightened, the resources provided by ECB and the Wisconsin Media Lab (at no cost to educators and students) have become even more critical.

You can learn more about the work of Wisconsin Media Lab here: www.ecb.org

ECB continues its commitment to our 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 a way that no other media can do.

Whether it's the daily talk show coverage produced on the "Ideas" network of WPR; focused election coverage on WisconsinVote.org; "Here and Now" with Frederica Freyberg (http://wpt.org/Here_and_Now/main), the ongoing "Wisconsin Life" (www.wisconsinlife.org) series on WPR; or a glimpse of classical music's future with "The Final Forte" (http://wpt.org/final_forte) WPR and WPT strive to bring a sense of place to their programming.

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 educational 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>))

Additionally, ECB staff members are 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.

During the past biennium, the ECB undertook steps to improve NOAA coverage in the state including initiating NOAA coverage in the Gresham area and relocation of an existing site to provide improved coverage in the Spooner area.

Here is a link which will provide you with more information regarding ECB's public safety responsibilities:

<http://www.ecb.org/broadcasting/safety.html>

Together, WPR and WPT were utilized by nearly one-million people in Wisconsin on any given week during the past two years and while there is much work to be done, we have had success in our efforts to broaden the base of financial support for both public radio and public television.

The ECB provides these services with 56.68 FTE, following a reduction of 5.50 FTE in the 2011-2013 budget. Over the years, the ECB has compiled many years of experience with flexible work patterns since the agency implemented its policies and procedures in the early 1980s. In conjunction with this, and to better equip the agency for COOP responsibilities, the ECB has also implemented policies on telecommuting and work-at-home. The ECB continues to offer its employees permanent part-time positions, job sharing, flexible-time work schedules and other alternative employment arrangements.

The goal of serving all of the state's citizens with public media is one that ECB, its predecessors and its partners have been striving to meet for decades. ECB accomplishes this goal through Wisconsin Public Radio; Wisconsin Public Television; delivering K-12 Educational media via Wisconsin Media Lab; along with our work in public safety.

All of us at the ECB are proud to be part of the fabric and culture of Wisconsin and the services ECB provides are something of which the residents of Wisconsin can also take pride in.

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.