

Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) FY 2020 Stabilization Funding Request

March 17, 2020

STATEMENT OF NEED AND REQUEST

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (“CPB”) requests \$250 million in stabilization funding to ensure the viability of public media stations during this period of extraordinary economic hardship. As a grant making organization in regular communication with our grantees, CPB stands ready to process stabilization payments quickly.

Every day, local stations leverage CPB funding to secure vital support from other sources, with nonfederal funding representing five of every six dollars invested annually in public media. Due to the unprecedented financial impact of the coronavirus, public media stations across the country are facing a severe decrease in funding from individuals, charitable foundations, corporate underwriting, states and universities. Early estimates, based on a projected crisis duration of six to eight weeks, indicate that FY 2020 losses could exceed \$200 million.

In Fiscal Year 2018, corporate support, which is not limited to, but includes underwriting, for the entire public media system totaled \$448 million. During the 2008 economic recession, corporate support declined by approximately 20 percent. Today, public television system leaders are estimating that they could lose one-third of corporate underwriting revenues. For one large station responsible for national production, that loss would be \$12 million alone. This loss does not include the impact on foundational giving, college and university support, membership, or a fall-off in major gifts. Public radio system leaders are estimating a \$50 million loss in nonfederal revenue.

Compounding these revenue losses would be the loss of the support that 36 states currently provide to public media stations, which accounts for \$216 million of the public broadcasting system’s annual revenue. Following the 2008 market crash and for several years thereafter, state funding for public media was reduced by approximately \$90 million. Today, 12 years later, state funding has rebounded significantly, but is still lower than the pre-recession peak.

CPB’s core mission is to ensure universal access to high-quality, non-commercial content and telecommunications services that educate, inform and enrich the public. Further, in many states and local communities, public media stations’ digital and broadcast infrastructure provide the backbone for emergency alert, public safety, first responder and homeland security services. If stations are forced to cut jobs, reduce content and services, or even close, the nation’s ability to deliver emergency alerts, much less essential information and educational services where schools have been closed will be significantly diminished.

APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE REQUEST

For payment to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (“Corporation”), \$250,000,000 shall be made available for fiscal stabilization grants to public telecommunications entities, with no deduction for administrative or other costs of the Corporation, to maintain programming and

services and preserve small and rural stations threatened by declines in non-Federal revenues due to the impact of the coronavirus.

GOALS

- To ensure continued universal access of public media service to Americans.
- To ensure continuity of local and national services provided by public media stations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

As the steward of the federal investment for our nation's public media system, CPB would send stabilization payments directly to public telecommunications entities that have experienced financial losses. By examining declines in key revenue streams – such as membership, corporate and foundation underwriting – as well as looking at projected shortfalls in state and university funding, we will be able to provide much needed support to those entities most in danger of reducing staff, content production and services, or declaring bankruptcy.

PUBLIC MEDIA STATIONS SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Educational Services

As school districts shutdown across our country due to the coronavirus outbreak, public television stations are offering their broadcast and online services to help teachers continue educational instruction and close the homework gap (those who are connected online and for those who are not). For example, in Southern California, PBS SoCal, KCET, and KLCS in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District and in collaboration with California PBS member stations, are delivering a broadcast schedule that is designed and sequenced to support instruction for children in grades PreK-12. To complement the broadcast component, they have partnered with KQED to support teachers with PBS LearningMedia's free resources that map to state curriculum standards.

Following suit, in South Carolina, Michigan, Louisiana and Massachusetts, when the governors announced school closures across the state, public television stations, in partnership with community educators, announced that they would provide educational programming and associated digital resources that adhere to the state's curriculum to foster at-home learning across all grade levels.

Nationally, PBS is providing a variety of resources available to families and educators to support their learning needs, including:

A new PBS KIDS Daily newsletter offering educational videos, games and related offline activities to help keep kids play and learn while schools are closed.

PBS LearningMedia is offering free professional learning events for PreK-12 educators that includes tips and techniques to support distance instruction.

News and Public Affairs

In all 50 states, public media stations are playing a vital role informing the local community about the latest coronavirus developments, delivering critical reporting and spotlighting local resources intended to help Americans navigate these uncertain times. Examples include:

- **Alabama**

- Alabama Public Television's Capitol Journal topped off the March 6 broadcast with [a report about a new Alabama coronavirus preparedness task force](#). The report featured an interview with the leader of the effort, state health officer Scott Harris, who told APT that it is likely that coronavirus will reach the state, even if it hasn't yet already.
- WBHM-Birmingham's coronavirus coverage about [state preparedness](#) links to an [interview](#) with Jefferson County's director of Disease Control, who discussed local hospital preparedness and what would prompt authorities to close schools.

- **Connecticut**

- Connecticut Public's home page directs viewers to a dedicated page, [What Connecticut Needs to Know about the Coronavirus](#), with guidance on symptoms and resources. It also includes an interactive map of New England's confirmed cases, designed by the CPB-funded New England News Collaborative.

- **Kentucky**

- The CPB-funded Ohio Valley ReSource, led by Editorial Integrity and Leadership Initiative editor Jeff Young, is continuously updating its [reporting on how colleges and universities in the region are responding](#) to the coronavirus. On March 10, Ohio Valley ReSource's scheduled training with the CPB-funded America Amplified was changed from an in-person session to an all-day digital day.
- WFPL Louisville Public Media is continually updating its [dedicated page](#) on coronavirus updates about Kentucky and Indiana, with the latest guidance from Governor Andy Beshear. Their daily reporting on the virus, which has looked at impacts on schools, prisons, and nursing homes, can be found [here](#).
- WUKY in Lexington reports that University of Kentucky officials are gathering information on student and employee personal [travel](#) to ensure healthcare protocols are followed on their return.

- **Missouri**

- [St. Louis Public Radio](#) has a Q&A for top questions, and has been reporting on the state's [first case of COVID-19](#) in St. Louis County.
- Nine Net's "Living St. Louis" [February 24 show](#) featured St. Louis University researcher Dr. Sharon Frey explaining the challenges of finding a coronavirus vaccine.

- **New York**
 - WNYC’s [live blog](#) is keeping a running total of cases in New York and includes a data visualization timeline of New York City area cases. They have a specific page on [How to Prepare for the Coronavirus in NYC](#) and regularly updated [FAQ page](#). Gothamist is also providing practical advice, like a New York Number for residents to report [price gouging](#) on high-demand products like Purell.
 - WXXI in Rochester, NY has compiled a list of resources, both local and national on their website [WXXI Coronavirus Info and Resources](#)
 - WBFO is reporting on the latest guidance given by Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gail Burstein to [116 Erie County residents](#) asked to undergo voluntary self-quarantine.
 - WLIW-TV Long Island’s local news and public affairs show, MetroFocus, tried to help viewers navigate the city and statewide response to the coronavirus outbreak in the [March 9](#) show.
- **Oklahoma**
 - KWGS Public Radio Tulsa is reporting on the [latest COVID-19 cases](#) in the state.
- **Texas**
 - The CPB-supported Texas Newsroom is leading coordinated joint coverage both on air and online, with eight Texas newsroom staff based at KERA Dallas, KUT Austin, Texas Public radio in San Antonio, Houston Public Media, and KTEP El Paso working to produce content for six statewide newscasts every weekday, the statewide magazine Texas Standard, national NPR newscasts, and content for stations across Texas.
 - Texas Public Radio in San Antonio has [played a leading role in the coverage](#), in part because Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio has been a quarantine center for folks taken off the infected cruise ships. TPR’s one-hour live call-in show, The Source,” focused the March 9 show on coronavirus with guest [representatives from the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, Southwest Regional Advisory Council, and San Antonio Fire Department](#).
 - KUT Austin aired a coronavirus special the morning of March 12 that many Texas Newsroom stations picked up.
 - KERA Dallas’ Mental Health Reporter is taking the lead on coverage for the station, and she was out ahead of the mental health impact with this story last month titled, [Experts Say Coronavirus Poses A Low Risk To The U.S. — So Why Are We So Afraid?](#) KERA is also planning an in-depth project as part of their [One Crisis Away initiative](#), looking at the impact this is having on folks living on the financial edge. KERA also ran a piece on how you can protect yourself with [links to resources](#)

- On [February 20](#) and [February 13](#) KLRN-TV San Antonio’s public affairs show “On the Record” conducted interviews about the cruise ship evacuees housed at Lackland, including an interview with CDC’s Deputy Director Captain Jennifer McQuiston.
- PBS El Paso’s monthly [call-in show](#) is featuring health and medical specialists focused on coronavirus. The audience is encouraged to submit questions ahead of the show.
- **Vermont**
 - Vermont Public Radio has produced a number of items including; [FAQs](#); how hospitals are preparing for coronavirus - [Community Hospitals Prepare for Coronavirus](#); and [Travel Tips](#).
- **Washington**
 - KUOW-FM Seattle, which serves a community at the epicenter of the outbreak, is posting live updates about the coronavirus online, in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The NPR-member station has broadcast [public health updates](#) live, explained [who is most at risk](#) for severe illness, disseminated information about the [governor’s decision to cover COVID-19 tests for the uninsured](#), documented the impact on local businesses and [Chinatown](#) and [food banks](#), and [closely covered](#) the outbreak at the local nursing home facility where many people have died. They also reported that the [first clinical trials for a coronavirus vaccine](#) will be taking place in Seattle. KUOW is encouraging the public to text and email the station to share their thoughts and questions about coronavirus.
 - KCTS Seattle’s digital publication Crosscut published an [in-depth story](#) of how local school districts are putting together plans to keep teaching and feeding students through closures during the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - KCTS Seattle’s digital news publication Crosscut has a [FAQ page on coronavirus in Washington State](#). Their coverage includes a look at how the coronavirus is an [“extraordinary threat” to the area’s significant homeless population](#).

Further, at a time when local newspapers are in free fall, and local public media stations are picking up the slack, the coronavirus pandemic is creating additional challenges for the thousands of reporters who are gathering news, editing and publishing. Expenses for public media stations are increasing as staff unexpectedly telework. In order to continue to provide high-quality, trusted, local and national information at this extraordinary time, stations are moving to equip their journalists with editing software and online tools that can be downloaded and used from their home office space. Stabilization grants will help stations cover these unexpected costs and allow them to continue their critical role in providing information to their communities.