



Corporation  
for Public  
Broadcasting

## Innovation in Public Media

With CPB's leadership and support, public media over the last 50 years has developed a broadcast infrastructure to support the seamless delivery of content from multiple sources to local public television and radio stations. Reaching nearly every part of the United States, this broadcast service engages Americans with rich storytelling, fact-based journalism, educational content and community services that are essential to strengthening our civil society.

Technology changes, demographic shifts and evolving audience expectations are driving important shifts in the public media system. To deliver experiences audiences expect today, support sustainability, and create efficiency at local and national levels, CPB is making strategic systemwide investments in digital infrastructure, addressing the need for scalability, interoperability, and cost-effectiveness for all stations and producers. These investments benefit the American people by delivering content and services when, where, and how they choose to consume them.

Historically, public media innovations have focused on providing universal access, such as closed captioning and Braille services for the hearing impaired and the blind. CPB launched the nation's first interconnection system, enabling all PBS stations to share and broadcast content over-the-air, reaching 95 percent of households. Public media also implemented multicasting services, mobile DTV, HD, and educational and public safety datacasting capabilities.

Today, CPB provides leadership to the public media industry by providing professional development resources to educate and advise station personnel and help stations navigate global industry changes. For example, CPB is facilitating learning opportunities about the new broadcast standard, ATSC 3.0 or NextGen TV, providing webinars, white papers, and advisors to support stations as they adapt to the enhanced content and educational opportunities available via this emerging technology. CPB's investments directly support stations in three areas:

### CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

- Digital Voltage is a series of workshops for public media stations in partnership with PBS Digital Studios' producers, YouTube creators and strategists to discuss digital content development, production, channel optimization, and marketing. Additional training for digital strategy and digital-focused staff has led to increased efforts in content promotion and community engagement.
- PRX's Project Catapult, a podcast development program for emerging producers and hosts, helps stations create podcasts and develop their overall digital storytelling capacity.
- CoastAlaska, a network of public radio stations in southeastern Alaska, created portable radio station kits for emergency situations. In 2017, two were sent to Puerto Rico, enabling the local public radio stations to resume broadcasting after Hurricane Maria.
- In many states and local communities, public media stations' digital and broadcast infrastructure provides the backbone for emergency alert, public safety, first responder, and homeland security services. Examples include:
  - Through CPB grants to NPR, 63 public radio stations across 17 states vulnerable to earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes received the software and training to provide text and graphic alerts. The alerts

### Public Media Firsts

1977—CPB and NPR pioneered accessible radio technology, creating live-captioned and braille radio programming.

1978—CPB introduced the first U.S. Satellite Program Distribution System, which enabled national distributors, stations; and producers to distribute programming to public media licensees in all 50 states and the territories.

1979—With CPB support, PBS was the first network to offer closed-captioned and descriptive video service for TV.

1994—CPB funded the first Native American satellite radio network.

2002—Seven public TV stations were among the first DTV broadcasters.

2013—With CPB support, TPT collaborated with Minnesota public safety and emergency management organizations to launch the country's first-of-its-kind, multi-lingual warning and alert messaging system.

are synchronized with over-the-air broadcast messages to be heard and seen on mobile phones, HD radios, “connected car” devices, Radio Data System displays, and online audio streaming.

- The Florida Public Radio Emergency Network (FPREN) developed the Florida Storms app, which provides statewide multimedia updates during hurricanes or other emergencies to stations across the state, their websites, social media channels and on mobile devices.

## **EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- The Digital Infrastructure Initiative includes strategic long-term investments to build and strengthen the digital foundation necessary for public media to thrive in a digital-first world. These investments ensure public media is adapting to consumers’ media habits by creating system-wide efficiencies, interoperability and scalability that helps the system create more customized user experiences and capture new revenue opportunities. The first initiative, an identity management solution that enables a system-wide Single Sign-On (SSO) service across public media websites will help stations leverage user data to make informed decisions regarding content and the creation of personalized experiences, strengthening audience relationships.
- Since 1999, CPB has encouraged joint master control (JMC) operations as a viable strategy to improve operational efficiencies, develop economies of scale, secure long-term sustainability, and strengthen capacity to deliver local content and services. In 2011, our Digital Distribution Fund supported the first facility (Centralcast) to combine the master control functions of at least five transmitters. Since 2016, CPB’s Healthy Network Initiative has provided funding for 28 public television stations to join a JMC.
- CPB is funding a Content Management System (CMS) for public media to serve as a single, shared CMS for national organizations and stations. The platform will enable faster content creation and a streamlined process for content sharing and collaboration, enabling publishing at scale, and greater cost efficiencies for the system.
- Local Journalism Collaborations are networks of local and regional news organizations that, in partnership with national producers, strengthen public media’s role as a trusted source of news and information. CPB has invested more than \$39 million to help launch 40 journalism collaborations connecting 126 public media stations in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Public media’s innovative journalism collaborations have inspired similar models across commercial media.
- Six public radio stations worked with WBUR’s BizLab, an innovation incubator, to develop and test new ideas in public radio fund-raising. Through the CPB-funded initiative, the stations were guided through an iterative “design thinking” process to help them develop new models of sustainability for public radio.
- The Public Media Major Giving Academy is a 13-week online curriculum being developed by Greater Public with CPB support to train station leadership and development officers to nurture major giving for public media.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

- The Digital Culture Accelerator is a professional development program designed to accelerate digital transformation by affecting organizational change and advancing a digital mindset among station leaders. It has helped stations integrate long-term digital strategies and best practices into their local newsrooms and content/program operations, and leverage data to measure the outcomes of these practices against strategic goals. Successful outcomes have included new audience development programs, increased user engagement in digital channels, including websites and e-newsletters, and increased membership revenues. An accompanying online playbook provides insights and best practices, enabling public media leaders to hone their digital acumen, breaking-down many disciplines (e.g. content; social, email, etc.) in step-by-step guides, diagrams, and webinars.
- The PBS Digital Immersion Project is both a mentor-based and self-paced professional development program for mid-level digital managers offering a multi-platform, educational curriculum to meet public media’s current and future digital needs. In 2017, CPB provided funds along with PBS for the first round of the program, designed for digital staff from public television stations across the country. To date, the program has helped personnel at 100 stations with essential skills like data-based decision making, multi-platform strategies, and digital content creation and distribution. A three-year extension of the program was funded in 2019 to expand the reach of the curriculum to more PBS member stations.