



## Educational Communications Board

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### **EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEETING**

**ECB Board Room  
3319 West Beltline Highway  
Madison, Wisconsin  
January 15th, 2016  
9:30 a.m.**

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#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

**Gene Purcell**

#### **Budget Wrap Up**

The implementation of operational changes following the substantial cut in state funding to ECB included in the 2015-2017 state budget has been largely completed. Changes include a small reduction in engineering staff as well as a more substantial reduction of staff at Wisconsin Media Lab. ECB has also ended most licensing and production activities related to K-12 educational media.

In addition, the ECB has completed the moves and consolidation of ECB administrative staff into the west wing of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor at the beltline building.

However, some elements of the 2015-2017 state budget remain unresolved for ECB and some other state agencies. Most prominent of these is a proposal to transfer remaining IT and Finance department functions to the Department of Administration. The state budget calls for the DOA to consult with affected agencies and to present a plan to the Joint Committee on Finance by next spring. I expect to work with DOA during the coming months to provide Agency input into this process.

Separately, this issue may also be included in current legislation designed to update State of Wisconsin civil service rules.

#### **STAR Transition**

The implementation of the “STAR” project at ECB and other State of Wisconsin agencies is underway as various elements of the system “go live.”

The STAR project involves phasing out the wide variety of antiquated HR and financial IT platforms used by the State of Wisconsin and then combining these functions into a common platform. Planning for the project began in early 2014, and accelerated during 2015.



ECB functions in the initial transition include: Agency financial recordkeeping, purchasing, accounts payable, payroll, benefits and more.

Financial functions such as purchasing and budgeting were transitioned to the new systems beginning on October 1, 2015.

In December 2015, the second phase of the project was implemented as agencies transitioned into using the STAR system for staff payroll. As with the implementation of the financial systems earlier in 2015, there was a great deal of internal planning and preparation throughout 2014 and 2015, followed by a steep learning curve for DOA and ECB staff as those systems were implemented.

As of this writing, the STAR financial and payroll systems are largely functional, although they continue to require additional implementation from DOA and ECB staff.

Further implementation of STAR system functions are scheduled for 2016.

### **Annual Financial audit set to begin**

Each year, the ECB is required to undergo a financial audit in order to remain qualified for federal funding distributed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Auditors from the Milwaukee-based CPA firm of Riley, Penner & Benton are scheduled to be on-site at ECB beginning the week of January 11. It's expected the audit will be completed by the end of February; audit results will be presented to Board members at its April 2016 meeting.

As a reminder, this audit will encompass the 2014-2015 fiscal year, a period of time where ECB staff collected financial information from the State of Wisconsin's "legacy" IT systems, meaning that the information from those systems has to be manually transferred from one system to another in order to provide auditing staff with necessary financial information. This transfer of data increases the likelihood of mistakes being made and has been highlighted in past audits.

Ultimately, the full implementation of the STAR system will reduce the need for this type of manual data transfers and will directly address these concerns. However, board members should be aware that these issues will continue to be present in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 audits.



### **The future of Wisconsin Media Lab**

A series of planning meetings were held during the past several months to examine the future of Wisconsin Media Lab. To date, the meetings have been internal and have focused on “big picture” topics such funding and whether the Wisconsin Media Lab can continue to exist at ECB or whether other options such as partnerships should be explored.

There has also been substantial discussion as to the level and type of services offered by Wisconsin Media Lab. Until this year, the Wisconsin Media Lab provided licensing for educational media materials which could then be used by K-12 educators and students, as well as producing content specific to Wisconsin.

Following the budget reduction to Wisconsin Media Lab, staffing has been reduced and all licensing and production activities are ending. Currently, one staff member remains at Wisconsin Media Lab to provide limited outreach support and maintenance of current activities.

During the next several months, the planning meetings will expand to include educators and others including our colleagues at UW-Extension and WPT.

### **FCC Spectrum Auction delayed**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has delayed the opening of the time period for broadcasters to file their intent to participate in the upcoming voluntary auction of TV spectrum.

The original opening was scheduled for mid-December 2015 and was subsequently delayed until January 12, 2016.

Broadcasters will then have until March 29, 2016 to indicate their interest in participating in the auction.

Since ECB will not be participating in the spectrum auction, there is no requirement to take any further action on this matter.

Following the end of the spectrum auction process, ECB expects to be notified of any changes in channel assignments for its TV stations which could result in a station being “repacked.” Board members can expect to hear much more about the “repack” during the next few years.