Educational Telecommunications Board of Directors

**Executive Director’s Report**

May 28, 2020

Where to begin….

There simply aren’t enough words to express my profound pride in in the staff of SDPB and what they have accomplished in the past months under less than ideal conditions. They have shown incredible resiliency, doggedness and team spirit and it shows in the quality and quantity of our work product. It also shows in our audience growth.

In March we enacted a plan to protect our staff and core infrastructures. So far it has worked out well. We intend to keep our work-from-home and key staff in facilities plan in place through much of the summer. The only significant change will be in allowing content staff greater freedom to travel, shoot video and capture interviews. We are not planning for events or outreach activities involving audiences in our studios for the foreseeable future.

In March the Department of Education reached out and asked us how we could support at-home and distance learning. We were able to provide K-12 educational programming on our SDPBTV channel 2 throughout the daytime and inserted special local educational content on our main SDPBTV channel. Additionally, we launched our Early Learning Initiative three months sooner than planned to serve the Pre-K audience impacted by the school closures. Again, as the numbers indicate, our services found their intended audience and were used.

We are in the early stages of planning expanded support for education in the fall and are awaiting some further direction from the Governor’s office and DOE.

SDPB has also stepped up the past few months in our State Emergency Operations role carrying the Governor’s daily press briefings and briefings from the Emergency Operations Center in Pierre. We have equipment and connects set up for long-term use as needed.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) received $75M in stimulus funds. These funds were distributed to qualifying public broadcasters across the country who each received a base amount. Those stations serving largely rural markets received an additional amount. SDPB qualified for the additional funding and received a total of $380,000 to support radio and television operations. There are no requirements for how we can spend these dollars. We are planning to hold them and use them to plug budget holes in FY21.

Due to the loss of underwriting revenue in general and specifically related to sports – or the loss thereof – and anticipated losses in membership and endowment earnings, Friends of SDPB voted to decrease their support to SDPB in FY20 by $250,000. The dollars mentioned above and our own decreased expenditures in travel and other areas due to COVID should get us through the next few months.

SDPB, along with the other division of State government have been asked to submit all expenditures made related to COVID and track expenditures going forward. Additionally, we were asked to compile a list of possible new expenditures to improve our ability to do our work and fulfill our mission. SDPB submitted around $1.2M in capital assets and other expenses. We are still waiting to hear back from the Governor’s office.

Nationally, Americas Public Television Service (APTS) is working on a second round of stimulus funding for public broadcasting. It is likely these dollars could be geared towards education support rather than rural stations. PBS rescinded their plan to raise membership dues in FY21 due to the financial strain on stations. NPR is working through their budget now as well.

All national meetings of PBS, NPR, APTS, OSBE, CPB and AGC (pretty much the entire acronym soup comprising affinity groups in public broadcasting) have put all meetings on hold indefinitely. I have been on several zoom calls with my national colleagues. While public broadcasters around the country have all responded to the crisis in their own way, state public broadcasters have played significant roles in emergency information, open government, K-12 support, Pre-K support and reporting. Some states are considering expanding their public broadcasting footprint to reach more of their rural citizens. SDPB is fortunate to have the broad coverage we do.

Work is continuing our Coming Home CPB research grant. We hope to begin conducting audience surveys and focus group studies this summer. SDPB has also been asked to submit a grant proposal to the BHACF for efforts in Pre-K education. Other pending outreach grants have been re-worked to accommodate for social distancing or moved to digital platforms.