

This message bank provides responses to anticipated questions about the recent elimination of two years of federal funding for public media

In July 2025, Congress approved a rescission proposal eliminating nearly \$3 million annually in federal support allocated to Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

This decision, combined with the loss of the Ready To Learn grant and executive actions restricting public media funding, represents an unprecedented disruption to the national public media system and the local services our community relies on.

This guide was created to support staff, leadership, and stakeholders as they navigate public questions and conversations about what these cuts mean. Inside, you'll find:

- Background on the rescission and related federal actions
- Details on the local impact for Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ
- Messaging on what the public can do to help
- Clarification of the relationships between Detroit PBS, PBS, and CPB
- Responses to DEI-related questions following national changes

FEDERAL FUNDING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What happened with federal funding for public media?

A: Congress approved a White House proposal to rescind two years of previously allocated funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). This decision eliminates nearly \$3 million annually in federal support for Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ, beginning immediately.

Q: Why was this funding eliminated?

A: The rescission was part of a broader political effort targeting federal support for public media. Despite significant public opposition and more than 3 million people nationwide contacting Congress to stop it, the measure passed both chambers.

Q: How important was this funding to your stations?

A: Federal funding made up about 10% of Detroit PBS's annual budget. It played a key role in ensuring long-term stability, particularly for technical infrastructure and operations.

Q: What impact does the loss of federal funding pose for the 90.9 WRCJ specifically?

A: In fiscal year 2025, 90.9 WRCJ received a Radio Community Service Grant of \$173,000 from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). This federal funding is vital to WRCJ's operations, supporting its mission to provide classical and jazz programming to the Detroit community.

WRCJ operates under Detroit PBS, sharing infrastructure and internal departments such as engineering, human resources, accounting, fundraising, and marketing. Therefore, any reductions in federal funding to Detroit PBS would not only impact television programming but 90.9 WRCJ. The intertwined nature of these organizations means that cuts could disrupt essential services, affecting the station's ability to deliver quality content to its listener.

Q: Without federal funding, what are the major sources of funding for Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ?

A: Detroit PBS receives funding from several sources, including:

- **Individual Donations:** Contributions from local members and supporters.
- **Corporate Underwriting:** Sponsorships from companies that support programming.
- **Grants:** Grants from foundations and other nonprofit organizations.
- **Federal Funding:** Allocated through programs like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), though this tends to be a small portion of the budget.
- **State and Local Government Support:** Grants or other funding from state and local agencies for specific projects.
- **Earned Revenue:** Content production, program development, licensing, and other mission-based services to nonprofits.

Q: How will this affect the programming I see or hear?

A: While we remain committed to our mission, the loss of funding will force difficult decisions. Over time, viewers and listeners may see fewer local productions, reduced community engagement efforts, and possible changes to the range of content offered.

Q: Are staff or services being cut?

A: Unfortunately, yes. In response to the loss of federal funding and broader financial pressures, we have implemented layoffs and buyouts, restructured departments, and are reassessing every part of our operation. More adjustments are likely as we evaluate the long-term impact.

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Q: Is there anything that can reverse the budget rescission?

A: The funding that was rescinded is gone. There may be future opportunities to restore public media support in upcoming federal budget cycles, but that will be difficult. The immediate shortfall is real and permanent.

Q: What long-term strategies are in place to reduce reliance on federal funding?

A: Detroit PBS is building long-term resilience through several initiatives:

- **Audience-Centered Content Strategy** – Delivering more personalized, relevant content that deepens engagement and builds loyalty
- **Earned Revenue Growth** – Offering media services to nonprofits and mission-aligned partners to generate sustainable income
- **Expanded Philanthropic Outreach** – Cultivating major gifts, endowments, and long-term investment in our future

By aligning content with community needs and creating value beyond broadcast, we are strengthening support for public media that lasts.

Q: What does this mean for educational programming?

A: Federal funding has been crucial for children’s programming, early learning resources, and community partnerships through initiatives like *Ready to Learn*. Without it, our ability to sustain this work will be significantly challenged.

Q: What can I do to help?

A: Now more than ever, Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ need the support of the community. You can:

- **Donate** at detroitpbs.org/donate or wrcjfm.org
- **Spread the word** about the importance of public media
- **Contact your lawmakers** and express your support for public broadcasting in future budgets

Q: Will Detroit PBS and WRCJ survive this?

A: Yes, but not without sacrifice. We’ve weathered storms before, and we will again. What sustains us is you, our viewers, listeners, and supporters. With your help, we will continue to provide trusted journalism, inspiring music, and educational programming for all.

Q: Does PBS own Detroit PBS? What is the financial relationship between them?

A: No, PBS does not own Detroit PBS. We are an independent, community-licensed public television station, governed locally by a volunteer board of directors representing the Detroit region. PBS acts as a national program distributor, offering educational programs, documentaries, and news to member stations like ours. We pay membership dues and content fees to PBS in exchange for access to this programming.

Q: What is the relationship between Detroit PBS, PBS, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)?

A: Detroit PBS is a locally owned and operated public media station serving Southeast Michigan. It produces and broadcasts content for television, radio (90.9 WRCJ), and digital platforms.

PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) is a national nonprofit organization that distributes programming to nearly 350 member stations across the country — including Detroit PBS. While Detroit PBS airs PBS programs (like *NOVA*, *PBS NewsHour*, and *Antiques Roadshow*), it is an independent station with full control over its local programming and operations.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress to distribute federal funding that supports public media. CPB does **not** produce or distribute content; instead, it provides grants to stations like Detroit PBS to support infrastructure, innovation, and programming — particularly for underserved audiences.

In summary:

- Detroit PBS is your local station.
- PBS is the national distributor of content Detroit PBS airs.
- CPB helps fund the system, including both national and local public media efforts.

Q: What will happen to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)?

A: The CPB is not gone, but its future has been dramatically destabilized. Without restored appropriations in upcoming budget cycles, its role as the backbone of public media funding could effectively be dismantled.

Q: Will the lack of federal funding impact the move back to Detroit?

A: The lack of federal funding will not directly impact Detroit PBS's move to 234 Piquette Avenue in Detroit, as no federal funding is planned for the project. The development is being financed through a capital campaign supported by philanthropic giving from community foundations, corporate sponsors, and individual donations. This campaign operates on a separate budget from the station's annual operating budget. However, financial constraints on either budget could indirectly affect the other, requiring careful coordination to ensure both the relocation and ongoing station operations are fully funded without disruption.

Q: What other threats or actions have been taken against public media?

A: Several actions beyond the rescission of CPB funding are creating serious challenges for public media:

- **Elimination of the Ready To Learn Grant:** This federal program provided vital support for early childhood education through PBS KIDS programming and resources. Its elimination disrupts efforts to reach underserved children with free, high-quality learning tools at home, in schools, and in communities.
- **Executive Order Limiting Use of Funds:** A recent Executive Order directs federal agencies to withhold funding from public media entities that distribute content from NPR or PBS. While facing legal challenges, this action has created uncertainty around existing grants and may discourage new funding partnerships tied to those distribution platforms.
- **Pressure on Underwriting Practices:** Critics have begun targeting the underwriting model, claiming that corporate sponsorships constitute bias or political messaging. This scrutiny could lead to tighter regulations or self-censorship, threatening a revenue stream that helps keep public media free of commercial influence.

Q: What can I do to help?

A: Now more than ever, Detroit PBS and 90.9 WRCJ need the support of the community. You can:

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Q: Where can I find updates?

A: We'll continue to share updates on our websites, newsletters, and social media. If you're not already subscribed, please sign up for email alerts at detroitpbs.org/subscribe.

DEI QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**Q: What is the impact locally on Detroit PBS regarding PBS national's decision to eliminate its DEI department?**

A: Detroit PBS is closely monitoring developments in Washington regarding DEI and federal funding. While PBS National has recently eliminated its dedicated DEI office, Detroit PBS never maintained a separate DEI office; instead, we have integrated DEI values throughout our organization.

Your continued local support is crucial in enabling us to provide valuable service to our community. As a community-funded, non-profit media organization, Detroit PBS is committed to representing the diverse voices of the four million people in the Detroit Metro area. Our approach is simple: Four Million People. One Story.

The Public Broadcast Act of 1967 calls for public media to address the needs of the unserved and underserved audiences and we are dedicated to serving the public interest by addressing the needs of our local communities. This commitment is reflected in the programming we create and present — including [American Black Journal](#), [One Detroit](#), [Great Lakes Now](#), [Detroit Performs Live](#) — but also in our wide-ranging education efforts. Our cradle-to-career approach starts with [early learning](#) from birth to age three and continues well beyond traditional [pre-k through grade 12](#) schooling, ensuring support for learning at every stage of life.

We also ensure that all job candidates and vendors are evaluated based on experience and merit, striving to maintain a team and programming that mirror the diversity of the community we serve.

We remain committed to our mission, and you can review our progress and impact in our [annual report](#).