

# CPB and the Public Media System

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is a private, nonprofit corporation authorized by Congress in the [Public Broadcasting Act of 1967](#) as the steward of the federal government's investment in public media. Its mission is to provide universal access to content and services that educate, inform, foster curiosity, and strengthen America's civic health.

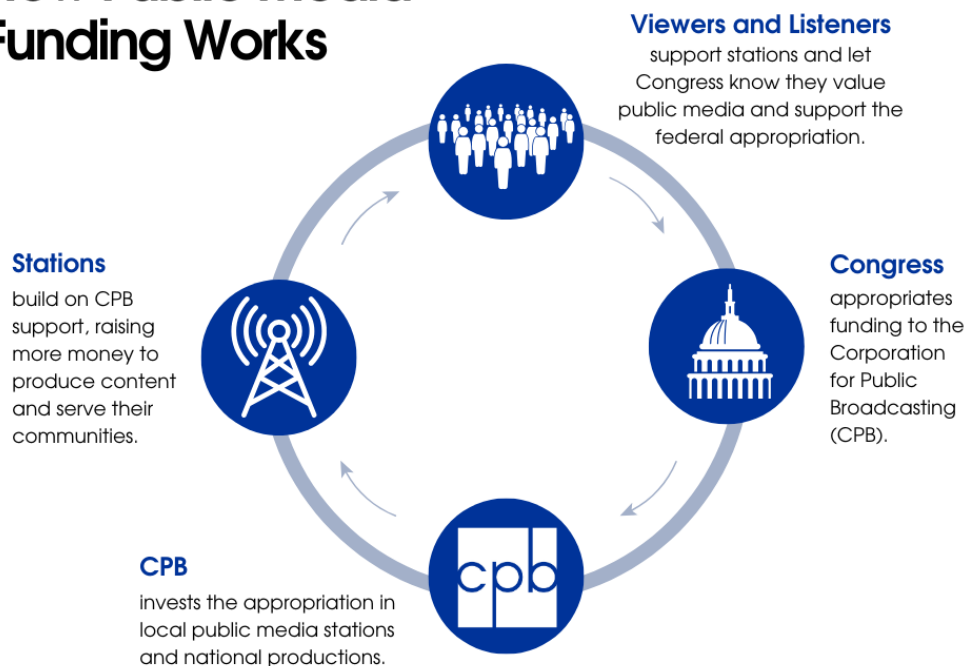
Public media in the United States is an efficient public-private partnership that delivers a strong return on the taxpayers' investment. *For every public dollar provided, stations raise nearly seven dollars from donors, underscoring their value to the communities they serve.*

CPB is the largest single source of funding for public radio, television, and related online and mobile services. Its funding provides the "public" part of the public-private partnership, but by design, CPB funding is not the only source. Since public media in the U.S. is locally based, public media stations rely on individual donors, state and local governments, underwriting, philanthropic and other types of support.

More than 70% of CPB's annual appropriation goes directly to more than 1,500 public television and public radio stations. The funding formula considers whether stations are the only broadcaster in their area or serve rural or small populations, and how much non-federal financial support (NFFS) they raise from other sources. The formula provides a cents-to-the-dollar match on NFFS, encouraging sustainability.

The annual appropriation also funds TV and radio programming, as well as projects that benefit the entire public media system. CPB also administers separate funding for interconnection and infrastructure, the

## How Public Media Funding Works



systems used to transmit public media content and emergency alerting to stations, which then deliver content to their audiences and public safety partners.

By statute, CPB does not produce or distribute content, nor does it own or operate any stations or national distributors such as NPR or PBS. Since 1975, CPB funding has been appropriated [two years in advance](#)—meaning that Congress included CPB’s FY 2025 appropriation in the FY 2023 budget process, the FY 2026 appropriation in the FY 2024 budget process, and so on. However, CPB does not receive this funding from Treasury until the beginning of each fiscal year, in early October. The advance affirms CPB’s role as an independent, private nonprofit and ensures stability in public media planning. It gives producers and stations more lead time to secure additional resources, helping to leverage federal support for greater public benefit.

## The Public Media System

Public media in the U.S. is a locally based, federated system of more than 1,500 public television and radio stations, which are licensed through colleges and universities, state, and local governments, or community nonprofit organizations. Public media provides trusted educational and informational programming that meet the needs of local communities. In many areas, they are the only locally owned and operated media left.

**Public media stations** make programming decisions based on their community needs, and they must engage and serve their communities to develop local support that sustains their operations. They produce local programming and can purchase national programming from PBS, NPR, and other public media distributors such as American Public Television, the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA), PRX and American Public Media. Public media stations also collaborate with local, regional, and national partners and with each other, fostering a vibrant multimedia network of expertise and resources, enabling stations to undertake more ambitious projects.

**PBS** is a private, nonprofit organization owned by its member public television stations. PBS distributes programming designed to educate, inspire, entertain, and offer a variety of perspectives to approximately 365 public television stations across the country and on digital platforms. PBS offers educational multimedia resources that help educators and students across the country.

PBS is funded principally by member station dues, distribution revenue, and underwriting support. CPB provides funding to PBS for some of the national programming it distributes and for the infrastructure that distributes content and emergency alerts from PBS to public television stations.

**NPR** is an independent, nonprofit membership organization of more than 1,000 member and affiliate public radio stations across the country. NPR produces and distributes news, information, and cultural programming across broadcast and digital platforms. NPR maintains more than 30 news bureaus in the U.S. and around the world, as well as the growing NPR Collaborative Journalism Network, which currently has six regional newsrooms, topic teams, and station investigations teams that work with member station newsrooms. As a local-national network, NPR provides both local access to national programming and a means for local stations to collaborate regionally and nationally, gaining wider exposure for their work.

NPR is principally funded by member station dues, distribution services, underwriting, and contributions. CPB provides direct grants to NPR for specific purposes such as international news bureaus and increased oversight to ensure objective, balanced, transparent, fact-based journalism. CPB also funds the infrastructure that distributes content from NPR and other national public radio producers to every public radio station.