

Senate Finance Committee

eTech Ohio Commission  
Fiscal Years 2012-2013 Budget Testimony

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Chairman Widener, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Committee:

My name is Kate Harkin, and I am the Executive Director of the eTech Ohio Commission. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the proposed eTech Ohio Commission budget for fiscal years 2012 and 2013. On behalf of the members of the Commission and staff, I would like to extend our appreciation for your time, leadership, and commitment to education in the State of Ohio.

## The Importance of Educational Technology

Educational technology comes in many forms and has evolved at a rapid pace within our lifetime. From film and overhead projectors, to VCRs and desktop computers, to powerful mobile technologies that can download entire textbooks, **today's technology is getting smaller, faster and providing more opportunities for teaching and learning than ever before.**

Educational technology is an essential tool in education. It helps teachers customize strategies to meet individual student abilities and needs. Learning with technology imparts the skills needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, including problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity. Additionally, the consistent, applied use of technology in the classrooms of today ensure students are prepared to enter the workforce digitally literate, a prerequisite for success in a technologically advanced global economy.

## The eTech Ohio Commission

The eTech Ohio Commission was created in 2005 to consolidate state investments in telecommunications support services provided to Ohio's public broadcasting affiliates, Ohio

Government Telecommunications, and K-12 school districts. From its inception the Commission was designed to improve efficiencies, effectiveness, and to facilitate the expansion and utilization of educational technology.

The eTech Ohio Commission is made up of nine voting members and four non-voting members. The nine voting members include three statutory members (the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State's Chief Information Officer), four private citizens appointed by the Governor, one appointed by the Speaker of the House and another by the President of the Senate. There are also four non-voting members, two from the House and two from the Senate with representatives from the majority and minority parties.

In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, the **eTech Ohio Commission is charged with advancing the education and accelerating the learning of the citizens of Ohio through technology.** Furthermore, the Revised Code states that the Commission is to provide leadership and support in extending the knowledge of Ohioans by promoting access to and use of all forms of educational technology.

In 2009, eTech Ohio Commission's mission expanded to serve the P-20 educational continuum including preschool, primary and secondary school, higher education and job-embedded professional development.

The Commission accomplishes its legislative responsibility by:

- Managing and Leveraging Federal Initiatives
- Providing Professional Development for Administrators, Educators, and Technology Staff
- Ensuring Reliable Network Services are Delivered to the Ohio K-12 Network
- Providing Operation and Network Support to Ohio's Public Broadcasting Network—Public Media, Public Radio, and Ohio Radio Reading Services

In December 2009, the Commission delivered Ohio's State Educational Technology Plan which articulates challenges and strategies to use technology to advance academic achievement. In November 2010, the eTech Ohio Commission released its 5-year strategic plan specific to the goals of

the Commission. Together, the plans provide a clear path for eTech Ohio's work to advance and expand the role of technology in accelerating learning for Ohioans in the next biennium.

## Accomplishments and Activities in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

eTech Ohio Commission programs are designed to promote the use of educational technology and can be grouped into the following categories:

- Digital Content
- Technology Integration and Professional Development
- Technology Infrastructure for K-12 schools and Public Media
- Information Technology Services
- Technical Assistance for State Agencies
- Expanded Educational Access Through Distance Learning

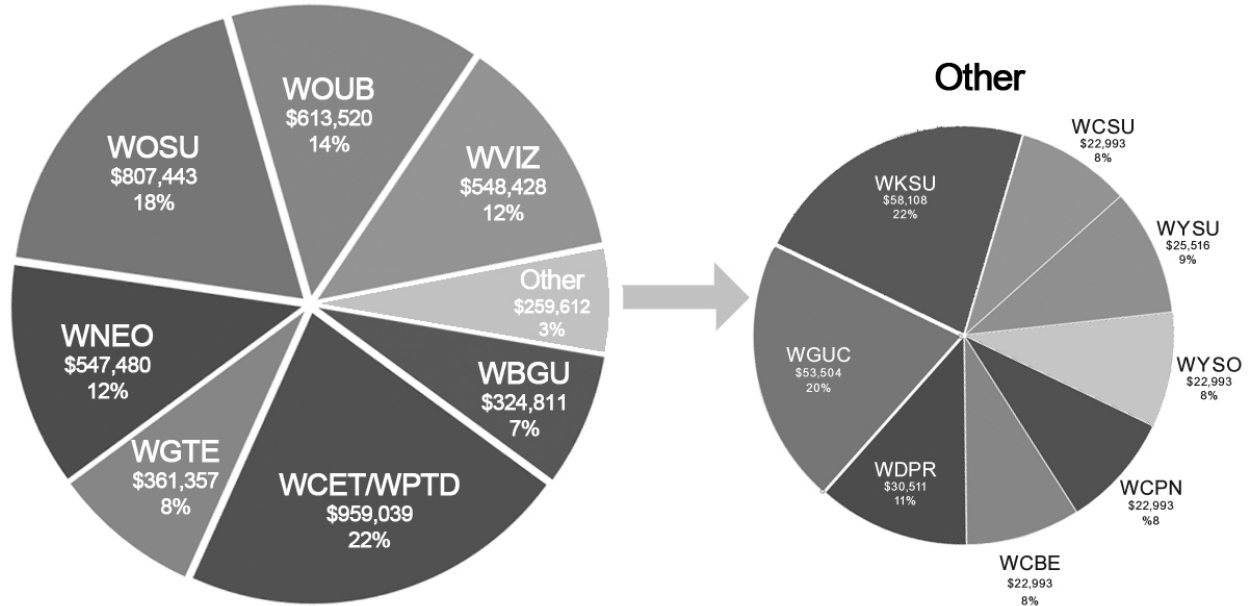
## Content Programs

eTech Ohio Commission supports the development, acquisition and distribution of electronic information resources. This is accomplished through the funding of Ohio's public television, radio stations, and Radio Reading Services to support operations and the development of instructional and informational resources.

In fiscal year 2011, the total funding appropriated to eTech Ohio for public broadcasters was \$4.4 million. Public television and radio stations put that funding to use by educating, informing and engaging their communities on national, state, and local issues. Public broadcasters also focus on local issues and concerns, providing our citizens with a greater depth of understanding on topics of interest in different regions of our state. They facilitate conversations among their communities. They provide professional development to early care and learning providers, and create programming that contributes to life-long learning for Ohioans. Three public broadcasting stations are affiliated with higher education institutions: WOSU (The Ohio State University), WOUB (Ohio University), and WBGU (Bowling Green State University).

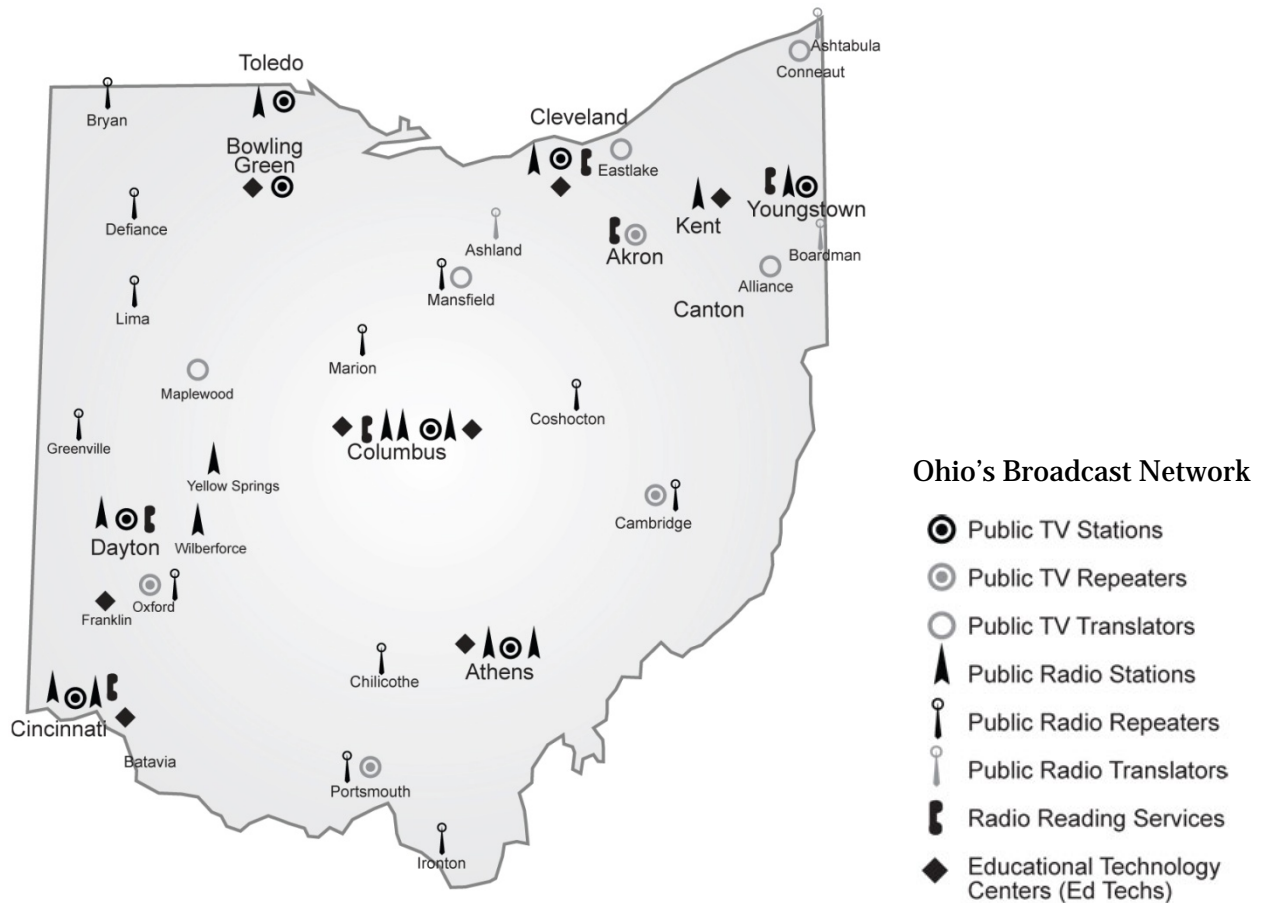
### FY 2011 Subsidy and Grant Funding

(Public TV, Public Radio, Multimedia Production Grants, Educational and Assistive Technology Funds)



As part of the state’s broadcast network, Ohio Government Telecommunications and the Statehouse News Bureau are particularly unique because they provide specialized information services for Ohioans. Ohio Government Telecommunications manages The Ohio Channel and records and broadcasts sessions of the General Assembly, the Supreme Court, and press events for the Executive Branch. The Statehouse News Bureau is the only broadcast outlet dedicated to in-depth coverage of Ohio government news and issues.

All programming is distributed through many mechanisms, from traditional over-the-air broadcasts to digital cable channels, streaming, and web sites. The Public Broadcasting community delivers over 125,000 programs annually to their local communities.



Funding for Ohio's Radio Reading Services is used to record local and national newspapers for the visually impaired. These services enable visually impaired Ohioans to remain aware of current events, local services, election information, and more. Recordings are available through a radio system, the Ohio Telephone Reader Service, and the Internet. On average, over 4,400 calls are placed monthly to access services.

Additionally, public broadcasters produce interactive, instructional programming with a priority given to resources aligned with academic content standards. These resources help explain challenging academic content areas. During fiscal year 2010, WOUB earned three bronze Telly Awards for their work on "*Spaced Out: A Cosmic Scene*," an educational website with video-on-demand modules focusing on the areas of science, technology, engineering and math.

Financial support for Ohio’s public broadcasting community is also allocated to eight regional educational technology centers (Ed Techs). Four Ed Techs are affiliated with public stations and four are independent, nonprofit organizations. These regional centers provide more than 187,000 hours of professional development services to over 55,000 teachers annually. The Ed Techs also create and distribute original digital content for use in the classroom, which provides teachers, parents, and students with enhanced instructional resources.

In addition to the public broadcasting community and Ed Techs, eTech Ohio has worked with Ohio’s higher education institutions, the K-12 community, museums, state agencies, and other partners for the development of digital resources. In 2009, Ohio was the first state to launch a comprehensive statewide iTunesU site, and has since compiled a collection of more than 2,000 digital educational resources categorized into areas of education, government and community interest.



Home page of Ohio on iTunesU

Ohio on iTunesU allows Ohioans to share educational resources and professional development materials free of charge with unlimited access. Recognizing that technology generates creativity and innovation for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, eTech Ohio is committed to continuing the expansion of Ohio's

digital media collection. Ohio on iTunesU has had more than 3.3 million downloads of Ohio-developed content in all 88 counties, all 50 states, and 210 countries around the globe.

## Professional Development and Technical Assistance

eTech Ohio provides professional development and training, technical assistance, and educational technology assessment and planning tools for administrators, teachers, and technology coordinators.

eTech Ohio is committed to providing high-quality professional development for Ohio's educators.

**Superintendents, principals, teachers, technology coordinators, and curriculum designers have access to face-to-face trainings, live interactive webinars, and online, self-paced professional development tutorials for 24/7 access.** Ohio's Ed Tech organizations provide additional professional development opportunities based on local school district needs and requests.

eTech Ohio also hosts the annual Ohio Educational Technology Conference. This financially self-supporting professional development event provides an opportunity for more than 6,500 educators and participants to learn about the latest technology trends, emerging technologies, and strategies for integrating technology into teaching and learning. In 2011, 451 primary and secondary students attended the conference, a record number, to provide technology support and to participate in competitions.

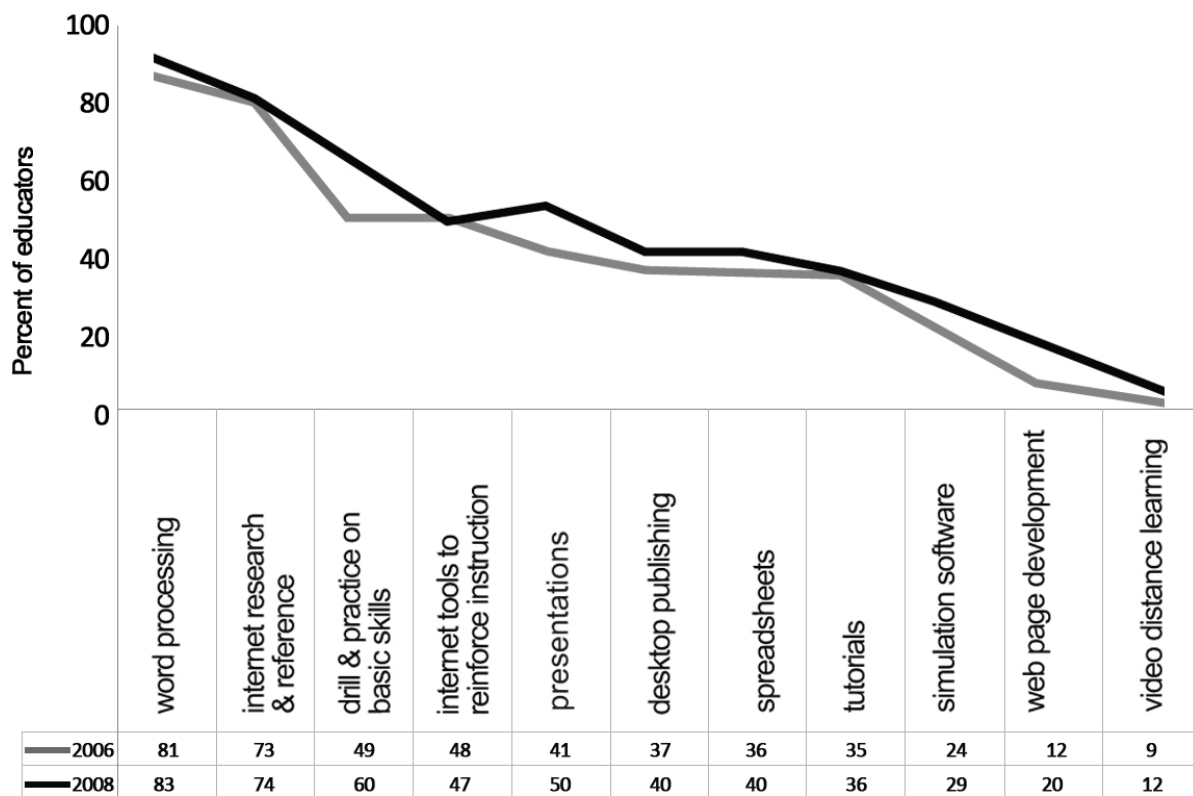
Technical assistance and training is provided to all Ohio public and private K-12 schools and libraries applying for the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate program. The E-Rate program provides discounts to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. eTech Ohio serves as the federal designee in reviewing and approving required technology plans for certain categories of funding from the Federal Communications Commission.

**In fiscal year 2010, eTech Ohio's technical assistance resulted in \$81.5 million of savings to schools and public libraries. Thus far in fiscal year 2011, we have conducted 33 in person trainings for 611 participants, and numerous phone consultations resulting in \$74.4 million in savings to date.**

Technology planning is provided to administrators through eTech Ohio’s online tools including tutorials, presentations, and extensive resources important to supporting districts’ facility planning process. Topics include Total Cost of Ownership, Value of Investment, design for technology, E-Rate considerations, model classrooms, and security systems.

Evaluation of technology accessibility and usage in Ohio’s public schools is compiled every two years through eTech Ohio’s online Biennial Educational Technology Assessment (BETA). This tool allows districts to assess usage trends by educators as well as identify district technology needs. eTech Ohio has been collecting information through the BETA tool for close to a decade. Information provides a longitudinal perspective on access to and use of technology by educators.

**Educators Reporting High or Very High Level of Comfort Using Various Technologies**



Source: BETA 2008-2009

## Technical Support to State Agencies

eTech Ohio also responds to requests for technical assistance, solutions, and troubleshooting issues for state agencies. Services include but are not limited to webinar facilitation, website design and hosting, technology-enhanced communication strategies, and software design. **Agencies served include the Governor's Office, the Office of the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Department of Education, and more.**

## Technology Infrastructure and Operations

eTech Ohio Commission operates Ohio's Video Conferencing Network Operations Center which delivers interactive distance learning courses and virtual field trips to K-12 schools and also provides video conferencing services to higher education institutions and state agencies.

**The video conference network serves 261 state sites serving 22 state entities, 1,110 educational sites serving the K-12 and higher education institutions and 11 One-Stop Centers allowing job seekers to have video conference interviews with prospective employers.** In fiscal year 2010, utilization of video conferencing by K-12 school districts, higher education institutions, and state agencies increased by 52%.

The Commission also provides 24/7 network services for on-air support and distribution of Ohio's public television and radio network programming. This includes delivery of programs, monitoring, troubleshooting, and resolving network related issues. The Commission also provides satellite uplink and downlink capabilities to the stations it supports. **eTech Ohio's network services reduce both redundancy and costs in Ohio's public broadcast operations.**

As one of its most important broadcast network support functions, eTech Ohio links the Ohio Emergency Management Agency to public broadcasters for statewide distribution of Ohio EMA signals and to local media outlets for live news feeds regarding emergencies.

eTech Ohio provides financial support to Ohio Academic Research Network's (OARnet) Network Operations Center for the monitoring and maintenance of the K-12 Network. Additionally, eTech Ohio

approves eligibility for school districts to receive connectivity subsidies provided by the Ohio Department of Education to offset the cost of local school district networks.

## Information Technology Services

eTech Ohio's Information Technology division is responsible for software design, development, and project management for its internal operations. **Over the past biennium, eTech Ohio has provided information technology services and software design services for the Ohio Board of Regents' Higher Education Information System, Financial Aid systems, the Articulation and Transfer Clearinghouse, and more.** In this capacity, it is a critical partner with the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education in the development and implementation of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (HB 290).

The Information Technology division is also working with Ohio Board of Regents' Shared Services partners to create Advanced Student Services that simplify and streamline data exchange between students and post secondary institutions, between post secondary institutions, and between higher education institutions and the Ohio Board of Regents.

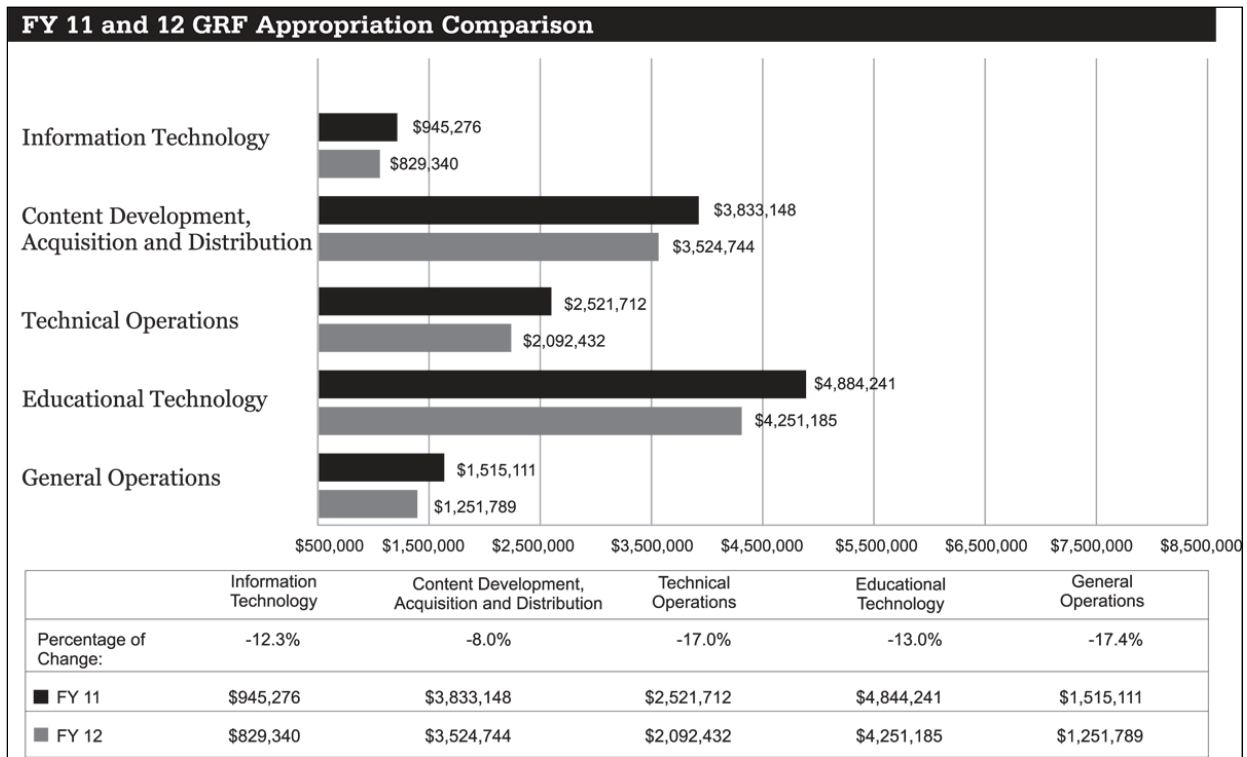
## Expanded Educational Access Through Technology

eTech Ohio is working to expand access to courses offered by a variety of high quality content providers. In Fall 2010, more than 240 schools were eligible to participate in eTech Ohio's Synchronous Interactive Video Distance Learning program, which expanded the number of offerings in Advanced Placement and Foreign Language courses. 43 schools enrolled approximately 1,500 students. This distance learning pilot program equipped schools with video conferencing technology and funds to provide students with Advanced Placement and Foreign Language courses. Mandarin Chinese was the most popular course representing 39% of total enrollment during Autumn 2010.

With the generous support of the General Assembly, the Commission was appropriated funds to provide online Advanced Placement courses at no cost to Ohio students. Students are able to take courses through the Ohio Learns! Gateway, Ohio's distance learning clearinghouse, established by the Ohio Board of Regents in September, 2010. To date, 88 course waivers have been issued to students in 17 counties across the state.

## Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Recommendations Overview

The eTech Ohio budget proposal would provide the funds needed to support our agency’s continued efforts in promoting the use of educational technology and providing vital services to the State of Ohio.



Approximately \$12 million per fiscal year in General Revenue funds is requested for the eTech Ohio Commission in fiscal years 2012-2013. This represents an overall decrease of 13% from funding in fiscal year 2011. To respond to the 17.4% decrease in General Operations, we will cope with this cut by staffing the agency below our total funded positions and pursuing additional opportunities for shared services within state government.

Our budget proposal as well as the Executive Budget Recommendation has an overall cut of 10% for the general operating subsidies provided to public television, public radio, and Radio Reading Services. Additionally the Statehouse News Bureau and the Ohio Government Telecommunications have a 2% cut for the upcoming biennium. While these reductions can be absorbed, programming and services will be impacted.

Funding for Educational Technology Integration and Professional Development has been reduced by approximately 13%. While receiving less funding for the upcoming biennium, we anticipate reaching a

larger audience for eTech Ohio's professional development programs by continuing to offer live online webinars and expanding our catalogue of on-demand training modules for educators and technology staff.

Technical Operations' recommended budget reflects a decrease of 17% in General Revenue funds. In the upcoming biennium, we will cope with the reduction through various cost saving measures including elimination of lease charges and power expenses from our regional points of presence as well equipment upgrades that reduce operating costs of public radio broadcasting.

Although the Information Technology budget has received a 12% reduction in General Revenue funds, eTech Ohio will still be able to provide IT services to meet the organization's internal needs. We will manage the reduction by deferring equipment replacement and system upgrades, and re-evaluating timelines and scope of work for current projects.

## Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, educators, students, and parents require a high tech, fully integrated system of services to achieve Ohio's educational goals. The programs of the eTech Ohio Commission help public broadcasters, educators, technology staff, and administrators make effective use of technology use in the classroom and for life-long learning. We provide high quality digital content that can be used by teachers and students alike. We help teachers learn how to use technology in the classroom and help administrators plan for technology in the future. We provide financial and technical support that maintains a robust network infrastructure that serves Ohio's public broadcast community, K-12 schools, higher education and state agencies. Our IT services are helping to upgrade and streamline data systems that assist other state agencies in achieving their goals. Our budget proposal will enable us to continue this work during the upcoming biennium.

Again, I thank you for your time and leadership in education, and would be pleased to answer any questions.