



2025 Local Content and Service Report

BALL STATE
PUBLIC MEDIA



Because of You, Ball State Public Media Endures

As we look back on the past year, we do so with reflection, gratitude, and a renewed commitment to the mission of Ball State Public Media.

What could have been one of the most difficult chapters in our history instead became one of the most affirming—demonstrating the essential role of community-supported journalism and storytelling.

THE CHALLENGE

This year brought a sudden and significant shift: the elimination of critical federal and state funding for public media.

The impact was immediate, creating a substantial gap and forcing us to rethink what comes next.

But one thing did not change: **our commitment to you.**

We did not scale back what matters.

We doubled down—focusing on fact-based reporting, meaningful storytelling, and programming that serves the public good.

EXCELLENCE, EVEN NOW

In the face of uncertainty, our team delivered some of its strongest work yet.

- **Award-winning storytelling** from Now Entering and Pop of Culture
- **National recognition** for educational innovation through the Public Media Accelerator Fellowship
- **Regional honors** for trusted, in-depth reporting from IPR News

These honors aren't just accolades—they are proof of purpose.

They reflect the work of journalists, producers, and educators committed to telling the stories that matter here at home.

THE MOMENT THAT DEFINED THE YEAR

When funding cuts were announced, we turned to you.

And you responded.

With **generosity.**

With **urgency.**

With **belief** in what Public Media makes possible.

Your support—at every level—began closing the gap almost immediately. More importantly, it sent a message:

This matters.

Independent, community-supported media is worth sustaining.

WHAT COMES NEXT

There is still work ahead. Sustainability will take continued innovation, partnership, and support.

But today, we are closer—because of you.

You are more than an audience.

You are **partners in this mission.**

You are the **reason this work continues.**

Thank you for standing with Ball State Public Media—for valuing trusted journalism, lifelong learning, and stories that connect us.

With gratitude,

Your Ball State Public Media Team

From Government Funding to Public Support

2025 was an unprecedented year for public media funding.

In April, the Indiana Legislature **eliminated 100% of state funding** for Public Media. In July, the federal government followed with the first successful rescission of federal Public Media funding in history.

For Ball State Public Media, these decisions resulted in the **loss of \$1.4 million—nearly 50% of our annual operating budget.**

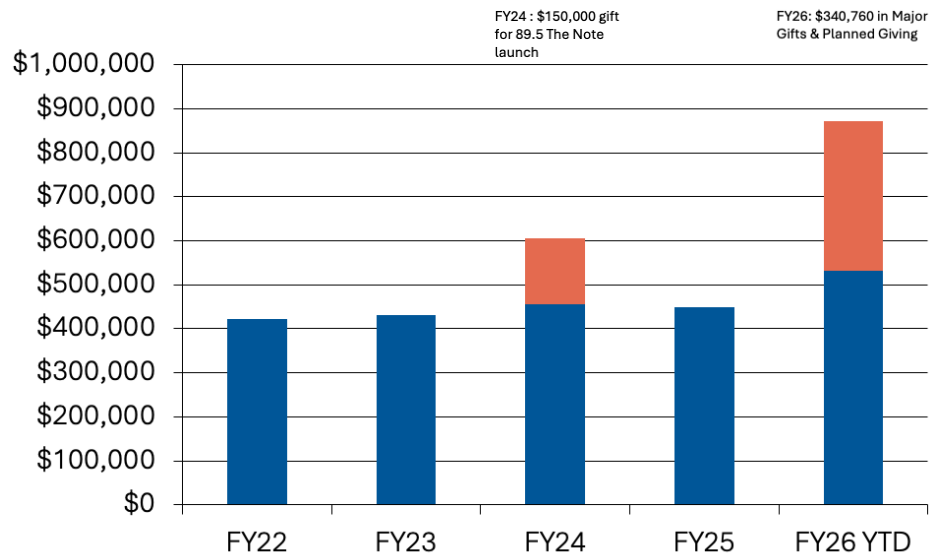
In response, Ball State Public Media implemented significant reductions and efficiencies across an already lean budget. The charts to the right illustrate the adjustments made to manage the sudden loss of revenue.

They also reflect a significant shift in revenue sources, as individual contributions increased to help offset the loss of government support.

As Ball State Public Media continues to adapt to this new funding environment, **support from individuals and community partners is more essential than ever to sustaining independent Public Media in our region.**

Record-Breaking Support from Donors

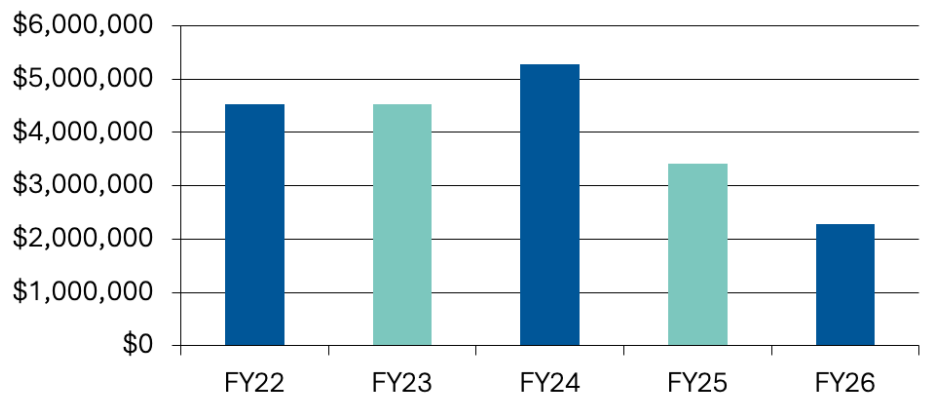
Individual and Leadership Giving for Ball State PBS and IPR are rising to help close the gap in the wake of federal and state funding cuts.



Blue = Individual gifts under \$5,000
 Orange = Leadership gifts (\$5,000+) and Planned Giving
 As of 4/20/26

Rigorous Reduction in Expenses by BSPM

Following the loss of federal and state funding in FY25, expenses were reduced through deliberate, strategic realignment.





Success Story-telling

Indiana Public Radio and Ball State PBS continued their commitment to telling the stories of our region through locally produced programming that connects people to educational experiences and trusted stories in East Central Indiana. Across radio, podcasting, and television, local content provided audiences with thoughtful conversations, cultural exploration, and community-driven storytelling.

Cardinal Compass: Campus and Community Conversations

Produced by Ball State students, Cardinal Compass aired seven half-hour episodes featuring **student hosts reporting on issues** affecting campus and the community. Conversations with Ball State President Geoffrey S. Mearns explored topics such as student career pathways, accessibility, refugee support, and neighborhood revitalization. The program provided Ball State CCIM students with valuable real-world experience in journalism, interviewing, and media production.

Now Entering...

Ball State PBS's popular Now Entering... series continued its mission of celebrating the people, places, and stories that make Indiana's small towns unique. In 2025, the series transitioned to a **30-minute format**, allowing it to reach broadcast audiences more effectively while enhancing visual storytelling through archival photos, maps, and motion graphics.

This season featured four communities across the region: **Fairmount, Downtown Muncie, Berne, and Pendleton**—exploring stories ranging from Fairmount's connection to James Dean and Berne's Swiss heritage to the arts and culture of Downtown Muncie and Frederick Douglass's historic visit to Pendleton during the abolitionist movement.

Beginning with the Downtown Muncie episode, Ball State PBS debuted **Red Carpet Premiere Events** in each featured town. These hometown screenings brought residents, business owners, and civic leaders together to celebrate their community on screen, turning each premiere into a shared moment of local pride and connection.

Local businesses showed up in a big way for Now Entering... this year, contributing **\$59,170** to support the series. After holding steady from 2023 to 2024, support jumped by more than **50% in 2025**—a strong sign that more partners are investing in local storytelling and the communities behind it.



2025 IBA Spectrum Award winner



Top: Now Entering Marion red carpet guests. Above: Now Entering Downtown Muncie audience at Muncie Civic Theatre. Previous page: Now Entering Downtown Muncie Q&A with the filmmakers and participants.

Indiana Public Radio News

IPR continued to deliver essential local journalism with approximately 30 minutes of live and recorded news each weekday during drive time. Managing Editor and Host Stephanie Wiechmann and reporter Thomas Ouellette covered regional, county, and municipal issues in an

area with few local news outlets. In December 2025, IPR's state and regional news partnership with Indiana Public Broadcasting Stations (IPBS) concluded following the loss of grant funding, making IPR's independent reporting even more vital to the communities we serve.



2025 PMJ Award winners



2025 SPJ Award winners



Pop of Culture

Hosted by Jennifer Blackmer, Michelle Kinsey, and Dr. Kara Duquette, Pop of Culture explores **Indiana's vibrant arts scene** through conversations with artists, curators, and creative entrepreneurs. The program highlights regional events, small businesses, and cultural organizations, helping connect audiences with the creative voices shaping communities across the state. In 2025, the show also welcomed a Public Media Accelerator host and audio assistant, providing Ball State students with hands-on, **real-world experience in Public Media production.**



2025 IBA Spectrum Award winner



Above, top: Pop of Culture producer Luke Jones in the IPR studio. Bottom left: Hosts Maya Doss and Michelle Kinsey pose during a Lovefest Pledge Drive. Bottom right: Hosts Michelle Kinsey, Dr. Kara Duquette, Jen Blackmer, and Maya Doss with Luke Jones.

The Facing Project

The Facing Project continued its mission of **building empathy through storytelling** in 2025. Monthly episodes paired personal stories with interviews that explored themes including race and justice, LGBTQ+ leadership, recovery and aging, environmental stewardship, health equity, and the role of art and storytelling in helping people navigate grief, identity, and belonging. By sharing lived experiences, the series encourages **dialogue and understanding across communities.**

BlueNotes with Larry Beck

IPR host Larry Beck shares his passion for jazz through BlueNotes, a monthly two-hour program celebrating the genre's rich history and influence. **Each themed episode explores milestones, notable artists, and musical traditions**—from the 125th anniversary of George Gershwin's birth to National Women's History Month and explorations of swing bands and jazz orchestras—introducing listeners to new discoveries while honoring jazz's enduring legacy.

The 2025 IPR Radio Drama

In 2025, IPR once again brought the magic of live radio theater to the community with a special production of **It's a Wonderful Life**, performed before a live audience and broadcast in real time.

The production was created in partnership with Jennifer Blackmer, Matthew Reeder and Jim Rhinehart from Ball State University's Department of Theatre and Dance and featured a talented cast and crew of **community members and Ball State students**. Actors, musicians, sound effects artists, engineers, and production staff worked together to recreate the classic story in the spirit of vintage radio drama.

The performance was also recorded for rebroadcast on IPR and Ball State PBS, with video support from the UMS/BSPBS crew and opening credits created by Ball State Department of Media lecturer Chris Flook.



Teaming up to turn field research into podcasts



For the past year, Indiana Public Radio Director of Audience Development Angie Grimes and The Facing Project Host J.R. Jamison partnered with **Ball State Criminal Justice & Criminology seniors** in their Virginia Ball Center capstone course to turn students with no media background into podcasters.

With guidance from professor Dr. Kiesha Warren-Gordon, and coaching from Grimes and Jamison on storytelling, scripting, and

interviews, students conducted field research and developed their episodes. They later recorded at Indiana Public Radio with support from Digital Audio Fellow Andrew Montavon.

The collaboration produced four episodes, releasing this spring, exploring human trafficking, youth mental health and the juvenile justice system, social worker-police partnerships, and the Whitley neighborhood Adopt-A-Cop program.

Above: J.R. Jamison with a Ball State student in the IPR radio studio. Top: Voice actor Edgar Wilde. Below: Indiana State House.



State Government Debates, Speeches, and Election Coverage

IPR kept listeners connected to important civic moments by providing live coverage of major state and national addresses, including the Governor's **State of the State** speech and the President's State of the Union. NPR special coverage events ensured audiences across our region had access to timely information about issues shaping the nation.

Events & Engagement

Education. Culture. Connection.

Since 1998, Ball State PBS has proudly served our community with the PBS Kids Ready to Learn program. This series of workshops **engages families in hands-on learning** utilizing PBS KIDS media.

The workshops aim to foster collaboration, communication, and fun among family members while supporting grown-ups' confidence and comfort to support their children's learning. BSPBS has administered and distributed these programs to daycares, community centers, preschools and elementary schools **for 27 years.**

In May 2025, the federal rescission of funding for PBS KIDS' Ready to Learn early literacy initiative marked a profound shift for public media stations across the country. For Ball State PBS, **it meant the loss of a nationally recognized framework** that had supported early learning, family engagement, and school readiness for years. **But it did not mean the end of our commitment.**

With the support of donors, members, neighbors, we continued to show up—meeting families where they are, expanding access to books and learning experiences, and creating spaces for curiosity, creativity, and civic connection.

Movie Screenings and Discussions

Caregiving

In partnership with Lifestream Services, Westminster Retirement Community and Minnetrista Museum & Gardens, Ball State PBS hosted a community screening and discussion of Bradley Cooper's documentary *Caregiving* in June 2025.

Downton Abbey

Fans of PBS Masterpiece celebrated *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale* at Ball State PBS exclusive advanced screenings in September.

The American Revolution

Ball State PBS brought the community together for an evening of civil discourse with a special preview screening of *The American Revolution*, a new film by Ken Burns, Sarah Botstein, and David Schmidt. The event offered attendees an early look at the documentary, setting the stage for thoughtful reflection on the nation's founding and its continued relevance today.

Following the screening, a panel of Ball State University experts led a dynamic discussion that explored the historical, civic, and economic dimensions of the Revolutionary era. Panelists included Dr. Ron Morris, Chair of the Department of History; Dr. David Roof, Director of the Center for Economic and Civic Learning; and Dr. Nicholas Miller, Assistant Teaching Professor specializing in American colonial history. Together, they provided valuable insights and encouraged meaningful dialogue around the themes presented in the film.

Right: Panel discussion with Ball State history and civics experts during a screening of *The American Revolution*.

Next page, from top: Leo Furlong wins the 2025 Regional Spelling Bee. Daniel Tiger and a fan at the 2025 Be My Neighbor Day. A "Paint Like Bob Ross" class for kids during the 2025 Happy Little Fest.



Community Events



Ball State PBS Regional Spelling Bee

The top spellers from area schools competed in the eighth Annual Ball State PBS Spelling Bee in March. Taking the stage at Sursa Performance Hall on the campus of Ball State University, 41 spellers competed. **Leo Furlong** was crowned (for the second time) the 2025 Spelling Bee Champion and competed in Washington, DC at the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Be My Neighbor Day

In June 2025, Ball State PBS hosted Be My Neighbor Day at Canan Commons in Muncie, welcoming **412 children and their families** for a day focused on community, kindness, and neighborhood connection. The event brought together **31 local neighborhood organizations**, offering families opportunities to learn about resources and services available in the community. Guests enjoyed live performances by Patchwork and Ruditoonz, and the celebration was made even more memorable with special appearances by Daniel Tiger and Miss Elaina, delighting young fans and reinforcing the spirit of being a caring neighbor.



Happy Little Fest

Happy Little Fest returned on October 25, 2025, bringing the community together to celebrate The Joy of Painting and the enduring legacy of Bob Ross. Held at its new location at Minnetrista Museum & Gardens, the festival offered a full day of creativity and fun, featuring live painting demonstrations, hands-on workshops, music, trivia, and a variety of family-friendly activities.

Guests of all ages had the opportunity to tap into their artistic side with painting workshops designed for both kids and adults, while also enjoying a deeper connection to the show's roots. Shuttle tours transported attendees to the historic WIPB studios, where The Joy of Painting was originally filmed, making the experience both interactive and nostalgic for fans.

PMX

Nurturing future media professionals



The **Public Media Accelerator (PMX) program** provides highly motivated students with immersive, hands-on experience at Indiana Public Radio and Ball State PBS, working alongside professionals in audio and video production, news, digital marketing, membership, community engagement, and design.

Fellows contribute to real broadcasts, original storytelling, and strategic initiatives while collaborating on a year-long cohort project that serves the campus and broader community. From producing local programs to supporting community engagement events, to covering local news stories, **PMX students don't simulate the work—they do the work.**

Left: Jack Ringenberg with mentor August Wilde at Happy Little Fest. Above: Casey Alexander wore his own custom-made Spelling Bee shoes while acting as a judge during the annual Ball State PBS Regional Spelling Bee.



In 2025, fellows gained an even deeper education as they experienced firsthand what it means to be part of a mission-driven organization navigating major federal and state funding cuts. Rather than stepping back, they leaned in—**witnessing leadership, resilience, and innovation in real time.** Students learned adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving under pressure, gaining professional insight that extends far beyond technical skills. The result is a cohort of emerging media leaders equipped not only with strong portfolios, but with the resilience and purpose required to shape the future of public media.



Above: PMX fellows at the 2025 Happy Little Fest; back row from left are Duncan Kinsey-Sherrill, Daniel Huber, Jack Ringenberg, Megan Morgan and Adriana Trimpe; front row from left are Ransom True, Casey Alexander and Maya Doss. Right: PMX Video Fellow Boston Betz filming during a Now Entering pledge taping.

BSPM by the numbers

Online in 2025

1.1M **15.3K**

**Views across
social media**

**Social media
followers**

457K

**BSPM websites
Pageviews**

Early Learning and Youth Engagement

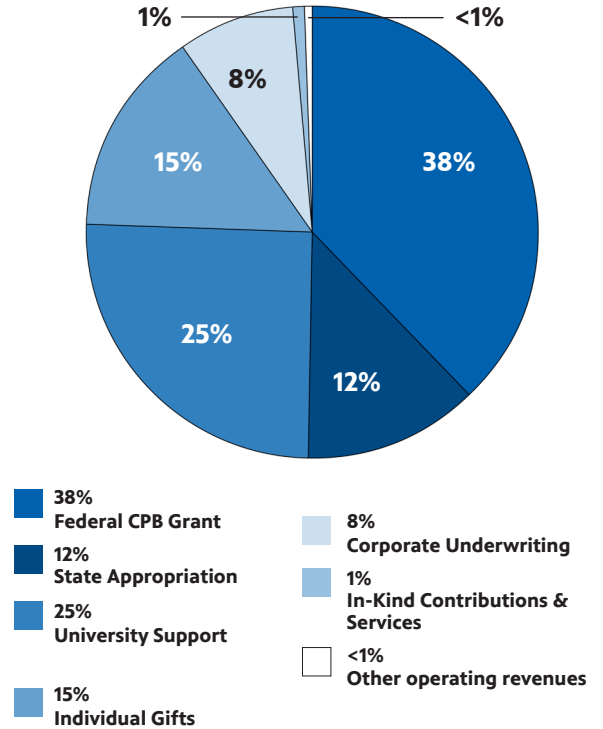
1,794 children served through Be My Neighbor Day, Pre-K programs, Elementary Programs, and community organization partnerships.

2,531 free books distributed to children and families through events, workshops, and Little Free Libraries

74 one-hour pre-K programs delivered across our region

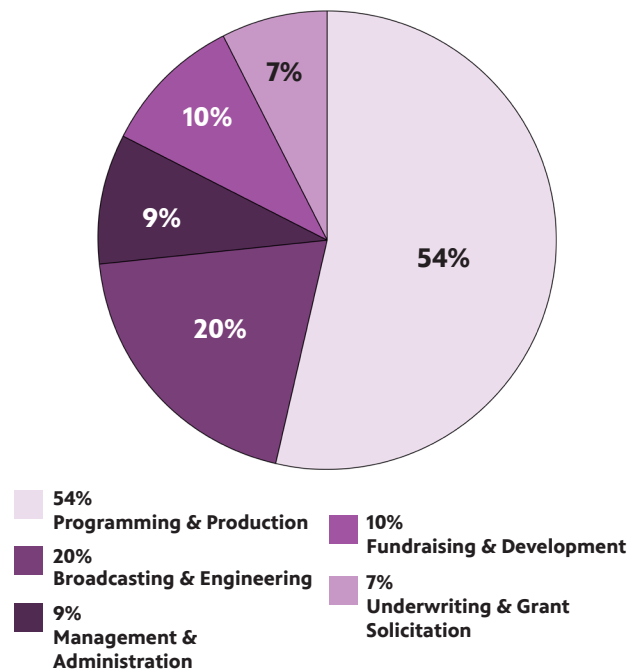
10 elementary-aged learning programs

FY 2025 Revenue



**Total Operating Revenue:
\$3,019,876**

FY 2025 Expenses



**Total Operating Expenses:
\$3,418,277**