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CPB and PBS Awarded Ready To Learn Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Helping Fund Education Content Development and Engagement in Alaska

Funding will support production of new educational content and local community engagement in Alaska that equips young learners with key skills for success through Alaska Public Media

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA – October 21, 2020 – The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS have received a Ready To Learn grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The grant will provide \$24,322,018 in year one of a five-year cycle* to fund CPB and PBS's comprehensive multi-media learning and station engagement initiative, which will connect children's media and learning environments to build key skills for success. The grant will provide resources to 12 PBS stations, including Alaska Public Media (AKPM), to implement local partnerships in Alaska.

The initiative will result in the development of new content that helps young children build vital skills to help them succeed in school and life, including functional literacy, critical thinking and collaboration — and shows them career options in age-appropriate ways. This will be done by producing multiple forms of content, some that show real-life examples of success by having adult role models share how they turned their childhood interest into their life's work. It will also help parents, caregivers and communities support children's learning and growth, with a goal of putting children on a path to success in learning, work and life.

"For the past two years Alaska Public Media's Ready to Learn initiative provided early education resources and our Alaska@Work initiative provided work force development resources, using our media and digital platforms to reach children, young adults and families." said Stephanie McFadden, Director of Education and Engagement, Alaska Public Media. "This Ready To Learn Grant will allow us to connect these efforts in order to provide a platform for family engagement that ensures that children and their parents can see the possibilities of careers."

CPB and PBS will work with experts in early learning and leading children's media producers to create new PBS KIDS multiplatform content, including *Wombats! (w.t.)*, produced by GBH, in which preschoolers will learn critical thinking and collaboration skills by following the adventures of three marsupial siblings as they explore their "Treeborhood." In *Liza Loops (w.t.)*, created and produced by Dave Peth, children ages 5-6 will encounter sociable city kid Liza, an aspiring inventor, and her fuzzy blue sidekick Stu as they invent solutions to help others in their neighborhood. As part of the grant, CPB and PBS will work with additional producers and partners on the third series with a literacy curriculum, in addition to digital games and podcasts, as well as resources to support family learning at home, in virtual spaces and in the community. All three series will be available on Alaska Public Media TV (KAKM Ch. 7) and PBS KIDS 24/7 channel (Ch. 7.4), as well as PBS KIDS digital platforms.

Today, children face a future filled with an unprecedented amount of uncertainty. The initiative's focus on introducing children to the mindsets, knowledge and skills required to succeed in the workforce stems from a rapidly evolving global economy. COVID-19 has also impacted the workforce landscape, making it more important than ever to equip children with skills and ways of thinking that will allow them to successfully navigate their future.

"PBS was founded on the belief that media can be a powerful force for education and inspiration. As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we are committed to building on our strong legacy of high-quality educational media to meet the needs of young learners," said Paula Kerger, President and CEO, PBS. "We are grateful for the vital support of CPB and the Department of Education, which allows us to serve millions of children across the country. Together with our member stations and producing partners, we will use every tool at our disposal to prepare the next generation for success in school and life."

Local PBS stations will work with community partners, including schools, public libraries, museums, businesses, local Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders, as part of a national network devoted to supporting the early learning needs of children in low-income communities. Alaska Public Media will partner with local organizations, including the Richard and Dianne Block Foundation, Mountain View Community Land Trust, Anchorage Library, Anchorage Boys and Girls Club, Anchorage Museum, MQC Enterprise, Anchorage School District, Best Beginnings, Thread and the Kuskokwim Consortium Library. Critical national partners include the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Parents As Teachers.

"As the proud recipient of the 2020 Champion of Public Broadcasting Award, I have long been an enthusiastic supporter of Alaska's public media, and was pleased to be able to write a letter of support to the U.S. Department of Education for this grant," said Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska). "This grant will help our children succeed both in and out of the classroom. Now, more than ever, we realize we need more innovative educational tools for our kids. Public media stations in Alaska and across the country are helping to fill a gap, with shows like *Wombats!*, *Liza Loops*, and my favorite, *Molly of Denali*—a very important show featuring an adventurous Alaska Native girl. Programs like these will be worked on as part of this grant—programs that make public media so important for so many."

The first phase of work will take place in 12 communities, including Alaska through Alaska Public Media, in addition to 11 others: Austin, Texas (Austin PBS); Birmingham, Alabama (Alabama Public Television); Detroit (Detroit Public TV); Las Vegas (Vegas PBS); Lexington, Kentucky (Kentucky Educational Television); Los Angeles (PBS SoCaL); Madison, Wisconsin (PBS Wisconsin); New York (WNET); Owings Mill, Maryland (Maryland Public Television); Pittsburgh (WQED); and Tallahassee, Florida (WFSU). Additional communities will be added during years 2-5 of the grant.

"Ready To Learn grants have enabled the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public broadcasting stations across the country to develop award-winning children's educational programming, such as the widely acclaimed *Molly of Denali* program," stated Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). "As a long-time supporter of public broadcasting and Ready To Learn grants, I am extremely encouraged that Alaska Public Media will again benefit from these grants that will help create new educational content, develop new partnerships, and provide fun new learning opportunities for children throughout Alaska and the nation. I look forward to seeing the positive influence and new learning opportunities this funding will help provide students across the state, through supporting the good work of Alaska Public Media and local partnerships."

The Education Development Center (EDC) will lead a research effort to assess the success of the five-year initiative, with emphasis on the new content's ability to build key skills and inspire children to explore the "world of work." Project research will also provide new insights into the ways in which newer media and intergenerational engagement can support children's learning. Data analytics will advance the understanding of how games can influence learning gains, and formative studies will drive informed content creation.

**Additional years of funding are contingent on Congressional appropriations.*

About Alaska Public Media

Alaska Public Media, Inc. (AKPM) is a shared Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) member and a 501(c)(3) organization. Committed to meeting the needs of our community and state, AKPM produces and presents news and content that provides lifelong learning opportunities in public affairs, health and leisure, science and nature, economic and social development, civic engagement and world events. The company is located in Southcentral Alaska and is comprised of KSKA radio, KAKM-TV, Create TV, PBS KIDS 24/7, the AKPM App and alaskapublic.org. Alaska Public Media also operates the Statewide News network and a shared television service with KTOO in Juneau and KYUK in Bethel.

About PBS

PBS, with its over 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches nearly 100 million people through television and over 28 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its website, pbskids.org, are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following PBS on Twitter, Facebook or through our apps for mobile devices. Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Pressroom](#) on Twitter.

About The Ready To Learn Initiative

The Ready To Learn Initiative is a cooperative agreement funded and managed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. It supports the development of innovative educational television and digital media targeted to preschool and early elementary school children and their families. Its general goal is to promote early learning and school readiness, with a particular interest in reaching low-income children. In addition to creating television and other media products, the program supports activities intended to promote national distribution of the programming, effective educational uses of the programming, community-based outreach and research on educational effectiveness.

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The contents of this release were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. The project is funded by a Ready To Learn grant [PR/Award No. S295A200004, CFDA No. 84.295A] provided by the Department of Education to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

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