

Broadcasting Board of Governors Open Government Plan

Respectfully submitted in compliance with the requirements of the Office of Management &
Budget's Open Government Directive

April 7, 2010

Updated on August 6, 2010

Overview

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) strongly supports the Open Government Directive and its goals of providing greater transparency, public participation and collaboration. As the independent federal agency supervising all U.S. government-supported civilian international broadcasting, the BBG is dedicated to, and built upon, openness – our agency broadcasts its activities to audiences spanning the globe. The BBG’s authorizing legislation, the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 (22 U.S.C. § 6202), charges it with providing:

1. News which is consistently reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive;
2. a balanced and comprehensive projection of United States thought and institutions, reflecting the diversity of United States culture and society;
3. clear and effective presentation of the policies of the United States Government and responsible discussion and opinion on those policies;
4. programming to meet needs which remain unserved by the totality of media voices available to the people of certain nations;
5. information about developments in each significant region of the world;
6. a variety of opinions and voices from within particular nations and regions prevented by censorship or repression from speaking to their fellow countrymen

By providing objective reporting and informed coverage of the issues and events at home and abroad, the BBG provides its overseas audiences with transparent information about events in their own countries, and a greater understanding of the United States and the American people. By engaging with audiences and creating dialogue through interactive programs and social networking, the BBG promotes participation by, and collaboration with, its overseas viewers and listeners.

The BBG’s Strategic Plan for FY 2008 – 2013 also works to incorporate the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration by pursuing, among others, strategies to:

- **Employ Modern Communications Techniques and Technologies** in order to maximize opportunities for audience interactivity;
- **Facilitate Citizen Discourse** by allowing for follow-up discussion of news stories and by developing new channels like blogs for citizens to engage in discussion;
- **Engage the World in Conversation about America** by seeking out opportunities to prompt two-way communication about American positions and policies, using interactive Web sites, blogs, call-in programs, English-language instruction and other tools; and
- **Broaden Cooperation within U.S. Public Diplomacy** by playing an active role in inter-agency strategic planning, pursuing mutually beneficial joint projects, sharing research data with other government agencies and developing partnerships with like-minded institutes and foundations outside of government.

While the BBG is committed to the values of transparency, public participation and collaboration in order to provide a more open government, the Agency is prohibited by law from releasing its overseas broadcasts within the United States. The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (also known as the **Smith-Mundt Act**, 22 U.S.C. § 1461 <http://vlex.com/vid/sec-general-authorization-19200986>), does not allow dissemination within the United States of records or information about the U.S., its people, and its policies, when those records or information have been prepared by the Agency for audiences abroad.

Entities Covered by the Act and administered by the Broadcasting Board of Governors

- Voice of America
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
- Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio Martí and TV Martí)
- Radio Free Asia
- Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa)

As a result of the Smith Mundt Act, the Agency is not permitted to foster public use of its most valuable dataset – its broadcast programming. In fact, the law prohibits dissemination to the American people.

The Agency is making available elements of its operations which are not affected by this prohibition through frequent publication of information about BBG activities via the Agency website, release of high-value information of interest to the public, creation of new feedback mechanisms for the public to contribute opinions and ideas, and pursuit of partnership opportunities with outside agencies and organizations.

This Open Government Plan details how the BBG will incorporate the principles of President Obama's 2009 Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government into its core mission objectives. The Open Government Plan reflects the input of key senior policy, legal, technology and editorial leaders at the BBG, as well as contributions from the American public. The Plan details the specific actions the BBG has taken in order to meet the President's charge, as well as future steps it intends to take to increase the openness with which it operates. We expect that this Plan will be a living document, changing in response to the feedback and suggestions provided by the American people.

I. Transparency

A. Inventory of High Value Information

The BBG maintains a significant collection of high-value information available for download by the general public. Among the information sets currently available for download from the Agency's website are:

Annual Reports: By law, the BBG is required to submit an annual report to Congress on its activities and spending. The BBG maintains an electronic library of its annual reports, from FY 1997 onward, online at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/annual-reports.html>

Budget Submissions: The BBG maintains an electronic library of its annual budget requests to Congress, from FY 2008 onward, online at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/budget.html>

NO FEAR Act Reports: The Notification and Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 requires federal agencies to post summary statistical data pertaining to complaints of federal discrimination filed against it by employees, former employees and applicants for employment. The BBG presents this data in electronic form on a quarterly basis, from FY 2005 onward, at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/nofearact.html>

FOIA Act Reports: The Freedom of Information Act provides the public with access to official agency information previously restricted from public review. The BBG maintains an electronic library of its annual FOIA Act reports, from FY 2000 onward, online at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/foia.html>

Middle East Broadcasting Networks Transcripts: From November 2007 through September 2009, the BBG regularly translated a random selection of broadcasts from Middle East Broadcasting Networks' Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa networks from Arabic into English. The BBG maintains an electronic library of these transcripts at <http://www.bbg.gov/pressroom/arabictranslations.cfm>

Performance and Accountability Report: The BBG's annual Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) presents the Agency's consolidated performance and financial information and is intended to assist Congress, the President and the public in assessing the BBG's performance in achieving its mission and its stewardship of the resources entrusted to it. The BBG maintains an electronic library of its annual PAR reports, from FY 2004 onward, online at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/performance-reports.html>

Persian News Network/Radio Farda Transcripts: From May 2007 through September 2009, the BBG regularly translated a random selection of broadcasts from the Voice of America's Persian News Network and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Farda

service from Persian into English. The BBG maintains an electronic library of these transcripts at <http://www.bbg.gov/pressroom/persiantranslations.cfm>

Privacy Reports: The BBG regularly reports on its policies for maintaining the privacy of its recordkeeping systems. An electronic library of the BBG's recent privacy reports is maintained online at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/privacy-reports.html>

International Broadcasting Bureau Remote Monitoring System: The BBG's International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) provides the public with online access to its global network of more than 70 remote monitoring systems (RMS) for determining the audibility of BBG radio broadcasts. The website is available at <http://monitor.ibb.gov>. Comprised of an antenna, a radio and a computer connected to the Internet, each RMS takes regular sound and frequency band samples of all local AM, FM and shortwave programs by the BBG and other international broadcasters. The site also includes special pages highlighting recent instances of jamming of BBG programming and a Web monitoring system that tracks the online availability of BBG and other news websites in several Asian countries where online censorship is common.

IBB engineers use the RMS database to determine the technical effectiveness of the BBG's broadcasting network in reaching its target audiences and to identify jamming of BBG programming. However, the database is also useful to radio hobbyists and members of the public interested in monitoring the quality of the BBG's broadcasting signals. The site includes detailed instructions for visitors; an additional video guide to using the site is available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI9IPVTCGUE>.

Other Reports: The BBG is regularly required to compile reports on various topics of interest to the public, covering topics as varied as the Agency's E-Government initiatives to U.S. international broadcasting in Iraq. An electronic library of reports compiled by the BBG that don't fit any of the aforementioned topics is available online at: <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/other-reports.html>

In addition, in January 2010, the BBG released three additional data sets/tools of high-value information as part of its compliance with the Open Government Directive:

2008 Freedom of Information Act Report: The BBG republished its 2008 FOIA Act Report in Microsoft Excel format in order to be more easily retrieved, downloaded, indexed and searched by commonly used Web applications. This information is maintained online at: <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/documents/BBGFY2008FOIAReport.xls>

BBG Highlights Reports: The BBG republished its monthly "BBG Highlights" reports detailing the BBG's latest accomplishments to be more easily retrieved, downloaded, indexed and searched by commonly used Web applications. The searchable version of "BBG Highlights" can be accessed at <http://www.bbg.gov/Highlights.cfm>

BBG Contact Directory: To better encourage contact with the American public, the BBG redesigned its organizational chart in order to provide more detailed and specific contact information for every major division and office within the Agency. The new organizational chart can be accessed at <http://www.bbg.gov/about/orgchartnew.html>

In order to foster the use of high-value agency information to increase public knowledge and promote public scrutiny of the BBG's activities, the BBG's Web site prominently features a "Reports" tab on the front page to direct users to this information. In addition, the BBG's Open Government page includes links to all high-value information sets available to the public.

B. Publication of Additional Data

In its initial plan of April 7, 2010, the BBG identified additional high-value datasets to be posted in a more user-friendly format for the public, as part of the transparency requirement. The data was posted within the May 2010 deadline set forth in the plan:

- The BBG's 2005-2009 Key Performance Indicators taken from the PAR warehoused at: <http://www.bbg.gov/open/documents/BBGKeyPerformanceIndicators2005-2009.xls> and registered on Data.gov at <http://www.data.gov/raw/2123>
- The 2001-2008 BBG Funding Overview warehoused at: <http://www.bbg.gov/open/documents/BBGFundingbyComponentFY01-FY08.xls> , and registered on Data.gov at <http://www.data.gov/raw/2125>

C. Other Ongoing and Future Reporting

Regular Reporting: As part of its reporting requirements, the BBG is responsible for publishing the documents listed below to its website on a regular basis. In addition, the Agency's Open Government page features links to these items.

Document	Frequency	Release Date	Contact	Web Location	Notes
Annual Report	Annual	June	Tish King	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/annual-reports.html	See below for information on Excel version of annual broadcaster spending
Budget Submission	Annual	February	Karen Larson	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/budget.html	
FOIA Act Report	Annual	March	April Cabral	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/foia-annual-reports.html	MS-Word format; see below for information on Excel

					version
NO FEAR Act Report	Quarter	February, May, August, November	Delia Johnson	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/nofearact.html	Has not been updated since 1Q FY 2009
Performance and Accountability Report	Annual	November	Theresa Beatty	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/performance-reports.html	See below for information on Excel version of Key Performance Indicators

Machine-Readable Reporting: To foster the use of high-value information to increase public knowledge and scrutiny of the BBG's activities, the BBG has endeavored to make certain components of its data available in "machine-readable" formats that allow them to be more easily retrieved, downloaded, indexed and searched by commonly used web applications. In addition to regularly updating this data and posting it to the BBG website, datasets must also be registered on Data.gov. Datasets requiring updating and republishing include:

Dataset (Format)	Frequency	Next Update	Contact	Web Location	Notes
Contact Directory (HTML)	Annual	January 2011	Julius Brooks, Cammille Morse	http://www.bbg.gov/about/orgchartnew.html	Contact directory requires annual update to reflect changes in org chart, phone numbers
FOIA Act Report (Excel)	Annual	March 2011	April Cabral	http://www.bbg.gov/reports/documents/BBGFY2009FOIAReport.xls	FOIA Act report is republished in Excel format
Funding by Component (Excel)	Annual	June 2011	Tish King	http://www.bbg.gov/open/documents/BBGfundingbyComponentFY01-FY08.xls	Provided graph from Annual Report of historical spending by broadcaster in Excel format w/ raw data
Key Performance Indicators (Excel)	Annual	November 2011	Theresa Beatty	http://www.bbg.gov/open/documents/BBGKeyPerformanceIndicators2005-2009.xls	Provided Excel summary of Key Performance Indicators from PAAR report

D. Compliance with Transparency Initiative Guidance

The BBG has actively complied with OMB's guidance on the following transparency initiatives:

Data.gov: On January 22, 2010, the BBG registered on Data.gov three high-value data sets never before available online or in a downloadable format: A machine-readable agency FOIA report; a machine-readable version of the monthly "BBG Highlights" report of Agency activities and accomplishments; and a new interactive organizational chart providing detailed contact information for specific BBG offices and divisions. As indicated in Section I.B., the BBG has identified additional datasets to be registered on Data.gov and intends to publish them by May 2010.

eRulemaking: Because the BBG is not a regulatory agency, its use of the Regulations.gov Web site is necessarily limited. However, the BBG works to ensure that notice of all relevant BBG business is posted to the site. Since 2005, the BBG has posted 56 notices, mostly related to the monthly meetings of its Board of Governors, 2 proposed rules, and 1 new rule.

IT Dashboard: As part of its annual budget request, the BBG submits to OMB completed Exhibit 53 and Exhibit 300 forms detailing its estimated spending for IT investments. Due to the small size of the BBG's IT spending relative to larger federal agencies, the BBG's spending is not typically included on the IT Dashboard.

Recovery.gov: The BBG did not receive any funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and thus has not contributed any data to the Recovery.gov Web site established to track Recovery Act-related spending.

USAspending.gov: The BBG regularly submits details on its contracts, grants, and other spending to USAspending.gov for publication. Because of the BBG's small size, its spending is typically aggregated with the spending for "all other small agencies." The BBG reports similar financial data to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (available online at <http://www.CFDA.gov>) and the Central Contractor Registration (available online at <http://www.bpn.gov/ccr>)

E. Proposed Actions to Inform the Public of Agency Actions and Business

The BBG regularly hosts public programs on issues of interest to the American public centered on topics related to U.S. international broadcasting. These are typically driven by news events and current affairs so upcoming programs have not been scheduled but will be announced well in advance to encourage public participation and collaboration. It is always our objective to provide programs online through live and on-demand streaming as well as include public participation as subject matter experts and through audience participation.

Our most recent event was co-sponsored with George Washington University's Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communications titled "Iran's Blogosphere and Grassroots Voices: Risks and Rewards of Engagement" on April 12, 2010. The event featured VOA and

RFE/RL journalists and outside experts commenting on the new media landscape in Iran and the prospects for grass-roots engagement with the Iranian people. The program was open to the public and interactivity was promoted through numerous social networking sites. The dedicated website for the event can be viewed online at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ipdgc/events/iran-blog/index.cfm>.

Other recent events of interest include:

- A September 2008 workshop titled “New Media vs. New Censorship: The Authoritarian Assault on Information” featuring BBG and outside experts discussing global trends in censorship of the Internet and profiling countries with the most onerous controls on the Internet and press. The event can be viewed online at <http://www.bbg.gov/ondemand.cfm>

F. Records Management Requirements

The BBG’s Voice of America maintains on its website a section detailing the Agency’s record management policies. As the site notes, BBG broadcasters are prohibited from releasing overseas programs material in the United States under Section 501 of the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, which provides that:

“Information produced by the Voice of America [and other BBG broadcasters] shall not be disseminated within the United States ... but, on request, shall be available in the English language at VOA, at all reasonable times following its release as information abroad, for examination only by representatives of United States press associations, newspapers, magazines, radio systems, and stations, and by research students and scholars and, on request, shall be made available for examination only to Members of Congress.”

However, tapes and transcripts of English language broadcasts older than twelve years are regularly retired to the National Archives and Record Administration’s Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch in College Park, Maryland for public viewing. NARA’s online catalog can be searched online at <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/>

G. Responding to FOIA Requests

At the BBG, Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) requests are managed by the Office of the General Counsel. The Office directs incoming FOIA requests to a designated FOIA/PA Officer, who fields the queries in consultation with the Agency’s Chief FOIA Officer (typically the General Counsel) and one Assistant General Counsel. Typical requests are for procurement records, lists of credit card purchase holders, audience survey reports, personnel and/or security files, and Board of Governors records, and are submitted in writing to the designated FOIA/PA Officer.

The BBG has worked hard to improve its performance in responding to FOIA requests and to satisfy requesters’ needs. The total number of requests increased from 10 in FY08 to 22 in FY09

with only one (1) employee working on FOIA requests on a part-time basis. In FY09, the BBG FOIA team completed processing of 20 requests with a backlog of two (2) requests. This backlog was due, in one case, to the failure of the requester to respond to the Agency's inquiry and, in the other, on the Agency's need to access documents from the National Archive.

Over the past year, the BBG has expanded the number of trained staff members dealing with FOIA matters from one (1) employee handling FOIA requests on a part-time basis to five (5) employees handling FOIA requests on a part-time basis. The Agency also significantly improved FOIA processing by implementing an automated FOIA tracking system (FTS). FTS permits proper monitoring of FOIA requests and more timely responses. As a result, the BBG drastically reduced the average response time from 60 days with 1 FOIA staff to 12 days with 5 FOIA staff during FY09. The BBG FOIA team is now focused on practical implementation of the Administration's policy of promoting "proactive disclosures" of information to the public.

The BBG maintains an online guide to the FOIA process and library of annual reports on its website at <http://www.bbg.gov/reports/foia.html>

H. Responding to Congressional Requests for Information

Congressional requests for information about the BBG and its programs are forwarded to the Agency's Congressional Coordinator (one individual). This position resides within the staff of the Board of Governors. The Congressional Coordinator receives and processes information requests related to the Agency's federal components (the Board, the International Broadcasting Bureau, Voice of America, Office of Cuba Broadcasting) as well as to the Agency's corporate grantees (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and Middle East Broadcasting Networks), and works directly with each Agency element to respond to requests in a timely manner. This information can be found at: <http://bbg.gov/open/empty.html>

I. Declassification Programs

While the BBG does make use of Classified government information, it relies almost entirely on Classified materials sourced from other government agencies. As the BBG does not author these materials, it lacks the authority to declassify them.

J. Language Service Review – Fostering Transparency as well as Internal Participation and Collaboration

The U.S. International Broadcasting Act's requirement that the BBG review services for deletions and additions "at least annually" is one of the most important and at the same time, most public duties of the Board. It is in this process that broadcast language priorities are set or modified, and then used as the basis to guide resource allocation decisions. The annual process involves detailed analyses that look carefully at priorities, local markets and current performance "impact."

There is a Congressional mandate that the BBG “review, evaluate, and determine, at least annually, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the addition or deletion of language services.” The process is a The Committee also recommends strategic priorities and funding for those priorities. Language service review is a top-down strategic analysis.

Given the importance of the management process, there is tremendous interest in it and its outcomes which are incorporated into the Agency’s budget requests.

Based on considerable feedback from front line employees as well as top management, the Board modified the Language Service Review process in 2010 in order to broaden feedback and participation from the each language service of each broadcast entity. This year the Agency achieved its goal and held more than 70 meetings with individual language service staff and entity management, providing a video overview and answers to frequently asked questions on the Intranet. In addition, the Director of Strategic Planning held multiple open briefings on the Language Service Review process for all interested employees in the federal entities as well as the grantee broadcast organizations.

K. Participation

Current and Future Activities

To create more informed and effective policies and programs, the BBG and its broadcasters actively work to create opportunities for the public to participate in, and comment on, BBG programs. Among the numerous activities the BBG is pursuing to foster participation from its audiences worldwide are the following:

- The BBG’s International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) recently established an Office of New Media to direct and manage Voice of America’s increasing use of the Internet and related digital technologies, including mobile devices and social networks, for distribution of multimedia content. This office has spearheaded the establishment of new social media outreaches, including a VOA channel on YouTube, a podcast library on iTunes, and blogs.
- BBG media markets are rapidly growing in complexity and sophistication, necessitating customized local strategies and expert implementation to enhance BBG competitiveness. National security imperatives and ever-changing media environments and new technologies require constant shifts in the way the BBG operates. The BBG must continually assess how best to scale and shape operations, including the right mix of language services and media platforms, to meet new challenges while enhancing performance.
- The BBG must keep pace with the steady development of new media technologies in order to position itself for long-term relevance in an increasingly competitive and complex global media market. Therefore, the BBG plans the expansion initiative for mobile devices and digital distribution of VOA content. If funding is approved, this will

enable our audience to receive content via their preferred method, while also facilitating feedback.

- IBB Engineering is working with the Voice of America to transition from analog to digital file-based systems. If funded, this enhancement will build on efforts already underway to allow VOA to maximize the strategic value of its digital assets by making them available in multiple media formats for re-use and sharing throughout the organization. (Page 31-34 of the FY 2011 Budget Submission at: <http://bbg.gov/reports/documents/BBGFY2011CONGBudgetSubmission-ForInternetPost.pdf>)
- VOA and its sister broadcasters Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Sawa, Alhurra and Radio and TV Marti all maintain interactive and innovative websites, with YouTube postings, online chats and blogs, access from handheld equipment, and e-mail distribution. Fueled by the development of new features and enhancements, in July 2009, direct visits to RFA websites increased by 58 percent over the same period in 2008, while users viewed 51 percent more pages.
- In January 2010, the VOA's Persian News Network launched a new iPhone and Android application that offers the latest news and enables users to send links to VOA stories via Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail accounts with a single click.
- In June 2009, VOA Spanish unveiled a redesigned interactive website, voanoticias.com. The new site is easy to navigate and offers many interactive tools and links, as well as video and audio news features that are constantly updated.
- In 2008, due to increasing Russian government media restrictions and direct pressure on VOA affiliates, the VOA Russian Service embarked on an ambitious strategy to deliver news and information to Russians via the Internet. The service's new website features a variety of interactive activities, including a daily Webcast presented as an embeddable video and a user generated community page where audience members interact. Additionally, VOA Russian posts videos on YouTube and blogs on Russia's most popular blogging platform, LiveJournal.
- Numerous BBG broadcasters host call-in shows and online features where viewers and listeners can share their opinions on topics of interest. The Language Services of the BBG's entities carry out interactive radio, TV and internet programming to Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Eurasia, South, East and Central Asia etc.

While the aforementioned initiatives help foster discussion of news events and U.S. policies, the BBG also works to gather feedback on the quality of its programming. One effort crucial to this task is the VOA News Blog, an online forum for discussions about the BBG's Voice of America broadcaster and available on the Web at <http://voanewsblog.blogspot.com>. Maintained by the current editor of VOA's Persian News Network and the former managing editor of VOA's

Central Newsroom, the VOA News Blog discusses the editorial quality and integrity of VOA content and responds to inquiries, comments and complaints about that content.

Since its launch in January 2008, the VOA News Blog has featured 110 posts from VOA staff and numerous comments from VOA audience members. It has addressed public inquiries about VOA's coverage of the 2008 Presidential elections, use of the term "terrorist," and even complaints about the quality of VOA coverage of the sport of cricket. In addition, the VOA has used the blog to actively solicit comments from the public about potential additions to VOA's training handbook for its journalists and new strategies for reaching overseas audiences via mobile devices.

In addition, in 2006 the VOA created e-mail addresses for each of its Language Programming regional divisions, domestic and foreign news bureaus, and other offices to field inquiries from the public about VOA programming. Those addresses, which are presented below, also appear prominently in the relevant office/division location on the VOA Web site, <http://www.VOANews.com> :

VOA News Headquarters: VOANews@VOANews.com

U.S. News Bureaus

Houston: Houston@VOANews.com
Los Angeles: LA@VOANews.com
Miami: Miami@VOANews.com
New York City: NYC@VOANews.com

Foreign News Bureaus

Bangkok: Bangkok@VOANews.com
Beijing: Beijing@VOANews.com
Brussels: Brussels@VOANews.com
Cairo: Cairo@VOANews.com
Hong Kong: HongKong@VOANews.com
Islamabad: Islamabad@VOANews.com
Jerusalem: Jerusalem@VOANews.com
Johannesburg: Johannesburg@VOANews.com
London: London@VOANews.com
Moscow: Moscow@VOANews.com
Nairobi: Nairobi@VOANews.com
New Delhi: NewDelhi@VOANews.com
Seoul: Seoul@VOANews.com

VOA Language Programming Regional Divisions

Africa: Africa@VOANews.com
Americas: Americas@VOANews.com
East Asia & Pacific: EAP@VOANews.com
Eurasia: Eurasia@VOANews.com

Near East & Central Asia: NearEast@VOANews.com

West & South Asia: WestSouthAsia@VOANews.com

Other Useful Contacts

Features: VOA-English-Features@VOANews.com

Learning English: Special@VOANews.com

Public Relations: PublicAffairs@VOA.gov

Request Program Guide: Letters@VOA.gov

While most of the current opportunities to participate are available only to our overseas audiences via radio, television and online broadcasts, the BBG also works to provide opportunities for the American public to contribute its opinion on BBG activities via several key media to the extent allowed by applicable laws.

Most recently, the BBG has created new feedback mechanisms in response to the Open Government Directive. Beginning in February 2010, the BBG established an e-mail drop-box, OpenGov@BBG.gov, for members of the public to contribute their suggestions for activities the Agency should pursue as part of its Open Government Plan. The e-mail address is prominently promoted on the Agency's Open Government Web page, located at <http://www.BBG.gov/Open>. In addition, in January 2009, the BBG released a new organizational chart featuring detailed, and previously unavailable, contact information for each of the Agency's offices and divisions. That contact information is now available through the BBG website at <http://www.BBG.gov/about/orgchart.html>.

Collaboration

A. Using Technology to Foster Internal Collaboration

The BBG's Engineering department is constantly searching for ways to increase collaboration across the Agency by leveraging new technologies. In recent years, much of Engineering's effort has been focused on creating digital broadcasting systems that allow personnel from across the Agency to reuse and share news content, while reducing resource costs and overhead. Among the initiatives currently scheduled for implementation are:

- Migration from legacy analog tape systems to DaletPlus Digital Media Systems, a comprehensive system that will enable VOA broadcasters to efficiently: manage digital video assets; automate newsrooms; implement tapeless production and play out workflows; and archive material. DaletPlus integrates many functions previously supported by stand-alone systems. In FY 2009, Engineering began the phased implementation of the DaletPlus system, starting with the installation of video asset management. This capability enables users to search ingested feeds and other video files, mark clips, and download these clips to their computers. These clips can then be digitally transferred for final editing into news stories. Engineering also installed the supporting software on Agency computers and, working with VOA, has trained potential users. Implementation of the DaletPlus modules that support digital video play out is also in

process. Thus far, five key language services can operate in a fully digital mode from video production to on air.

- Development of an asset archiving system that will be capable of supporting all media, not just video files. Improved digital storage will support centralized sharing and archiving of online, near-term, and long-term files.
- Implementation of a simplified Web content delivery system that provides new capabilities, increases flexibility, and reduces the time required for non-technical personnel to create and maintain language Web sites. This system has already been rolled out for all of the Voice of America's language services.

In addition, the BBG continues to experiment with the use of interactive tools like Webcasts and blogs to better enable discussion and collaboration among large groups of employees and the overseas audience. The round-the-clock nature of BBG operations, combined with a far-flung network of domestic and overseas bureaus, make it difficult to assemble large groups of employees.

To accommodate the geographic distances and time-zone disparities, the Agency has Webcast two "Town Hall" events, in which senior leaders field questions submitted live and via the Web. Similarly, the BBG has established an employee blog, Tune In, for employees to submit questions about Agency policies and share information about common problems. Finally, the BBG is currently utilizing the Microsoft SharePoint Intranet platform to enable discussion of its FY 2010-2015 Human Capital Plan and other initiatives being launched across the Agency.

B. Using Technology to Foster External Collaboration

New technology platforms have proven crucial to the BBG's efforts to improve the quality of collaboration with its outside audiences, other federal agencies, the American public and non-profit organizations. By leveraging tools like interactive and on-demand webcasting, the BBG has been able to foster collaboration through special events like:

- Migration to a new content management system will provide greater opportunities to use new media to invite public feedback on the Open Government plan as well as other Agency programs and policies. Use of polls and dynamic video responses to public queries are under consideration once the new CMS is in place Agency wide no later than December 2010.
- In June, 2010 the Heritage Foundation hosted an event titled "Perspectives on U.S. International Broadcasting" where BBG Governor Jeff Hirschberg gave remarks and participated in the discussion.
- In May 2010 the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) held a day long summit entitled "Seizing the Moment: Media & Peacebuilding" at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. The

summit considered specific recommendations on ways to harness the power of media for conflict prevention. The BBG participated with a hands-on demonstration that allowed the public to get a flavor for and ask questions about our broadcasting efforts to regions in conflict.

- The April 2010 discussion, “Iran’s Blogosphere and Grassroots Voices: Risks and Rewards of Engagement” examined opportunities for citizen-to-citizen exchange between the American and Iranian people. The discussion, featured representatives from the Committee to Protect Journalists, George Washington University and the Iranian diaspora community, to uncover ideas for engaging the Iranian public. It was featured online live and on-demand.
- The March 2010 discussion, “Rebuilding Haiti’s Media: The Lifeline of Development,” examining the current state of media in Haiti and its future after the recent earthquake. The discussion included representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Organization of American States, The World Bank and the media development NGO Internews contributing ideas on how to best rebuild Haitian media and how best to meet the Haitian people’s need for information in the aftermath of the crisis. The event was Webcast to audiences worldwide and can be rebroadcasted on demand via the VOA Web site.

As new media technologies continue to advance, the BBG aspires to build upon these efforts to improve the quality and range of collaboration. A library of previous special events is available online at <http://www.voanews.com> and <http://bbg.gov/pressroom/events.cfm>

Anti Web Censorship Efforts:

In addition, the BBG actively collaborates with a broad community of researchers within and outside of the government to circumvent blockage of online broadcasting content by hostile foreign governments. One such system currently under testing sends news feeds through privately operated e-mail accounts to effectively evade the Web-screening protocols of restrictive regimes. Other efforts rely on the help of non-government research institutions and private firms who share our interests in the global free flow of information to develop networks of proxy servers to allow BBG audiences to directly access otherwise banned content and to develop software to skirt restrictive Internet firewalls.

C. Other Collaboration Efforts including Inter-Agency information sharing

Collaboration with other government agencies is a crucial component of the BBG’s operations. In fact, it’s authorized by the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994, which allots an *ex officio* seat on the Board of Governors to the Secretary of State (who typically delegates her authority to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs). Many of the BBG’s

other collaboration efforts with other federal agencies are detailed in its FY 2011 Budget Request. Ongoing interagency efforts in which the BBG participates include:

- **VOA's Public Relations Office** is planning a few open news briefings for external and internal news coverage that will be taking place in the fall of 2010 and beyond. Topics for the events will be posted in the next update to the Open Government Plan. To make VOA's operations more transparent and open to the public, the Public Relations Office is also working on extending the promotion of the VOA studio tours to various free websites.
- BBG's Office of Public Affairs has built an online page for the **Burke Awards** to highlight the distinguished journalists working for the BBG entities. The page will be updated on a yearly basis as awards are granted.
- **Zimbabwe:** USAID is funding a Reporting Center in Zimbabwe. USAID is committed to continuing to support VOA's Studio 7 which remains a popular program in that country. VOA will organize a training session for the Zimbabwe stringers in South Africa in early September.
- **Training workshop in Kingston, Jamaica:** VOA's Development Office conducted a one-day workshop on hurricane preparedness for 24 Jamaica-based reporters. The U.S. Embassy in Kingston extended a special invitation to the Development Office to conduct the training following an earlier visit to Jamaica this year, where they implemented a successful three-day workshop on avian influenza and on earthquake disaster preparedness for journalists from several Caribbean and South American countries. The most recent workshop included the participation of the Jamaican Government's Office of Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Management-ODPEM, the National Hurricane Center in Florida (via DVC), and the Military Liaison Office. It was a hands-on, interactive workshop, where journalists learned to prepare and report on wind and water disasters as well as the role of the government and international entities during such disasters. The U.S. Embassy in Kingston has asked VOA's Development Office to conduct a similar workshop at the beginning of hurricane season in 2011.
- **Angola:** The U.S. Embassy has committed in principal to support the creation of a Portuguese-to-Africa Service pilot call-in show that focuses on good governance, democratic processes and civic education. If successful, USAID has indicated it might be interested in supporting an expanded version of the show.
- **DRC:** VOA is in the final stages of negotiating with the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa an agreement providing VOA funding to support a weekly radio program that focuses on

HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence in the DRC. The funding would also allow VOA to run a training program for journalists in DRC on HIV/AIDS.

- **The Administration’s Afghanistan/Pakistan Strategy Planning Group:** The BBG chairs the broadcast media working group and has been a leader in establishing processes for sharing relevant audience research data with other government agencies. The two most recent and in-depth data sharing projects were the Afghanistan Deep Dive in October 2008 and the Pakistan Deep Dive in January 2009, which involved collaboration with the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense and several private research firms.
- **Refugee Broadcasting to Central Africa:** In collaboration with the State Department, the VOA Central Africa Service has produced popular youth refugee radio programs in Burundi and northwest Tanzania for the past eight years.
- **Language Service Review:** By law, the BBG is required to review and evaluate its language services annually. State Department and National Security Council priorities are among the criteria considered by the BBG in determining which language services to add and delete.

D. Methods to Increase Collaboration With Private, Non-Profit and Academic Communities

The BBG is interested in exploring potential contests inviting people to solicit innovative mobile phone applications that BBG broadcasters might use to grow and engage their audiences in the developing world. Given the reach of mobile phones in even the poorest corners of the world, the BBG is eager to explore new mobile strategies and welcomes ideas from non-traditional sources. We have reviewed OMB’s guidance on the use of challenges and prizes to promote open government and are eager to utilize the Web-based platform it promises to develop in the coming months for managing prizes and challenges. Per OMB’s guidance, the BBG is studying potential legal issues that may arise from any contest we offer.

L. BBG Performance Indicators

Delivering accurate news and information to significant audiences in target countries is the BBG’s core definition of success. This requires first that BBG programming conveys information in a manner attractive to listeners or viewers, and second, that programs reach large numbers of people on a regular basis. Both elements are equally important and the BBG has implemented performance indicators to measure both at the entity level, together with other secondary measures. Scores for the performance indicators and secondary measures are measured for each language service annually and then aggregated at the entity level to summarize the accomplishments of each entity. Below is the list of the performance indicators:

- Overall weekly audiences
- Affiliations and transmitters
- Program quality
- Program credibility
- Signal strength
- Satellite effectiveness index
- Transmission network consumable expense
- Verification and validation of indicators

A detailed explanation of each indicator can be found at:

<http://www.bbg.gov/reports/documents/BBGFY2011CONGBudgetSubmission-ForInternetPost.pdf> (Pages 22-28)

M. Flagship Initiative

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide information that is accessible to the public and showcase the depth and width of our operations, the Broadcasting Board of Governors is in the process of collecting data to build an interactive map that will be available on the BBG website. Every week, more than 171 million listeners, viewers, and Internet users around the world turn on, tune in, and log on to U.S. international broadcasting programs. The map will reflect the geographical locations of our international audience and how we reach them. The data that will be presented through the map will specifically include target areas, entities, languages and platforms of broadcasts. This effort will provide a clear and transparent picture of the BBG's operations worldwide.

In addition, the feasibility of sharing new datasets in a password protected environment for a group of outside partner organizations. We continue to evaluate these initiatives on the basis of appropriateness, cost, and viability.