



Broadcasting
Board of
Governors

Achieving Strategic Impact

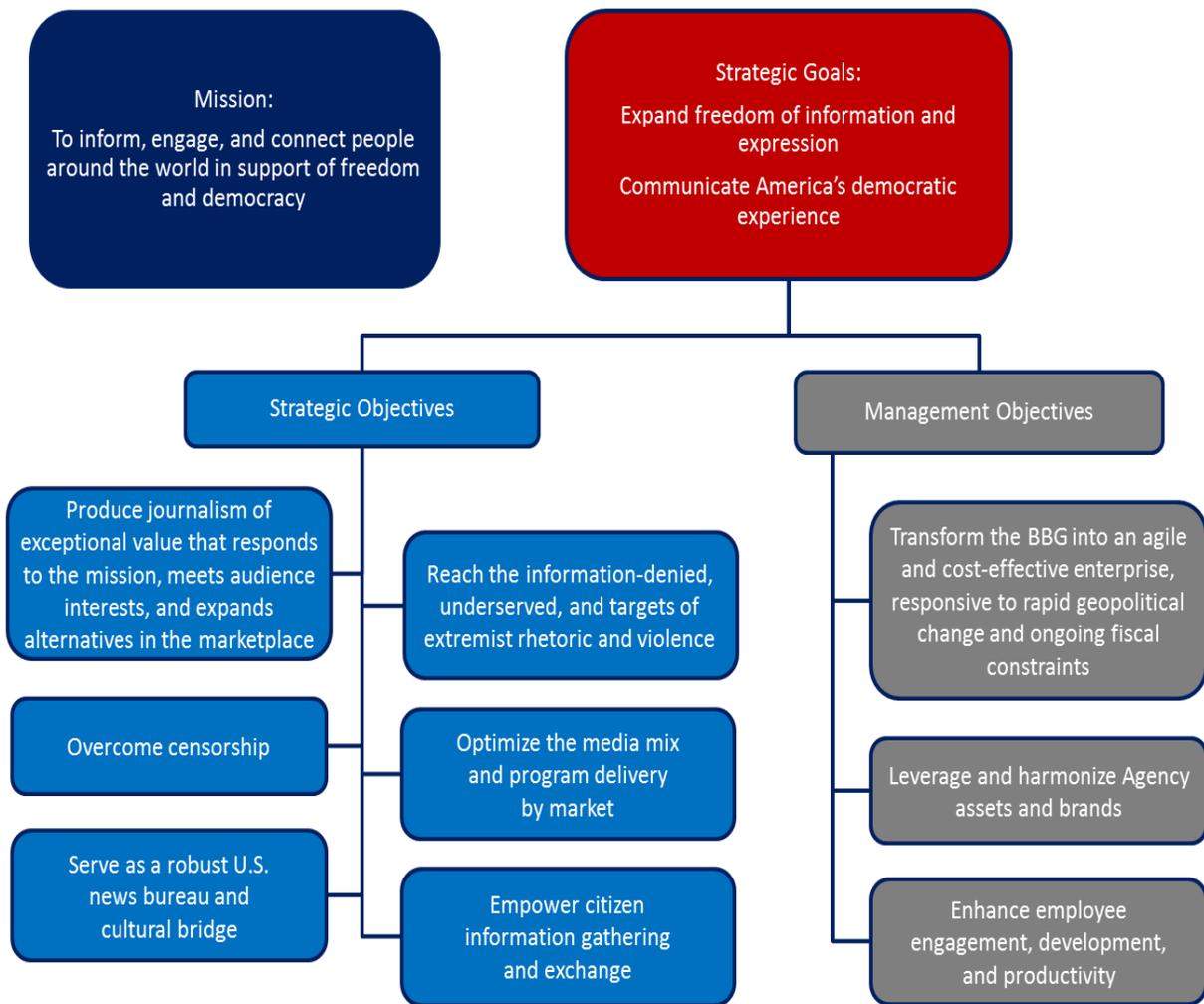
BBG Strategic Plan 2014-2018



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Achieving Strategic Impact



Preface

This Strategic Plan of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for 2014-2018, *Achieving Strategic Impact*, is the fourth BBG Plan since the Agency's inception in 1998 and the first under the governing board that took office in August 2013. It supersedes our 2012-2016 Plan in compliance with the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, which requires that federal agency strategies align with presidential terms of office.

The challenges that faced the Agency and shaped the previous Strategic Plan have only intensified – national security challenges of rising extremism and recalcitrant authoritarianism, dynamic global communications environments with continuing media proliferation and yet diminished media freedom, and growing U.S. government spending constraints.

The prior Plan, in addressing these challenges, laid out a dozen priorities, from focusing on areas affected by extremism, to modernizing distribution, to combating Internet censorship, to engaging the world in conversation about America, to honing understanding of impact.

To meet these goals, BBG has launched a robust Africa Sahel initiative with local FM stations, vernacular languages, and content streams; migrated further from shortwave radio to satellite TV, FM, mobile, and social media; pioneered technologies to circumvent government-imposed Internet firewalls; leveraged the successful “Washington bureau” approach for U.S. reporting; and developed a new impact model to deepen performance measurement.

While impact is not reduced to numbers alone, BBG audiences have grown by some 40 million since 2011 to a record 215 million, just 1 million shy of the goal of 216 million by 2016.

Yet key challenges and goals remain. BBG audience reach among youth and women is too small. Exploitation of digital media is uneven across the Agency. Redundancies among support services and language services alike endure. Better-resourced global media, particularly from state-sponsored adversaries, are a growing competitive threat. Geopolitical change from Venezuela to Ukraine demands swift crisis responses from our bureaucratic structures. Budgetary pressures force difficult trade-offs.

The BBG is responding by sharpening our strategic pencil. In support of this Plan, we are drawing up subordinate strategies for every BBG language service, setting clear goals and targets in over 100 target countries, and driving and measuring performance with new forms of research to track progress in real time – all pegged to our new Impact Model. Resources will be tight, and so we will recommit to pursuing efficiencies and enhancing agility across the Agency.

The times require that we focus on driving strategic and operational improvements to power our journalism in support of U.S. interests. Growing numbers of people in the world are dependent on what we offer. We must serve them, while reaching out to new audiences, with fresh vision and vigor. This is the thrust of *Achieving Strategic Impact*, BBG's Strategic Plan for 2014-2018.

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Executive Summary

The BBG is the U.S. government’s civilian international media agency, encompassing the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa (under the Middle East Broadcasting Networks – MBN), and Radio and TV Martí (under the Office of Cuba Broadcasting – OCB). One of the largest media organizations in the world, the BBG provides content in 61 languages to more than 100 countries on a wide range of broadcast and digital media platforms with some 3,600 employees, 1,500 stringer reporters, and 54 news bureaus.

In this 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, the BBG is for the first time presenting a unified strategic management system that ties both ends of the strategic spectrum together – a clear mission and strategic goals and objectives on the front end with clear performance measures in a new impact model on the back end.

The new clarity in goals and measures will drive improved articulation and execution of strategy as well as improved reporting for BBG employees and stakeholders alike.

Current Operating Environment

A mix of external and internal factors – geopolitical challenges coupled with rising media competition, on the one hand, and budget constraints matched by new requirements for institutional agility, on the other – have shaped our current strategy. Both drive the imperatives going forward of continued strong strategic impact and increasing operational efficiency.

Mission

As BBG’s chairman Jeff Shell has said: “Excellence in journalism remains BBG’s most important objective. Hundreds of millions of people around the world count on us for accurate news and information. We stand committed to this mission.”

We capture this mission in our official mission statement: *To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.*

The mission upholds the BBG’s role as a modern, multi-faceted, multi-media journalistic organization that informs audiences who lack access to fact-based, verifiable news; engages them in our online content and on-air programs and their own content creation, including support for citizen journalism; and connects them peer-to-peer through our media platforms and to the wider world with technologies that circumvent Internet censorship.

By adapting our work to the needs of audiences and the ways in which they wish to use and interact with media, the BBG is providing new avenues to fulfill our long-established mandates from Congress : (1) to provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive news; (2) to represent American society and culture; and (3) to present and discuss U.S. policy.

Overarching Strategic Goals

The BBG's mission is supported by two overarching strategic goals: (1) expanding freedom of information and expression and (2) communicating America's democratic experience.

Both of these goals serve to further the BBG mission of supporting freedom and democracy. Free press and free expression are universally acknowledged as key to free, open, democratic societies. Communicating America's democratic experience serves the same purpose. In covering the U.S., we open a window onto democracy in action through which our audiences can see reflected their own struggles to forge freedom and democracy.

Free, open, democratic societies tend to be more peaceful and prosperous than non-democratic societies and seldom threaten their neighbors or harbor extremists. That is why they are critical to U.S. national interests and foreign policy, and why BBG's role in supporting their development matters.

Strategic and Management Objectives

The mission and overarching goals are the BBG's strategic first principles. They frame the work of the Agency and give rise to specific actions spelled out in the Agency's strategic and management objectives. There are nine of these in this 2014-2018 Plan: six strategic and three management objectives.

Strategic objectives capture what to do in the field to fulfill our mission. They include:

- Produce journalism of exceptional value that responds to the mission, meets audience interests, and expands alternatives in the marketplace
- Reach the information-denied, underserved, and targets of extremist rhetoric and violence
- Overcome censorship
- Optimize the media mix and program delivery by market
- Serve as a robust U.S. news bureau and cultural bridge
- Empower citizen information gathering and exchange

Management objectives cover how to improve the enterprise to support fulfilling our mission – work processes, coordination, and employee satisfaction. They include:

- Transform the BBG into an agile and cost effective enterprise responsive to rapid geopolitical change and ongoing fiscal constraints
- Leverage and harmonize Agency assets and brands
- Enhance employee engagement, development, and productivity

Both sets of objectives are detailed below. Corresponding performance goals and targets supporting each of these objectives are noted in the Performance Budget section of the Congressional Budget Justification.

These objectives will be accomplished through a sustained commitment from leadership to strategic and management improvements and through new country-level strategic planning that will allow the Agency objectives to propagate down to all operational levels.

Corollary Country-Level Planning and SMART System

The country-level planning, in particular, will dovetail with and flesh out Agency strategy, and significantly advance efforts to date to strategize in response to market factors and policy aims. BBG has created over the last year the Strategic Management and Audience Research Tool, SMART, as the repository for such strategies. SMART already contains detailed profiles of BBG activity at the country level. Now, BBG will incorporate into SMART goals by country and region matched by key performance indicators consistent with the Agency's new impact model. The effort will debut immediately, resulting in fresh plans across the board by the end of 2014.

Impact Measurement

As noted, the BBG has developed a new impact model that systematically accounts for the performance measures that define the success of BBG media in the field. The model incorporates a robust set of quantitative and qualitative metrics derived from and informed by BBG's audience and market research program as well as a range of supplemental indicators, including anecdotes. The aim is to have a basket of measures, some core and some optional, that can be matched to widely differing market circumstances to relate impact over the short, medium, and long term within three sectors -- our audiences, the media, and the governments in our target markets.

Focus for the Future

The focus of this Strategic Plan is achieving impact, using the tools of professional journalism. In charting this strategic direction, the BBG seeks to continue its record audience growth but to do so with demonstrated impact in supporting U.S. strategic interests around the world. At the same time, the Agency is responding to the new emphasis in the administration and on the Hill for performance management, including the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, as a means of achieving leaner, smarter, and more effective programs – all in the current fiscal environment in which, even as the BBG mission is more vital than ever, we must try to do more with fewer resources.

Global Operating Environment

Around the globe, freedom and democracy are under assault, imperiling U.S. interests. Europe is witnessing a return to Cold War tensions. The Middle East, with the democratic spirit of the Arab Spring a distant memory, struggles now for even modest pluralism. North Africa and the Sahel face rising extremism, from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, now rivaling the ferocity of the Taliban in South Asia.

Freedom House has noted that 2013 marked the eighth straight year of declines in global freedom. The Reporters Without Borders (RWB) 2014 Press Index shows worsening press freedom in all regions except Asia, which was static.

The struggles unfolding today all have significant information components. A war for influence is playing out on the stage of public opinion. Whether it is Russia Today or China Central Television (CCTV), or at an extreme the propaganda machine of Al Qaeda, states and non-state actors alike wage nonstop appeals for hearts and minds.

Media are proliferating. But the existence of more media does not mean more media freedom. As RWB notes, states such as Russia and China are sacrificing press freedom to national security and surveillance, and non-state actors like Al Qaeda are increasingly using violence to quell independent journalism.

The forces of democracy are also active. People in the streets, from Cairo to Kiev, raise their voices and mobilize in protest to stem the power of the state, to curb pervasive corruption, and to hold their leaders accountable. Their tools are those of modern popular expression – social media, mobile phones, and software to circumvent Internet blocking.

These new tools are part of increasingly sophisticated communication means and complex media environments. The media mix varies widely by market, but the global trends are clear. TV, both terrestrial and satellite, remains by far the dominant medium worldwide for both news and entertainment. Radio continues its years-long decline but is still a powerful medium in much of the developing world. Shortwave and AM radio retain a foothold only in the most rural and impoverished societies while FM holds on and is actually expanding in key regions such as Africa. The Internet now trumps radio in use, and especially as a source of news, in many more developed media environments. Social media show unabated, exponential growth.

For international media organizations such as the BBG that operate across a wide spectrum of media environments, the constant shifts in media use and development are daunting challenges. Tracking media consumption requires up-to-date research, an expensive proposition for scores of markets. Even with it, securing effective local distribution is often hard. Unfettered access is rare; media laws and regulations typically impose a myriad of restrictions.

As stiff as the external challenges are, the BBG faces a host of internal challenges that also shape the Agency's direction going forward. Many of these figured prominently in the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan.

The most immediate internal constraint is shrinking resources. BBG budgets, as enacted for FY 2014 and proposed for FY 2015, reflect funding declines. They will put substantial pressure on current levels of service and support.

Beyond reduced funding levels, systemic issues persist. The BBG, due to a host of historical antecedents, remains an organization of multiple media properties with different legal and administrative frameworks and numerous overlapping language services. The Agency has made progress in ensuring that the language services all offer unique value and do not duplicate one another. But, there is more work to do.

In structure, VOA, OCB, and IBB are federal agencies whereas RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN are non-profit private corporations that receive their funding and broad strategic direction from the BBG but operate as independent entities. The different frameworks complicate coordination and cooperation across the BBG. Achieving a clearer chain of command has driven BBG's proposal, endorsed by the administration, to hire a permanent chief executive officer who would report to the Board and have authority to manage the entire the Agency. The proposal is now before Congress.

Still, there is an inherent challenge in managing a complex, global, multi-media communication enterprise as a government agency which, however streamlined, will always involve a measure of bureaucracy with rules and procedures that make for effective management controls but also for often cumbersome responses to emerging political and media developments that require rapid reaction.

Adapting BBG program delivery is a case in point. Signal delivery on current platforms has never been better. But Agency use of platforms must evolve further and faster in keeping with the shifts in media use noted above. Continued support of large-scale shortwave and AM radio facilities is unsustainable given global media use trends and declining resources.

Current internal challenges necessitate that the BBG become a more nimble and streamlined organization, continue to reduce unnecessary language service overlap, optimize information technology and program delivery, and seek every avenue to enhance operational efficiencies.

This mix of external and internal factors – geopolitical challenges coupled with rising media competition as well as budget constraints matched by new requirements for institutional agility – have shaped the objectives laid out in this new Strategic Plan.

Mission and Support for U.S. Interests

What remains constant for the BBG is our mission. Professional journalism and related support for sustainable independent media have enduring value in helping to foster free, open, democratic societies. As always, such societies tend to be more peaceful and prosperous than non-democratic societies and seldom threaten their neighbors or harbor extremists. That is why they are critical to U.S. national interests and foreign policy, and why BBG's role in supporting their development matters.

The BBG's mission is: *To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.*

The mission upholds the Agency's role as a journalistic organization and advances the utility of accurate, credible news and information to help support democratic transformation, to counter extremist propaganda, and to throw a light on human rights abuses.

The mission also acknowledges that citizen journalism, user-generated content, and peer-to-peer sharing are vital components of the new information environment, and seeks to drive the BBG's growing role in facilitating our audiences' own contributions to news and information flows and to encourage them to share this content with us and with one another.

Further, BBG's mission includes helping to enable billions of people to connect to the Internet and access our content as well as other publicly available news and information through circumvention technologies and other means. We also offer citizens and professional journalists alike the tools to report safely without detection by government surveillance. This work is increasingly important in countries such as China and Cuba that are bolstering their firewalls to keep outside information from getting in and inside information from getting out, and actively pursuing those who dare to report the realities of daily life.

Yet, there is more to BBG's mission to inform, engage, and connect audiences.

In Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere, we routinely reach out to our audiences in public town hall meetings on topics such as health and the environment, involving hundreds, even thousands, of people. These opportunities for direct engagement with our audiences are broadcast on-air and help further develop a following for our news programs.

Some 2,400 affiliated radio and TV stations around the world carry our content on their airwaves, providing more than half of the BBG's total audience. Through them, we are heavily engaged in local media environments, partnered in two-way communication, doing live interactive segments and custom packages pegged to our affiliates' needs and interests.

We also maintain active training programs in the practices and principles of objective journalism for our affiliates' journalists as well as independent reporters in the countries we serve. We offer workshops for media operators in TV and radio station management,

formatting, and advertising sales. And we consult with leading national media networks, government and private, to advise on business strategies and execution.

All this we do in support of free, open, democratic societies and independent indigenous media, which are the lifeblood of such societies.

Overarching Strategic Goals

Operationalizing the mission is the business of any strategy. For BBG, this begins with two, clear overarching strategic goals: (1) expanding freedom of information and expression and (2) communicating America's democratic experience.

The goals flow directly from the U.S. International Broadcasting Act, BBG's enabling legislation. Congress mandates the BBG to do accurate, credible, and comprehensive news; to represent American society; and to present and discuss U.S. policy – all consistent with the standards of professional journalism. Doing so, as the Broadcasting Act establishes, “contributes to international peace and stability” and serves “to support freedom and democracy – in a rapidly changing international environment.”

Free press and free expression are broadly supportive of U.S. foreign policy in that they foster societies that are free, open, and democratic as well as peaceful and stable. We see this in the daily practice of BBG journalism around the world:

- In Ukraine and Russia, where new challenges to stability and democracy have wracked the region, the BBG-supported journalists provide breaking news coverage, analysis, and diverse perspectives, featuring U.S. and European views in the face of heightened Russian propaganda.
- In war-torn Syria, we aid the besieged citizenry with reports on life-and-death developments, including where the regime is mounting its latest attacks.
- In Somalia, we counter violent extremist propaganda targeted to youth with frank on-air and online discussion of radicalism.
- In China, we combat censorship by tapping into internal viral networks with coverage of taboo subjects, including high-level government corruption and Tibet.
- In a host of countries, from Burma to Belarus, we ease inter-ethnic and inter-religious strife with roundtable discussions that bring diverse parties together to bridge differences and model civil discourse.
- And in lands that have suffered natural as well as man-made disasters, from Haiti to the Central African Republic, we provide a humanitarian lifeline to people in extreme distress.

Communicating America's democratic experience serves the same purpose. In covering the U.S., we open a window onto democracy in action in our society. President John F. Kennedy, in a speech commemorating VOA's 20th anniversary in 1962, framed the telling of America's story

eloquently: “What we do here in this country, and what we are, what we want to be, represents really a great experiment in the most difficult kind of self-discipline, and that is the organization and maintenance and development of the process of free government. And it is your task ... to tell that story around the world.”

VOA and MBN, which particularly report on America, cover the U.S. in all its complexity. They are a mirror, not a mouthpiece, showing our country’s democratic trials and tribulations so that the people we target overseas, struggling to nurture or sustain their own democratic systems, might see their stories reflected in ours.

Conveying and critically assessing official U.S. policy – what it is, which parts of our government make and articulate it, and how there are at times sharp policy differences – is a key component of America’s story. U.S. leadership in the world depends in part on global audiences knowing where the United States stands on the issues of the day.

Strategic and Management Objectives

The BBG’s mission and two strategic goals serve as strategic first principles: they undergird and guide everything else in the strategy. What follows are six strategic objectives and three management objectives that drill down into the specific work of the Agency in support of the goals and the mission. The strategic objectives speak to what to do in the field; the management objectives address how to improve the enterprise.

As noted elsewhere in this Plan, BBG will begin in 2014 to set clear goals and performance targets at those operational levels, thereby deepening Agency planning and performance assessment and accountability. The further planning will provide clear connective tissue from the expression of overall strategy for the Agency to what specifically will be implemented on the ground.

For simplicity of presentation, performance goals for each of the strategic and management objectives are not stated in this Plan. They can be found in the Performance Budget section of the Congressional Budget Justification.

Strategic Objective 1: Produce journalism of exceptional value that responds to the mission, meets audience interests, and expands alternatives in the marketplace

Journalism is the daily work of the BBG broadcasters, and producing fact-based, verifiable news and information must be preeminent in Agency strategy. To have impact, BBG journalism must meet audiences’ interests along the breadth of subjects that matter to their lives and, at the same time, must add value in expanding the range of media alternatives. Our aim is not just to follow the 24-hour news cycle but also to drive the news agenda through original reporting, in-

depth analysis, and a unique cross-cultural perspective that helps our audiences become sophisticated consumers of news and media.

- As congressionally-mandated, provide news and other programming that is accurate, timely, objective, and comprehensive and in accordance with the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism.
- Produce exceptional content that quickly responds to and engages audience needs and interests on the platforms that audiences use.
- Provide news and information, consistent with audience preferences and mission requirements, not addressed adequately by media in the target area, e.g., human rights and good governance.
- Offer non-news content that research, web analytics, and audience and affiliate feedback show are of vital interest to audiences, such as health, science, and technology.
- Produce enterprise reporting through deep and lasting exploration of critical issues in the countries we target.
- Co-create content with reputable partners, as appropriate and consistent with broadcasting standards and editorial guidelines.

Strategic Objective 2: Reach the information-denied, underserved, and targets of extremist rhetoric and violence

In deciding where to broadcast, BBG considers the local media situation and prioritizes countries that lack a free or developed press. In all target countries, BBG broadcasters seek to grow their audience base and reach those traditionally underserved by our programs. Populations in our target countries are overwhelmingly young – a challenge but also an opportunity for us to connect with a demographic that in the main has never even heard of us. Our current audiences are 62 percent male and 38 percent female – an imbalance ripe for correcting. We understand that to reach and be relevant with these audiences we need to provide them with content that not only informs them of international and local news, but assists them in building and participating in a civil society. BBG pays special attention to audiences in areas plagued by extremism, as extremist forces espouse a violent ideology and execute campaigns of propaganda and terror that threaten U.S. and regional security and stymie free, open, democratic societies. Support for programming to these audiences is in the interests of U.S. national security.

- Prioritize countries lacking freedom and democracy or faced with extremism where accurate, credible news and information are lacking; boost service to these areas, where feasible.
- Introduce service in selected new languages to reach sizeable new audiences in important countries where our products are urgently needed.

- Reach out to women and youth with the kinds of content and conversation they wish to have beyond traditional news and information paradigms.
- Sharpen audience segmentation and targeting to drive content strategies and better address gender and age demographics, as well as psychographic segments.
- Create country-specific content streams in existing languages to augment news and information for priority countries, e.g., Egypt, Mali.
- Serve as a conduit for the transmission of reporting from inside closed societies to outside audiences.
- Ensure strong local news coverage, as warranted by events, to meet urgent audience needs in areas of crisis.
- Draw on the experiences of the world's many models of free societies, in particular the U.S., to present a broad array of political views and debates.

Strategic Objective 3: Overcome censorship

For almost 70 years, U.S. international broadcasting has fought censorship in all its forms. Today, as the global media environment undergoes a dynamic revolution, access to a truly free press is actually in decline. Jamming of radio and TV broadcasts, including our own, continues in a number of countries. Journalists suffer harassment and violence daily. National media laws often restrict free flows of information, limiting the ability of international news organizations to distribute their content. Intimidation of journalists results in self-censorship. The Internet in particular is under assault. The BBG upholds the universal right of citizens everywhere to receive and impart information without restriction. We work on many fronts to make news and information accessible to our global audiences with the aim of enabling not only unfettered access to our own products but also the full spectrum of independent news sources on the Internet.

- Lead in assisting the world's citizens to gain access to information on all platforms, advocating on the international stage and coordinating within the U.S. government and with international broadcasters and other allies.
- Help audiences understand through journalistic reports the practices and policies of Internet censorship and circumvention.
- Expand the usage and knowledge of tools that enable circumvention of censorship in closed information societies.
- Fund technologies that counter Internet censorship and Internet blocking.
- Increase effective use of social media and digital platforms to combat censorship.
- Provide in-house digital expertise to address real-time censorship and jamming issues in targeted regions.
- Support the independence of media organizations in places where media freedom is threatened through a strong affiliation program that supports their viability through content, training, and other professional services.

Strategic Objective 4: Optimize the media mix and program delivery by market

It is essential that we reach audiences on their preferred media platforms. Yet the BBG's distribution methods and means continue to lag shifts in media use. We must therefore align how we deliver our content with how consumers now access it. For traditional media, we must migrate to the most effective broadcast channels, including satellite TV and FM radio. We must accelerate our investment into growing and enhancing new distribution methods, with specific attention to social and mobile platforms. And considering we have one of the world's largest affiliate networks, we must aggressively expand and improve our affiliations and syndication of content in effective formats. Ultimately, the Agency is platform-agnostic. We seek to do what works best for the market at hand to get our content to as many users as possible.

- Increase distribution on platforms that we know audiences are using – FM, satellite TV, and mobile devices – migrating away from legacy platforms where they do not reach audiences.
- Find creative ways to penetrate closed societies, through flash drives, DVDs, and other alternative delivery means.
- Expand local distribution through affiliation with strong local television and FM radio stations and, where possible, installation of FM transmitters.
- Expand digital content support to affiliates to enable them to exchange content with USIM, as well as with other affiliates.
- Draw on research and other inputs to tailor format and presentation styles to audience needs and media usage habits, creating content that can break through ever-increasing clutter.
- Exploit the falling cost of video production by updating our broadcasting facilities to support growing audience appetite for TV and video. Support our audience's growing appetite for social media, TV, and video by purchasing equipment and rebuilding aging infrastructure and broadcasting facilities.
- Integrate and digitize all content – e.g., text, audio, photos, graphics, and video – on a common content management system to facilitate use across platforms, support on-demand needs of the audience, and increase use via syndication to affiliates.

Strategic Objective 5: Serve as a robust U.S. news bureau and cultural bridge

Representing American society and presenting and discussing U.S. policy are legislated mandates for the Agency and thus constitute mission imperatives. BBG coverage of the U.S. is comprehensive across all elements of society but aims overall to convey the practice of democracy in all of its complexity. It is not about persuading audiences to like us; it is about helping them see how we manage the challenges of our democratic society – from economic growth to fiscal crises to race relations to educating our youth to addressing environmental change. These topic areas find ready comparisons in our target countries and resonate with our audiences in practical, meaningful ways. Carrying them out requires sensitivity and creativity.

Currents of anti-Americanism still run strong in some parts of the world, necessitating deft outreach on our part that stresses dialogue not monologue. The way people interact with media today, with emphasis on interaction, further affirms this approach. At the same time, America's still dominant role on the global stage makes our country a focal point of international attention, and our national language is the one that tens of millions of people around the world seek to learn. VOA, in particular, is uniquely mandated and positioned to leverage these advantages to connect with diverse international audiences, serving as a U.S. news bureau for our affiliate partners and providing English-learning programming.

- Counter propaganda and incomplete information about the U.S. by explaining U.S. policy and providing perspectives on American life and values.
- Serve as a U.S. bureau for media outlets across the world that wish to engage with us for news, analysis, and perspectives from the United States – on the model that has succeeded in Armenia, Bolivia, Turkey, et al.
- Emphasize English learning as a vehicle for positive audience engagement and interaction as well as information on American society and culture.
- Meet the global interest in American politics with in-depth coverage and analysis of national elections and coverage of other political events to impart the news and to elucidate the democratic process, with stories localized to make them interesting to specific target regions.
- Satisfy the world's growing appetite for learning English through TV and radio programs, online instruction, printed instructional materials, and innovative short-form videos posted on the Web.

Strategic Objective 6: Empower citizen information gathering and exchange

New and powerful web, mobile, and social media tools are enabling increasingly diverse voices to be heard around the world. These tools have made media personal, moving the power from centralized broadcasters to a new class of bloggers, activists, videographers, and a content-generating public. They are using media not only to tell their stories on a digital world stage but also to connect with one another to chart the future of their communities and build new forms of civil society. Social media are also changing the way news is gathered and distributed, requiring news organizations to adopt new work flows that allow them to use multiple platforms to deliver content to a global audience. Our Agency must aggressively pursue an innovation agenda that develops the next generation of content, tools, and distribution platforms.

- Become a hub to facilitate and empower citizen information gathering and exchange on solving problems and building democratic institutions.
- Nurture citizen journalism and channel user-generated content from inside repressive states.

- Link citizens within repressive societies and to external audiences through social media networks.
- Combat racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice and conflict by facilitating and empowering informed dialogue.
- Enter into a “global conversation” with our audiences by using social media tools to identify, source, and distribute news content into the channels where people are having conversations about their community and the world.
- Build new partnerships to create tools that help us more efficiently and effectively translate content for a global audience around high-quality news and information.
- Pursue partnerships with technologists around the globe who are building the next generation of digital media technology through mobile and social media.
- Develop a suite of new media products that can be easily deployed by language services based on market consumption data, with an eye toward maximizing opportunities for user generated content, peer-to-peer sharing, and audience interactivity.

Management Objective 1: Transform the BBG into an agile and cost effective enterprise responsive to rapid geopolitical change and ongoing fiscal constraints

By virtue of historical circumstance, today’s BBG is a complex amalgam of diverse media outlets and respective support organizations, operating under different legal and administrative frameworks. The result is an organization lacking the agility essential to operate in a rapidly evolving global media environment and the standardization that enables rational resource allocations. Going forward, the Agency must undergo rapid and fundamental transformation in order to appropriately fulfill its charter amidst growing geo-political instability and substantial budgetary challenges.

- Restructure Agency management by appointing an Agency-wide CEO to manage the BBG’s day-to-day operations, with a part-time board of directors focused on strategy, budget, and public outreach.
- Transform the Agency’s technological platforms and workflows, enabling it to continually adapt to global standards in content acquisition, manipulation, distribution and audience consumption behaviors.
- Transform the workplace and increase collaboration by leveraging Open Space concepts.
- Make innovation a core value of how we work and interface with audiences and other stakeholders.
- Automate and streamline business processes and work flows.

Management Objective 2: Leverage and harmonize Agency assets and brands

The BBG is one of the world’s largest news-gathering and reporting enterprises with more than 80 language services, 54 overseas news bureaus, 3,6000 employees, and 1,500 stringer

reporters. Each of the Agency's five broadcasters generates original reporting every day from and around the world's hotspots – the Sahel and Central Africa, Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Burma, China, Egypt, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Yemen, et al – primarily in vernacular languages for target audiences in these areas. Too little of this rich content is translated and shared across the BBG to augment international news coverage for other BBG vernacular services or made available to other global audiences in English. The BBG will remedy this by facilitating coordination between broadcast entities and reinforcing their unique and respective mission-driven legislated roles in areas served by multiple broadcasters.

- Place the audience first in planning, organizing, funding, and programming across the agency.
- Ensure coordinated and complementary mission-driven operations and content served by two BBG media entities.
- Develop and encourage an environment where coordinating activities across entities becomes routine.
- Build the internal content-sharing network, aligning internal editorial support and coordination, as needed.
- Channel original reporting from the language services to the central newsrooms and across the BBG to get maximum mileage out of the content we currently produce.
- Harmonize newsgathering, including stringer and correspondent networks, across the BBG to ensure required editorial coordination and avoid redundancy.
- Use our coordinated newsgathering and reporting structures as assets to provide affiliates with greater value, through interactive segments and other special offerings.
- Research and develop translation capacities, partnering, as appropriate, with outside organizations to access expertise and resources, as needed.

Management Objective 3: Enhance employee engagement, development, and productivity

Our diverse, multi-cultural, and multi-talented workforce offers a rich range of experience and expertise to carry out the Agency's mission. Key to success in a rapidly changing, highly competitive global media environment is flexibility to develop innovative products for our target countries consistent with emerging priorities, programming formats, and advances in technology. Enhanced skill sets are required to program for and transmit via multiple media platforms – radio, TV, Internet, mobile, and social media. Our employees are most effective when they are well motivated, trained, and led. Continued efforts to equip and energize the entire BBG workforce are critical as we confront mounting competitive pressures worldwide.

- Promote human capital planning and management as a top priority for senior executives, managers, and supervisors throughout the Agency.
- Increase internal transparency and communication across the Agency and its networks to increase trust, collaboration, and efficiency in daily and strategic activities.

- Consistently communicate organizational goals, objectives, priorities, and performance expectations in a timely manner to staff at all levels in the Agency.
- Ensure a safe and secure work environment for all employees.
- Implement a management training curriculum focusing on performance management, human capital planning and processes, communication, and financial and administrative management.
- Improve the consistency and credibility of Agency performance management processes.
- Develop cross-training and internal development standards and procedures, as applicable.
- Foster employee participation in Agency health and wellness programs.

Measuring Success

Current Impact. The BBG is currently meeting its global challenges with unprecedented success. With our global digital and analog transmission networks, the BBG now reaches 215 million people weekly, our highest worldwide audience measured to date and up from 166 million in 2011.

Audience penetration is especially strong in strategically vital countries such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Mali, Somalia, Nigeria, and Burma, and in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In most of these places and in many target countries, the BBG networks are not only market leaders in audience but also help to set the news agenda with unique, original reporting.

Audience size is a key metric in meeting the Congressional mandate that our media programs “reach a significant audience,” but there are many more. For years, the BBG has tracked other key indicators such as reliability and understanding. Audiences almost uniformly give high marks to the BBG’s news programs for trustworthiness and to information programs for contributing to their better understanding of American culture and policies.

New Impact Model. In recognition that impact is about more than just audience reach, the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan set a goal of developing a multi-factor approach to gauging success in the fulfilling the Agency’s mission. We have now developed a new Impact Model (see Appendix) and are beginning to implement it.

The Model is pegged to the BBG mission statement and examines impact in the areas of informing, engaging and connecting, and being influential. These effects are considered over three time periods – short, medium, and long term – and across three sectors – audiences, local media, and governments. The Model employs a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures to account for wide a variety of media and political environments in BBG target markets. Given the variability of markets, core indicators will be used wherever current research data allows, but the Model will necessarily be applied flexibly.

Ongoing Research. Driving BBG’s improved impact assessment is the Agency’s global market and audience research program. Consistent with the Congressional requirement that the BBG maintain “a reliable research capacity,” the Agency undertakes quantitative, qualitative, evaluative, and ad hoc research projects every year to directly help support decisions on programming and strategy.

The BBG maintains a vast database of audience and market data that consolidates research results. The archive covers some 90 countries and contains socioeconomic and demographic data as well as strategically important information on local media, competition, and audience preferences and needs. The research guides BBG strategic planning at all levels, specifically on-air program development, program reviews, and the Agency’s comprehensive annual strategic review of all language services.

We also have united our research and data collection across the BBG with advances in a single digital metric system for all entities for web, social, mobile, and video/audio content. Coupled with traditional and innovative research, such as in-country panels and mobile phone-based research, we are consistently and frequently measuring our performance across all of our media platforms.

Going forward, BBG research will track the new Impact Model in providing data for the newly established performance indicators. It will also employ new forms of research that allow for faster turnarounds in acquiring program feedback consistent with the new country-level planning that BBG will be undertaking.

Program Evaluation. Each BBG entity conducts yearly reviews of each of our language services and their programming in order to maintain high quality broadcasts and to help the language services progress toward their strategic goals. These reviews are scheduled to include fresh research data and analysis about the media market and audiences in the area that each program targets. Survey data allow both for the development of future strategies in response to media trends, as well as a review of the services’ performance across key indicators, such as the size and positive experience of the audience.

The BBG conducts annual independent evaluations to assess effectiveness and strategic priorities. The annual Language Service Review conducted by the Board assesses two basic questions: (1) where the BBG should broadcast and (2) how well BBG is fulfilling the congressional mandate to “review, evaluate, and determine, at least annually, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the addition and deletion of language services.”

Corollary Country-Level Planning and SMART System

This impact model informs the current Strategic Plan and particularly the performance goals that support the strategic objectives. It has also informed a strategy review process that began

in 2014 in which the Board will set clear goals for the Agency and select performance targets that define success in specific markets.

Since 2012, the BBG has been developing a new strategic planning system, the Strategic Management and Audience Research Tool (SMART). SMART now holds profiles of BBG language service activity in 100 countries, including research and budget data, media and political overviews, and statements of the roles and strategies of the respective BBG language services.

With the new country-level planning, BBG will graduate the current SMART statements into full-fledged country strategies, putting in place clear goals, targets, and metrics (per the impact model). BBG performance reviews will then track language service activity consistent with the stated goals to gauge success in accomplishing them. New forms of research, as noted above, will approximate or allow real-time assessment, enabling faster course corrections when program activity is missing the mark.

The country-level planning is part of BBG's further commitment to achieving and demonstrating impact at a time of fiscal austerity when return on investment increasingly matters.

BBG Strategic Plan in Action

This Strategic Plan provides high-level guidance for the activities of BBG networks. But local circumstances – geopolitical situation, government policies, media environment, etc. – dictate the precise role that the broadcasters will fulfill in each market. Presented here are three case studies, representing a range of political and media environments, showing how BBG networks carry out the Strategic Plan.

Ukraine

VOA plays an essential role in Ukraine as a unique and comprehensive source of news, information and unbiased analysis about American life, thought and institutions, U.S. foreign policy, U.S.-Ukrainian relations and Ukraine's democratic evolution. RFE/RL helps Ukrainians find their own path toward a more mature democracy by engaging, informing, and offering thoughtful audiences the chance to learn from one another, to understand other sectors of society and cultures within the country, and to participate and begin to integrate more constructively into European organizations and structures.

The services jointly help the BBG to advance several strategic objectives by achieving specific goals and targets:

- Produce journalism of exceptional value that responds to the mission, meets audience interests, and expands alternatives in the marketplace

VOA is working to advance and support Ukrainian media by launching a fellowship program with Ukrainian TV affiliates in which journalists from partner stations would work at VOA and co-produce regular custom reports for those stations and by offering training to local journalists and media outlets.

- Optimize the media mix and program delivery by market

RFE/RL seeks to increase weekly reach by diversifying platforms and program offerings, in particular, adding television, in order to reach a wider audience helping to counter inaccuracies and misinformation that appears in local news programming. They have set audience targets to measure the success of this initiative.

- Serve as a robust U.S. news bureau and cultural bridge

VOA serves as a U.S. news bureau in Ukraine to better explain the U.S. and U.S. policies to Ukrainians, strengthen ties to the West, and counter inaccuracies and distortions of U.S. policies. They will strengthen this role by increasing the number and frequency of customized interactives or special reports for major television/media companies in Ukraine.

- Empower citizen information gathering and exchange

RFE/RL seeks to engage young audiences on digital platforms in order to inform future leaders and support their efforts at building a civil society. They have set goals to increase visits to their Ukrainian website and Crimean pages.

Egypt

MBN's overall objective in Egypt is to provide accurate and balanced coverage of Egypt, the region, and the U.S. and support democratic values by expanding the spectrum of ideas, opinions and perspectives available in the local media.

MBN advances the BBG's strategic objectives in the following ways:

- Produce journalism of exceptional value that responds to the mission, meets audience interests, and expands alternatives in the marketplace

In the highly politicized, increasingly restrictive Egyptian media market, Alhurra provides information not available on other TV stations to ensure Egyptians have objective and balanced coverage of Egypt and the United States.

- Empower citizen information gathering and exchange

MBN is increasing engagement with Egyptian youth via digital media, including desktop and mobile websites, apps, and social media, to enhance their understanding and provide a platform for open and objective dialogue about the U.S., Egypt and regional issues not available in local media.

- Serve as a robust U.S. news bureau and cultural bridge

Through their work providing quality journalism and fostering dialogue, MBN serves as a cultural bridge, conveying U.S. perspectives on U.S. foreign policy towards the region and providing insights into American values and American culture.

North Korea

RFA provides uncensored news and commentary about North Korea to its citizens. The service provides a platform for North Koreans bold enough to voice their experiences and thoughts on the air. RFA also offers North Korean perspectives on their homeland after leaving the country and news about the thriving economic and cultural world in South Korea.

VOA Korean programs inform North Koreans, with a focus on reaching elites, about U.S. policy toward North Korea, U.S. news, and international news. In addition, VOA focuses on dispelling

systematic propaganda against the U.S. imposed by the North Korean government on its citizens by providing accurate information and news.

The services advance several BBG strategic objectives by achieving specific goals and targets:

- Produce journalism of exceptional value that responds to the mission, meets audience interests, and expands alternatives in the marketplace

To expand the media options available to North Koreans, RFA is exploring opportunities for satire and humor, soliciting defector feedback for what works best in the market.

- Reach the information-denied, underserved, and targets of extremist rhetoric and violence

RFA is expanding original reporting and materials from inside North Korea, including more sound bites and more video from a greater range of demographic and geographic areas, in order to provide audiences the information they need to make the best decisions for their society in a time of political change and transition.

- Overcome censorship

RFA is expanding coverage of elite activities, behaviors, decisions, relations and statements, to inform and educate citizens about their leaders.

- Serve as a robust U.S. news bureau and cultural bridge

In order to reach elite audiences in North Korea, VOA is producing unique content about North Korean, U.S. and regional issues and U.S. policies that is picked up by international media – particularly South Korean media that is fairly widely received in the North.

BBG in Transition

This new Plan takes effect during a time of transition for the BBG. Four new Board members were confirmed in August and September 2013. The President has nominated two additional Board members who are awaiting Senate confirmation. In January 2014, the Board designated a three-member interim management team to steer the Agency until a new CEO position is authorized and filled.

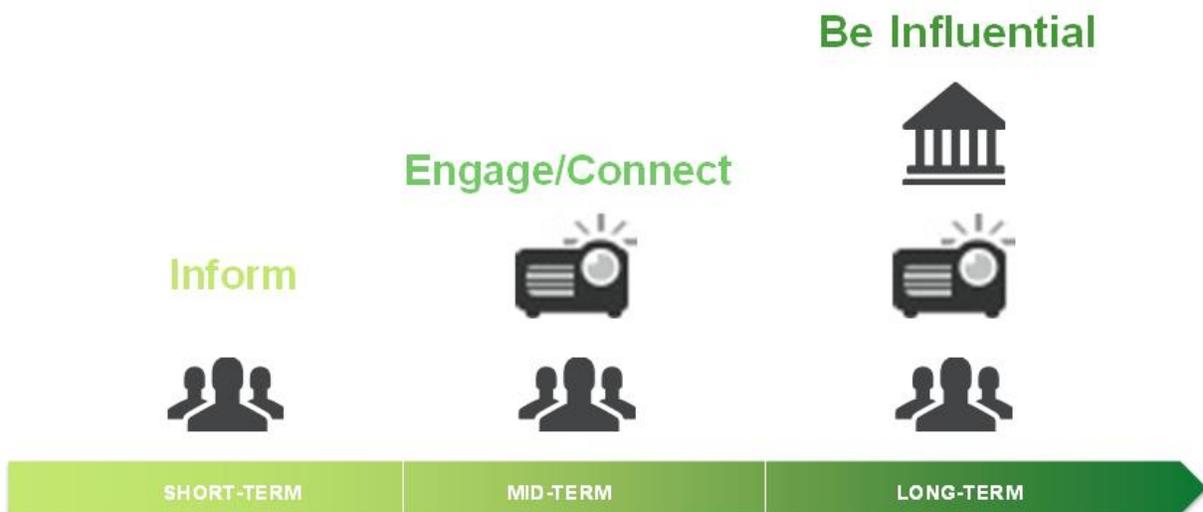
BBG leadership is aware that Congress and the Executive Branch are keenly interested in the role and structure of the BBG and how our mission can most effectively be carried out in the future. New authorizing legislation under consideration could change the future course of the Agency.

BBG Board members and senior leaders have been involved in discussions with stakeholders on Capitol Hill and at the White House about the future configuration of the BBG and its networks. The BBG has shared its strategic vision with these stakeholders and has incorporated their concerns into the strategies in this Plan.

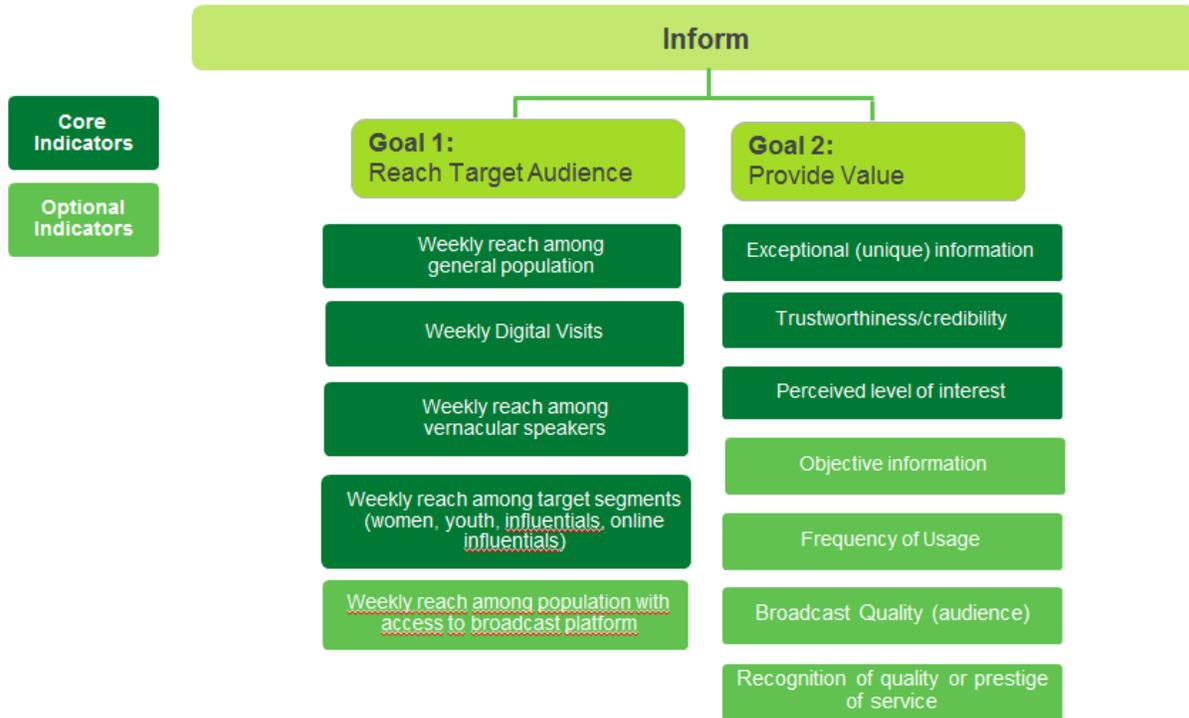
Appendix: Impact Model

The new system referred to above for evaluating BBG performance in the field, the Impact Model, is depicted below in schematic form. In separate BBG documents, it is explained in detail.

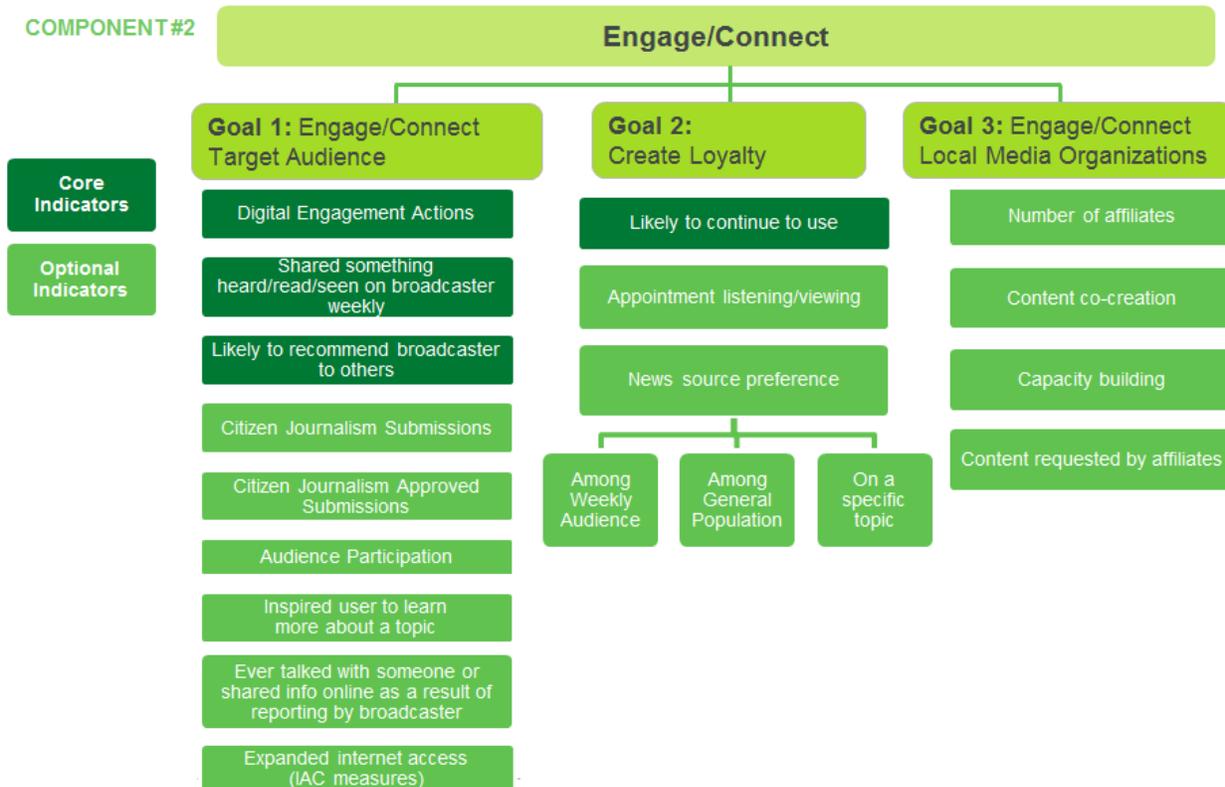
To reiterate, the Model tracks the BBG mission statement and aims to capture impact over various time periods and across discrete sectors in our target markets, using a basket of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The indicators will be flexibly applied, given the widely varying media and political environments in which we operate, to discern and describe BBG success. The Model will be central to new country-level planning and performance assessment across the Agency.



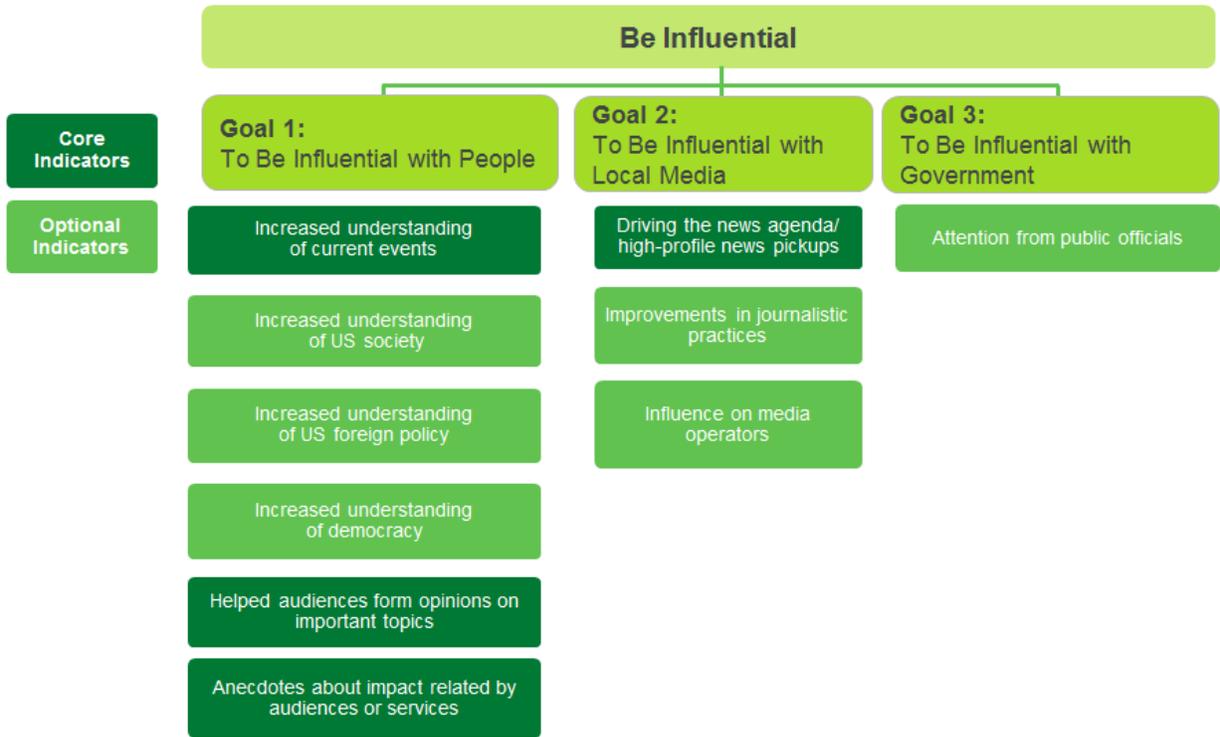
COMPONENT #1



COMPONENT #2



COMPONENT #3





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