

FY 2017 BUDGET REQUEST

BBG Budget Highlights

The Broadcasting Board of Governors requests **a total of \$777.8 million** for FY 2017. Highlights include:

- **\$768 million for International Broadcasting Operations (IBO)** to fund VOA, OCB, TSI, and IBB operations, as well as grant funds for the operations of RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN and to establish an OCB grantee. This funding provides increased resources to expand Russian video and digital programs, to counter ISIL misinformation, and to increase research on the impact of BBG media. It also increases funds for VOA to complete its transition from purchase order vendors to staffing agency contracts.
 - **These IBO Funds Include \$12.5 million for Internet Freedom** programs to support BBG's anti-censorship activities to combat growing efforts by authoritarian governments to limit freedom of expression on the internet. These projects will benefit from the enhanced coordination provided by a newly established BBG Office of Internet Freedom.
- **\$9.7 million in Broadcasting Capital Improvements** to support infrastructure maintenance and improvements, for an initiative to enhance cost-effective facilities at the Kuwait Transmitting Station, and a project to counter erosion at the Marathon Transmission Site.

PRIORITY INVESTMENTS INCLUDE:

- **Digital and Video for Next Generation Influencers (\$15M):** RFE/RL and VOA will expand digital and video production to engage with young audiences who are impacted by pressure from Russia, or by the media campaigns of violent extremist groups such as ISIL. RFE/RL (\$10M) will expand video and new media in Russian, and launch digital teams for Central Asia and other areas where Russia supports frozen conflicts (such as Trans-Dniestria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and the North Caucasus). VOA (\$3.5M) will increase digital content for Russian speakers and for regional audiences impacted by ISIL extremism, including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. VOA will create digital reporting teams focused entirely on social media, from story conception through reporting and publication, and give the public a platform to debate and discuss ISIL extremism. The Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation (\$1.5M) will facilitate these initiatives by upgrading systems to support new digital platforms and HD (high- definition) video.

- **Raise Your Voice Campaigns for Egypt, Central Asia, and the Balkans (\$2.5M):** MBN (\$1.25M) will expand the digital component of the Raise Your Voice campaign that has successfully engaged Iraqi audiences on issues that have allowed ISIL to attract young fighters. The enhancement, which provides a platform and forum for discussion of issues and potential solutions at the root cause of extremism, will allow MBN to inaugurate a Raise Your Voice campaign for Egypt. RFE/RL (\$1.25M) will launch similar efforts for Central Asia and the Balkans.
- **Research Funds (\$2M):** BBG proposes a \$2M research investment for impact studies to engage next-generation influencers who use mobile, social and digital media in areas experiencing violent extremism, to assist in developing audience loyalty and trust for BBG's expanding Russian media, and to increase the impact of digital media in Cuba and Latin America.
- **Expand Global Distribution Capability (\$2M):** This investment will strengthen the ability to reach and engage global audiences by expanding global distribution capability using satellites and other digital methodologies. This effort supports the agency's ability to both curate and distribute content and to successfully attract audiences in areas where BBG seeks to have the greatest impact.
- **Kuwait Transmitting Station, Expanded Broadcast Capacity (\$4.55M):** BCI investment funds will be used to continue the planned expansion of the shortwave broadcast infrastructure in Kuwait. Broadcasts from this location reach multiple regions including Africa. Due to the low cost of electrical power in Kuwait, it is also BBG's most cost-effective shortwave transmitting site. The project will facilitate the transfer of higher-cost, mission critical transmissions from other stations to Kuwait.

SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS:

- **Transmitting Station Network Realignment (\$5.7M):** BBG will realign transmitting station sites and transmissions across its worldwide network in response to the global migration from shortwave listening to other media formats. Affected regions include the Middle East, as well as Central and East Asia. Affected transmitting stations are located in Europe and Asia
- **BBG-wide Operating and Administrative Reductions (\$14.3M):** Through selective reductions and closer coordination and collaboration, BBG media networks will reduce administrative and overhead costs to cover other cost increases and program priorities.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES INCLUDE:

- **Empowering the BBG CEO:** In order to optimize BBG's coordinated coverage of global news and information – including emerging international crises – and to maximize the use of shared support services, the FY 2017 Budget Request proposes to legally authorize day-to-day operation and management duties to a Chief Executive Office appointed by the Board. There are other efforts to reform BBG, but the empowerment of the CEO is too vital to wait. The agency urges the Congress to include the proposed CEO empowerment language in the FY 2017 appropriations.
- **Spanish Language Grantee for Cuba:** BBG requests authority to establish a new Spanish language, non-Federal media organization that would receive a BBG grant and perform the functions of the current Office of Cuba Broadcasting.