



FY 2019 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Executive Summary

Summary of Appropriations

FY 2017 - FY 2019

(in thousands)

INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING OPERATIONS (Programs, Projects and Activities)	FY 2017 ENACTED	FY 2017 ACTUALS	FY 2018 CBJ	FY 2019 REQUEST
FEDERAL ENTITIES				
Voice of America	\$ 234,685	\$ 232,661	\$ 199,756	\$ 199,922
Office of Cuba Broadcasting	\$ 28,056	\$ 28,938	\$ 23,656	\$ 13,656
International Broadcasting Bureau	\$ 59,671	\$ 57,827	\$ 52,863	\$ 54,863
<i>Internet Freedom; Anti-Censorship (non-add to IBB)</i>	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation	\$ 181,399	\$ 177,055	\$ 166,092	\$ 159,977
Total, Federal Entities	\$ 503,811	\$ 496,481	\$ 442,367	\$ 428,418
NON-FEDERAL ENTITIES				
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	\$ 117,388	\$ 123,743	\$ 99,600	\$ 91,334
Radio Free Asia	\$ 43,109	\$ 53,752	\$ 35,296	\$ 35,296
Middle East Broadcasting Networks	\$ 112,600	\$ 112,700	\$ 103,100	\$ 101,294
Total, Non-Federal Entities	\$ 273,097	\$ 290,195	\$ 237,996	\$ 227,924
Total, International Broadcasting Operations	\$ 776,908	\$ 786,676	\$ 680,363	\$ 656,342
BROADCASTING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	\$ 9,700	\$ 7,339	\$ 4,791	\$ 4,791
Total, Broadcasting Capital Improvements	\$ 9,700	\$ 7,339	\$ 4,791	\$ 4,791
BBG GRAND TOTAL - Appropriation/Request	\$ 786,608	\$ 794,015	\$ 685,154	\$ 661,133

Above all, we value the dignity of every human life, protect the rights of every person, and share the hope of every soul to live in freedom. That is who we are.

- President Donald J. Trump; July 2017; as quoted in the National Security Strategy

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is requesting \$661.1 million. This request prioritizes funding for areas of key strategic importance to the United States and may enable the agency to be an even more impactful global media organization.

The BBG is America’s civilian international media agency, comprising 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).

The BBG consists of five dynamic, modern organizations that provide content through digital platforms, television, and radio in 58 languages to more than 100 countries, reaching an audience of more than 278 million each week.

The BBG networks advance U.S. national interests by providing audiences in closed societies, or where free media is not yet fully established, with consistently accurate and compelling journalism and other content that opens minds and stimulates debate. The BBG demonstrates to the world values that reflect American society: freedom, openness, democracy, and hope. Societies that embrace these values support U.S. interests because they enjoy greater stability and prosperity, live in peace with their neighbors, reject terrorism and extremism, and make better political allies and trade partners for the United States. As the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) explains, “Stable, prosperous, and friendly states enhance American security and boost U.S. economic opportunities.” In covering the United States, BBG opens a window onto democracy in action, in all its richness and complexity, through which global audiences can see reflected their own struggles to build sustainable democratic systems.

The work of the BBG is more important – and challenging – than at any time during its history spanning more than seven decades. In a world awash in media and interconnected as never before, governments and non-state actors, including extremist groups like ISIS and Boko Haram, have weaponized information to generate a relentless, sophisticated stream of false narratives that too often go unchallenged. As detailed in the NSS, “Rival actors use propaganda and other means to try to discredit democracy. They advance anti-Western views and spread false information to create divisions among ourselves, our allies, and our partners.” Government funded broadcasters inundate audiences with disinformation about global events and depict the United States on an irreversible downward social spiral, its institutions failing and global strength on the wane. Global media freedom has deteriorated steadily during the past decade and internet freedom is declining as more governments censor information and expand surveillance.

Role of U.S. International Media

The BBG’s founding legislation (U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994) requires U.S. international media to –

- (1) inform people through accurate, objective, and comprehensive news;
- (2) represent American society, culture, and thinking; and
- (3) present and discuss U.S. policy.

This is reflected in the BBG mission statement: “To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.”

The five networks pursue this mission through complementary, reinforcing roles. RFE/RL, RFA, and OCB emphasize domestic news for their local, geographically-defined audiences. Covering developments specific to their local target markets is their specialty, most notably in countries without a free press or in transition. At the same time, each also covers limited regional and international issues and events (including those in the United States, as warranted) to ensure comprehensive news coverage. VOA emphasizes international and regional news and in-depth coverage of the United States. VOA also covers significant domestic events to ensure comprehensive news coverage, especially in areas where it is the only BBG presence, such as sub-Saharan Africa. As the only Arabic language network, MBN provides a full range of international, regional, and local news in Arabic as well as thorough coverage of the United States.

Establishing Trust and Credibility

The BBG networks accomplish their goals by building relationships of trust and credibility with global audiences. In addition to high-quality, fact-based news and information, BBG engages audiences and connects them with one another and with the wider world, in particular by providing technologies that circumvent internet censorship.

Discerning news-seekers shun propaganda and content that they believe is not trustworthy. A legally mandated “firewall” prohibits U.S. Government interference in BBG content, ensuring that journalists and editors can develop programming that reflects the highest professional standards.

The BBG’s credibility is further bolstered and its reach is extended through news and information in local vernacular languages, such as Somali or Chechen, as well as regional or global languages, including English and Russian. Overall, more than four out of five weekly audience members trust the content they receive from BBG networks, according to representative BBG media surveys. With the high levels of trust that audiences place in BBG networks, the networks become a go-to source in times of crisis or to verify other information sources.

Organizational Change and Progress

The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) made significant reforms to the management structure of the BBG. Primarily, the act authorized the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as a Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed position, and provided the Agency with additional operational authorities to add flexibility to processes in light of the Agency’s unique media-based mission. It also authorized a Presidentially-appointed Advisory Board, which includes the Secretary of State; members of the current BBG Board continue to work with the CEO in moving the Agency forward.

The Agency leverages the statutorily-authorized International Media Coordinating Committee (ICC), made up of the heads of the five BBG networks to coordinate strategy, enhance programming, and align investments. Working in partnership through this coordinated structure, the BBG networks have delivered a number of signature accomplishments in the past several years, including launching a quickly growing 24/7 Russian-language digital network that counters Kremlin disinformation and tells the truth about America and global events; accelerating the migration of content to digital, mobile, social media, and satellite TV and FM radio; pioneering technologies to circumvent government-imposed internet firewalls; reinvigorating the telling of America's story by expanding a "U.S. bureau" approach for reporting to media outlets around the world; and fully operationalizing a sophisticated and dynamic Impact Model to demonstrate effectiveness, inform resource allocation, and improve accountability through targeted goals based on specific metrics.

Building for the Future

Today, the BBG is uniquely positioned – through its enduring mission, organized structure, and revitalized leadership, greatly improved internal coordination and collaboration, and expanded global reach on all media platforms – to combat disinformation and extremism and to communicate America's story and values to the world.

Budget Highlights

This FY 2019 budget request is \$661.1 million, a \$24 million decrease from the FY 2018 budget request.

Proposed substantial reductions in this request are:

- **OFFICE OF CUBA BROADCASTING (OCB)** - \$10 million in programmatic reductions;
- **RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY (RFE/RL)** - \$8.27 million in direct/indirect program cost savings; and
- **OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES, AND INNOVATION (TSI)** - \$6.1 million in operations savings.

This budget also presents a set of strategic investments that build on the BBG's successful efforts in three key areas:

- **CONFRONTING STATE-SPONSORED DISINFORMATION**, supporting democratization in Venezuela and Central American countries with a focus on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua;
- **ACCELERATING THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL AND INTERACTIVE PLATFORMS**, by implementing significant enhancements to the BBG's cybersecurity profile, mitigating risks, and funding Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) investments; and
- **STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY**, by increasing research to enhance BBG's portfolio of evidence to help strengthen agency accountability and evidence-driven decision-making.

This budget also is accompanied by the BBG’s 2018–2022 Strategic Plan, which presents the agency’s two overarching strategic goals: (1) expanding freedom of information and expression and (2) communicating America’s democratic experience and values. These strategic goals support the third and fourth pillars of the National Security Strategy, “Preserving Peace through Strength” and “Advancing American Influence,” by using accurate, objective information to foster the American values of democracy and free expression and, as the NSS directs, “expose adversary propaganda and disinformation.” The Strategic Plan provides the agency’s roadmap to achieving impact in the agency’s target markets. The Strategic Plan and this budget submission also respond to new calls for institutional agility as reflected in the Administration’s management priorities of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability.

The fast-shifting global environment requires that we focus on continually improving our operations in order to maximize our journalistic impact, thereby supporting American interests and American national security. Our growing audiences throughout the world are hungry for the exceptional news and information that we offer. We will meet that demand, while reaching out to new audiences, with fresh vision, imagination, and innovation.