

FY 2017 BUDGET REQUEST Executive Summary

The Broadcasting Board of Governors			
(\$ in thousands)			
International Broadcasting Operations	FY 2015 Enacted	FY 2016 Enacted	FY 2017 Request
Federal Entities			
Voice of America	\$ 214,733	\$ 218,450	\$ 224,412
Office of Cuba Broadcasting	\$ 27,130	\$ 27,140	\$ 27,100
International Broadcasting Bureau	\$ 61,404	\$ 61,200	\$ 63,093
Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation	\$ 182,487	\$ 181,483	\$ 182,300
<i>Internet Freedom; Anti-Censorship</i>	\$ 17,500	\$ 15,000	\$ 12,500
Total, Federal Entities	\$ 485,754	\$ 488,273	\$ 496,905
Non-Federal Entities			
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	\$ 103,850	\$ 108,414	\$ 121,138
Radio Free Asia	\$ 38,255	\$ 38,500	\$ 38,000
Middle East Broadcasting Networks	\$ 109,408	\$ 109,600	\$ 112,100
Total, Non-Federal Entities	\$ 251,513	\$ 256,514	\$ 271,238
Total, International Broadcasting Operations	\$ 737,267	\$ 744,787	\$ 768,143
Broadcasting Capital Improvements	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	\$ 9,700
Total, Broadcasting Capital Improvements	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	\$ 9,700
BBG Grand Total - Appropriation/Request	\$ 742,067	\$ 749,587	\$ 777,843

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is a networked global media agency for a networked world. The five media organizations that comprise the BBG – the Voice of America (VOA), Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), and Radio Free Asia (RFA) – complement and reinforce one another in a shared mission that is vital to U.S. national interests: to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. Together, the BBG media organizations communicate each week with more than 226 million people across the globe. However, the millions of people we reach worldwide are perhaps best measured by the impact we have with them.

Two crucial challenges guide U.S. international media today. First, the explosion of information flows during the 21st century has given rise to sophisticated exploitation of media by authoritarian regimes and non-state entities. While free media are crucial to democratic transitions, civil society and governance, they are also susceptible to abuse by powerful, non-democratic actors including Russia, ISIL and China.

Second, the global information wave increasingly has pressed governments to impose greater censorship in an effort to manage their domestic information spaces. The Arab

Spring gave hope to millions, but served notice to non-democratic governments about what can happen when domestic discontent is amplified by powerful and pervasive information tools. Even Western governments, faced with sophisticated propaganda from ISIL — which uses social media to coordinate and publicize attacks — are struggling with the proper balance between information freedom and national security. As a result, global freedom is at a 10-year low, and the most significant global reversals have been in freedom of expression and the rule of law (Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2016”). Internet freedom around the world declined for a fifth consecutive year in 2015 as more governments censored information while also expanding surveillance and cracking down on privacy tools (Freedom House, “Freedom on the Net 2015”).

BBG broadcasters are professional journalists committed to providing accurate, credible, and comprehensive news and information to audiences who lack access to the truth and are therefore susceptible to misinformation. BBG journalism is thus an antidote to censorship and extremist rhetoric, as well as a model of free media that helps foster and sustain free, democratic societies.

BBG broadcasters also offer life-saving information during humanitarian emergencies. When events dictate, they react quickly to crises with surges in broadcasting. And, BBG provides Internet anti-censorship tools to help audiences break through government-imposed information firewalls and protect their on-line privacy.

Telling America’s story and explaining U.S. foreign policy is a significant part of the BBG’s mandate, as directed by Congress. In their roles under the BBG’s mission, VOA and MBN — while providing comprehensive regional and world news to their audiences — cover the United States in all its complexity so that audiences in countries that are struggling to nurture or sustain their own democratic systems might see their stories reflected in ours.

The networked structure of the BBG ensures that the BBG media organization can deliver high-quality content consistent with their distinct roles in ways that are the most cost-efficient for the American taxpayer, through the sharing of cross-cutting content, delivery channels, support resources and other assets.

Even as the BBG is adapting content and delivery to suit rapidly evolving media preferences, the agency continues to orient its coverage to address U.S. national interests and priorities around the world. To do so in 2017 and beyond, the BBG media organizations will collectively focus on five core themes.

ACCELERATE A MARKET-DRIVEN SHIFT TO DIGITAL MEDIA

In order to be a credible information source, each of BBG's 61 language services must be on popular media delivery systems. In a growing number of places, BBG can most easily engage with young, influential media consumers by moving to digital, video, mobile and social media networks.

Raise Your Voice Campaigns: MBN's *Raise Your Voice* campaigns use multiple platforms — such as Google Hangout discussions, infographics, short videos, and social media — to engage Arabic-speaking audiences in discussion and debate about the fight against extremism and the underlying causes of terrorism. After establishing a new digital management and staffing structure and creating *Raise Your Voice* campaigns for Iraq and the Maghreb, in the FY 2017 Request, MBN proposes to develop a similar interactive platform for Egypt. RFE/RL requests resources to deploy parallel formats for Central Asia and the Balkans.

Increasing RFE/RL and VOA Digital Media for Russian Speakers: RFE/RL is expanding locally focused Russian websites for individual regions, including areas where Russia supports "frozen conflicts." RFE/RL will also expand the newly launched wire service for Central Asia that provides news about Russia-related topics in the Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik languages to more than 500 Central Asian media outlets. The FY 2017 Budget Request proposes increased funding for both VOA and RFE/RL to develop content for influential young consumers of Russian digital media.

RFA and VOA Mobile E-books: RFA will continue to leverage e-books as its fastest growing digital format. Because they are easily downloaded and shared via email or thumb drives, they enable their audience to circumvent government censorship. VOA *Learning English* will also expand their use of this mobile-friendly format.

VOA Hausa Mobile Web Growth: The VOA Hausa Service will build on its success with mobile web applications to engage with young Hausa speakers in Nigeria and the broader Sahel region, where Boko Haram waged the world's deadliest terrorist campaign last year by killing nearly 6700 people. After attracting more than 74 million web visits in 2015, VOA will increase their coverage of this ISIL-related terror group to reach a growing audience of mobile users.

OCB Digital Media: In order to evade Cuba's Internet censorship, OCB leverages such tools as web-based proxy servers and encryption technology for mobile applications and devices. Already reaching out to nearly a million Cubans via email and SMS each week, Radio and TV Martí will increase their efforts to deliver news and information that is not otherwise available.

BBG Internet Freedom Program: In 2016 and 2017, the BBG will strengthen its robust Internet Freedom (IF) program as a shared support service for projects to counter internet censorship across the globe. Having defined a framework and governance structure, BBG will create a BBG Internet Freedom Office to oversee the selection and evaluation of IF projects, which are currently managed by RFA and the Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation (TSI).

ENHANCE STRATEGIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOP EFFICIENCIES ACROSS BBG'S FIVE INTERDEPENDENT NETWORKS

BBG's networked structure allows its media networks to maximize high-quality coverage of increasingly transnational challenges, and to optimize costs for shared support services. The five network leaders who comprise BBG's International Media Coordinating Committee (ICC) meet bi-monthly with the agency CEO to nurture joint coverage opportunities and develop solutions to common concerns.

Empower a Chief Executive Officer: BBG has made positive strides by onboarding a CEO of U.S. international media. However, it is imperative that the Congress include the proposed CEO empowerment language proposed in the FY 2017 Budget request that will legally provide the CEO with the powers to manage the day-to-day operations of the agency. 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.

Integrating BBG News Coverage: In 2017 VOA and RFE/RL propose to enhance *Current Time*, their jointly-produced, daily half-hour Russian-language television and digital news program that is especially popular among young viewers between 15 and 24. In another collaborative effort, VOA, MBN and OCB plan to coordinate their coverage of the 2016 Republican and Democratic conventions. And, each of RFA's nine language services plans to produce an investigative series that can be used across BBG entities.

Integrating BBG Technical Infrastructure: As they integrate program content, BBG networks will also intensify their use of shared distribution channels and production tools, including the *Pangea* content management system that RFE/RL developed to produce multimedia websites. In Afghanistan, RFE/RL and VOA will continue to share broadcast frequencies, coordinate coverage both in Afghanistan and the U.S., and promote each other's programs.

CONCENTRATE IN FIVE KEY AREAS

While BBG has a global reach, its networks best fulfill their mission and advance U.S. national interests when they focus on areas where their trusted journalism is most needed to inform, engage, and connect people in support of freedom and democracy. In that light, BBG is concentrating its efforts in five key areas.

ISIL and Violent Extremism: In addition to expanding their successful *Raise Your Voice* campaigns, which invite Arabic speakers to share their opinions via digital and broadcast media, MBN will build on the success of the *Delusional Paradise* series and create a follow-on documentary series to highlight efforts of people, organizations, and institutions across the Middle East who are working every day to combat ISIL and its proliferation. In 2017 RFE/RL proposes to expand its coverage of the growing influence of violent extremism in Central Asia and the Balkans. VOA proposes to increase digital content for regional audiences impacted by ISIL extremism, including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Russia & the Russian Periphery: During 2016 and 2017, RFE/RL and VOA will expand their jointly produced *Current Time* TV/digital video program as a fresh alternative to Kremlin propaganda for Russian speakers in Russia, the former Soviet space, and around the world. The original 30-minute *Current Time*, a daily Russian-language television news program produced by VOA and RFE/RL, is now on the air in nine countries via 25 media outlets, including in Central Asia. In the FY 2017 Budget Request, RFE/RL and VOA jointly propose increased funding for *Current Time*. The enhancement will enable RFE/RL to produce eight hours of daily video for television and digital distribution, and will permit VOA to expand programming that corrects disinformation about the U.S. On the Russian periphery VOA will support Ukraine's "Year of Global Learning" by sharing popular *Learning English* programs for Ukrainians eager to improve their English skills and engage with Western Europe.

China: In 2016 and 2017 RFA Mandarin intends to expand weekly satellite TV programming from five to seven 30-minute original programs. VOA Mandarin will add a daily one-hour satellite TV newscast for morning audiences in China. In addition to expanding e-books for popular consumption, RFA will add a line of historic and academic e-books. For their weekly online forums VOA Mandarin will use WeChat, China's largest social media platform to evade censors. VOA Tibetan will leverage the method that they successfully pioneered to crack Chinese restrictions and link to the VOA Tibetan website with a QR (Quick Response) code that mobile phones can scan.

Iran: In response to the rapid growth of mobile media in Iran and to the nearly 60,000 daily engagements from Iran through BBG internet anti-censorship tools, VOA and RFE/RL will continue to update their successful Persian-language media mix. VOA plans to deploy an engagement team to mine social networks for opportunities to curate user content and to fill information gaps in trending stories. RFE/RL will reallocate resources, shift emphasis from Farda's radio operations and grow its TV production.

Cuba: Radio and TV Martí are adjusting their media formats as Cuban audiences gravitate to mobile phones and digital media. Although the U.S. and Cuba agreed to normalize diplomatic relations, the Cuban government continues to control all media platforms on the island. In 2016 and 2017, the Martí will expand functionality of the existing SMS-based social platform (grown from 11,300 subscribers in 2013 to 723,000 users in 2015) and provide additional apps to support offline content sharing in the island. OCB will also increase on-island radio penetration, DVD distribution, and live streaming, as well as provide e-books, expand news and programming locally produced in Cuba, and further leverage social media.

CURATE, COMMISSION AND ACQUIRE CONTENT

For broader impact BBG needs to focus on original reporting that provides depth and perspective on events, rather than on daily news coverage that is readily available on other media. Becoming an organization that actively curates, commissions, and acquires content also allows BBG to be a gathering point for a new generation of compelling storytellers, documentarians and journalists that are engaging their peers on digital platforms.

PBS Content for Ukraine, Lithuania and Estonia: BBG plans to strengthen relationships that it has built with local media organizations in Ukraine, Lithuania and Estonia by working jointly with the State Department to facilitate access to nearly 400 hours of high-quality U.S. public media content from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS).

Expanding BBG Russian with Acquired and Commissioned Programs: Beginning in 2016, RFE/RL will coordinate with VOA to acquire and commission Russian-language content that will be used as part of the six-hour digital and satellite stream targeting global Russian speakers.

Co-creating Content Globally: From *Radio Today* in Bangladesh to *TV Azteca* in Mexico, BBG networks will continue to work daily with media outlets to co-create content and report the news.

Citizen Journalists: As RFA expands television and mobile programs for China, they will use visuals sourced from citizen journalists in target areas to complement their own reporting.

MEASURE IMPACT

BBG cannot have impact without audiences, but sheer audience size is only one indicator of impact. BBG will increase research efforts to hold ourselves accountable, using both quantitative and qualitative data to provide evidence of shifting values and opinions, and of moving people to action.

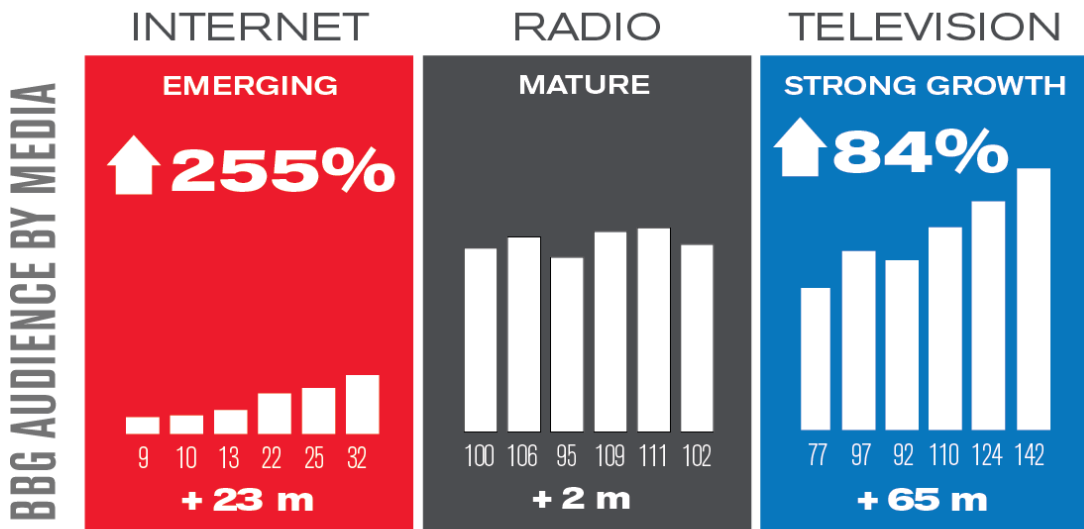
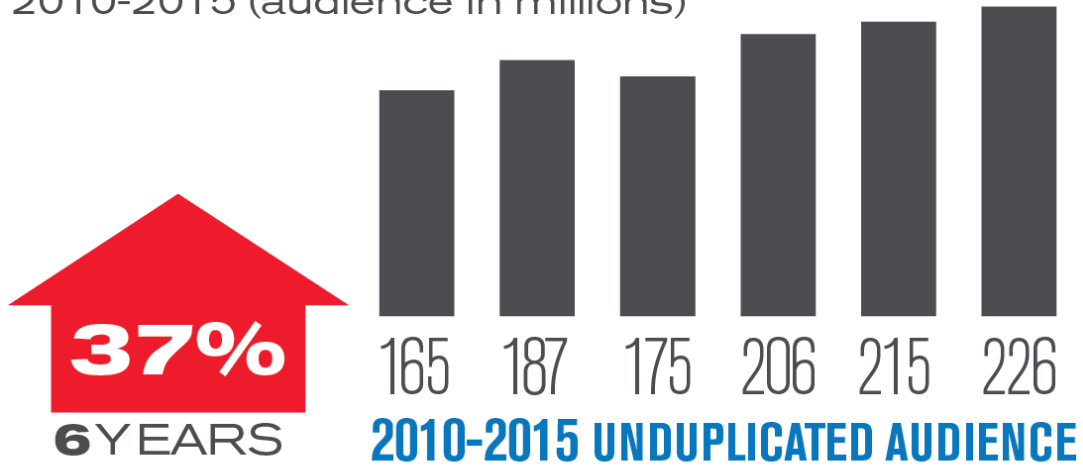
Impact Measurements: BBG has developed an Impact Model focused on three sectors: audiences, media, and governments. It defines both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The indicators — which include weekly audience, trustworthiness, content sharing, and increased understanding of news events and high profile news pickups — permit BBG to measure effectiveness for its wide range of platforms and media environments, and across various timeframes. BBG will also measure the reactions and opinions of audiences over time toward U.S. foreign policy. During 2016 and 2017, research teams from all BBG networks will collaborate to refine measures that gauge the effectiveness of current BBG media products and indicate how new projects can have the most impact. BBG proposes to increase its research budget to measure the impact of the Russian investment, of expanding digital *Raise Your Voice* campaigns, and of digital media in Cuba and Latin America.

Global Audience Hits 226 Million: Because BBG must attract an audience to achieve our mission, the agency will continue to measure weekly audience size. Based on recent research conducted in more than 100 countries and territories in the last two years, the 2015 Global Audience Estimate revealed that BBG's total unduplicated weekly audience reached 226 million. This is a 37% increase since 2010.

Audience Growth Reflects Global Media Trends: In order to continue engaging with global audiences, BBG will also track evolving media trends. Comparing the distribution of BBG radio, television, and internet consumers over the last five years shows how successfully BBG is adapting to worldwide changes in media preferences. Between 2010 and 2015, the global radio audience held steady around 100 million; the TV audience grew by 84%, from 77 million to 142 million; and Internet audiences increased by 255% from 9 million to 32 million.

BBG Audience At-A-Glance

2010-2015 (audience in millions)



(Some BBG audiences consume content in more than one media. By media charts are not unduplicated.)

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.