

Broadcasting Board of Governors FOIA PLAN Under Executive Order 13,392

INTRODUCTION

On October 1, 1999, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) became the independent federal agency responsible for all U.S. government and government sponsored, non-military, international broadcasting. This was the result of the 1998 Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act (Public Law 105-277), the single most important legislation affecting U.S. international broadcasting since the early 1950s.

Among its duties, the Broadcasting Board of Governors is tasked with the oversight of the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB). The IBB is composed of the Voice of America (VOA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), and 12 support offices, including the Office of Engineering and Technical Services and the Office of Marketing and Program Placement. The IBB is responsible for administrative and oversight functions for VOA and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting.

Voice of America

The Voice of America broadcasts on radio and television in 44 languages to an estimated 96 million people each week. In addition, computer users logon to VOA's Internet site (www.VOAnews.com) for news and information. VOA radio provides around-the-clock, reliable news, balanced reporting, and informative features. VOA focuses on countries that lack a strong, independent media. The [VOA Charter](#) (Public Law 94-350) requires that broadcasts (1) be accurate, objective, and comprehensive; (2) represent all segments of American society and present a balanced and comprehensive view of significant American thought and institutions; and (3) clearly present the policies of the United States.

VOA-TV produces programs in more than 20 languages, including news reports, feature magazines, and live call-in shows. TV broadcasts include original and acquired programs that reflect American life along with discussions on United States foreign and domestic policies. VOA's

Internet provides continually updated news and information with photos, audio and video.

Office of Cuba Broadcasting

The Office of Cuba Broadcasting directs the operations of Radio and TV Martí, two broadcast services that provide Spanish-language news, features, and entertainment programs to Cuba. In accordance with the Broadcasting to Cuba Act of 1983 (Public Law 98-111), Radio Martí follows Voice of America journalistic standards and guidelines for presenting a variety of news and information in an accurate and objective manner.

The station broadcasts seven days a week, 24 hours a day on medium wave (AM) and shortwave.

TV Martí programming includes four-and-a-half hours of daily newscasts as well as programs about public affairs, culture, music, sports, and entertainment. The station broadcasts commentary and information about events in Cuba and elsewhere to promote the free flow of information and ideas in that country.

The mission of the Broadcasting Board of Governors is: To promote and sustain freedom and democracy by broadcasting accurate and objective news and information about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.

While the BBG's mission is to broadcast to audiences overseas, it is prohibited by the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (22 U.S.C. 1461) to disseminate within the United States records or information about the U.S., its people, and its policies, when those records or information have been prepared by the agency for audiences abroad (Exemption 3). The most recent court case challenging the "Smith-Mundt" ban on domestic dissemination of BBG program materials, *Essential Information. et al. v. USIA.*, was decided in USIA's favor in 1996, and upheld on appeal.

A. NATURE OF BBG's FOIA OPERATIONS

The BBG processes Freedom of Information/Privacy Act requests for records maintained by the agency. Typical requests are for procurement records, credit card purchase holders list, audience survey reports, personnel and/or security files, board records, etc. In

FY2005, the agency received 45 requests and processed 51, an almost 50% decrease from the 78 requests received and 80 processed in FY2004.

Three staff members have part-time/occasional FOIA duties, which currently do not exceed more than twenty-five percent of their time. FOIA requests are processed by the agency's designated FOIA and Privacy Act Officer in consultation with the Chief FOIA Officer and an Assistant General Counsel.

B. AREAS SELECTED FOR REVIEW

The following are improvement areas that the agency proposes to develop and implement in 2006 and 2007. Upon considering the number of FOIA requests received per year, the agency has identified particular areas in which it can improve the administration of the FOIA in accordance with Executive Order 13,392.

Potential improvement areas:

- FOIA Web pages/Reading room records
- In-House Electronic FOIA Training
- Use of Information Technology and Update Data Program

C. NARRATIVE STATEMENT SUMMARIZING RESULTS OF REVIEW

The BBG Web page provides a wealth of information about the agency and provides a link directly to the agency's FOIA Web page. The FOIA Web page explains how to make FOIA and Privacy Act requests in accordance with the agency's published guidelines. The FOIA Web page also lists the BBG's address, telephone and fax numbers to be used in making FOIA requests. As a result of the review, the Web page will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and updated to assure the accuracy and completeness of published information.

BBG is very much aware that management and staff awareness of the requirements of the has a direct bearing on the efficient and accurate processing of requests. We have determined that a training program to provide management and staff with a better working knowledge of the FOIA and Privacy Act should be implemented across the agency. We have also evaluated the agency's use of information technology. We

determined that the current ACCESS data program is out of date and not user friendly. Currently ACCESS does not provide the tools necessary to accurately index and track the status of requests or to accurately report on the progress of FOIA requests. We have decided that we need to update the system to allow us to report on our progress, including indexing and organizing documents electronically. Advance training on an updated version of ACCESS will be needed. Such a system will provide us with the tools we need to efficiently track the status of our requests and compile our annual report. In addition, it was determined that the PDF scanner was being under utilized and should be more routinely used to expedite in-house communication of incoming FOIA requests.

D. AREAS CHOSEN AS IMPROVEMENT AREAS FOR PLAN

- FOIA Web pages/Reading room records
- In-House Electronic FOIA Training
- Use of Information Technology and Update Data Program

E. IMPROVEMENT AREA PLANS

1. FOIA Web pages/Reading room records.

Goal: To improve the format of the BBG FOIA Web page in order to provide more information to the public. **Target completion: 12-31-07** (and continuing thereafter).

STEPS

- Examine ways to improve the BBG FOIA Web page to make it user-friendlier. **To be completed by 9-30-06** (and continuing quarterly thereafter).
- Meet with IT/Computer Services staff to refine and update the format for locating and posting reading room documents. **To be completed by 9-30-06.**
- Review the BBG FOIA Web page quarterly to ensure that information is current and documents routinely requested are posted. **To be completed by 12-30-06** (and continuing quarterly thereafter).

2. In-House Electronic FOIA and Privacy Act Training.

Goal: To establish and implement an in-house electronic FOIA and Privacy Act training program for all designated FOIA coordinators. Thereafter, all FOIA coordinators will be trained annually to increase efficiency in handling requests for documents in the agency's systems of records. **Target date: 12-30-07**

STEPS

- Meet and work with other Federal agencies that have effective training programs. ***To be completed by 12-31-06.***
- Identify and modify training program best suited to the agency. ***To be completed by 6-30-07***
- Work with in-house IT/Computer Services to install electronic training program. ***To be completed by 6-30-07.***
- First Annual Training. ***To be completed by 9-30-07.***

3. Use of Information Technology and Update Data Program.

Goal: To increase efficiency and improve quality of document and information retrieval by installing an updated version of the Access Program and utilizing existing PDF scanner. **To be completed by 12-30-07.**

STEPS

- Implement integration of PDF scanner into the FOIA processing computer network. ***To be completed by 9-30-06.***
- Identify and meet with other Federal agencies that use Access in their FOIA Program in order to upgrade and effectively use our data program. ***To be completed by 12-30-06.***
- Discuss needs with appropriate IT and Training personnel. ***To be completed by 1-30-07.***

- Install and test updated Access data program. ***To be completed by 3-30-07.***
- Full-scale implementation. ***To be completed by 12-30-07.***

The projected completion dates given are anticipated timelines, however, completion may be sooner depending on the circumstances surrounding each project.