



## **PUBLIC MEDIA DATA TASKFORCE (w.t.) MEETING SUMMARY**

October 28, 2010

On August 31 – September 1, 2010, CPB convened the kick-off meeting of the Public Media Data Taskforce. This consultative group, consisting of representatives from stations and national organizations, is charged with assisting CPB management to rethink its system-wide data collection processes and reporting goals.

CPB collects data from the station community in three ways, the annual financial reports (AFR), the Station Activities Survey (SAS) and the Station Activities Benchmarking Survey (SABS). The data collected through both the AFR and SAS are required by CPB to meet statutory obligations. Initiated by CPB in 1998, SABS was a voluntary attempt to provide public television stations data to encourage best practices. Over 60% of the public television stations participated in the survey. Two years after its debut, CPB made the survey mandatory.

In the most recent years, the perceived value of the benchmarking survey among public television stations has had decidedly mixed reviews, namely:

- Not cost effective – too little value, with too much time to prepare
- Not comparative – the non-standardization of data has yielded apples to oranges comparisons
- Not timely – information is too old to help make short term business decisions
- Too confusing – over 800 data points, many with vague data definitions
- Causes redundant work at the station level due to duplication of data in multiple reports

By contrast, public television's national organizations have found the data helpful in making decisions regarding station services, strategic planning, various grant initiatives, and representing public television on Capitol Hill.

## MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of the taskforce is to review and evaluate the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Public Media's data needs and reporting process and provide recommendations to CPB management to improve the process in a way that:*

- *Ensures the collection of relevant data from across the public media landscape*
- *Addresses CPB's needs for data to timely guide and evaluate its program and system support investments and activities*
- *Supports the needs of current audiences and users and identifies the needs of future audiences and users*
- *Improves the cost effectiveness of the process*
- *Eliminates redundant data-entry requirements across the survey universe*
- *Standardizes critical comparative data*
- *Communicates the value of data collection and application to station peers*
- *Encourages data sharing among National Organizations*
- *Analyzes the value of unified reporting for joint licensees and multiple service operations.*
- *Assesses the methods of data collection that are best suited to different types of data and different informational needs*
- *Explores ways in which financial and operational data, once collected, can be better managed, analyzed, and more effectively acted upon by the public media community*

## MISSION-CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Using this statement of purpose as a backdrop, the panel's discussion focused on several areas of importance and questions that need to be addressed:

- ❖ Who are the audiences that use public media financial and operating data and what are their needs?
  - Organized third-parties (such as foundations, Congress, federal agencies, public interest advocacy organizations, and academic institutions) for purposes of understanding system impact and needs as they consider financial support or legislation.
  - Local professional staff (such as station, university officials) to identify opportunities to learn from peers' best practices.
  - Station governing officials (such as boards of directors, trustees, and state agencies) to understand a station's contributions to the community and resource needs.
  - National organizations (such as CPB, PBS, APTS, NPR, APM, PRI, SRG, DEI) to determine system-wide trends, strengths, weaknesses and needs.
  - Individual donors and underwriters to understand a station's position with relevance to the rest of the system and community needs.

- ❖ What external sources of data can be integrated / leveraged with financial and operating data that CPB collects to yield greater value?
  - Arbitron and Nielsen - audience ratings data
  - Web site analytics – station web traffic
  - SRI International – Non-Profit and government research data
  - DEI Benchmarking study – Public Radio Development data
  - PBS engineering study – Distribution, delivery and equipment data
  - NACUBO – College and University data
  - CASE – Education institutional data
  - Target Analysis / Donor Centric – Fundraising data
  - Other environmental data (e.g., macro economic and financial indicators)
  - AFR and 990 – Station Financial data
  
- ❖ What kinds of data are essential to guide the national organization’s investments in programs and services and to inform their advocacy on behalf of public media?
  - National organizations need to meet to discuss what kinds of data are essential to provide the quantitative support for “Telling public broadcasting’s story” and for other aspects of their work.
  
- ❖ Are we using the correct methods to collect the data?
  - A sampling method to collect time sensitive data, or data that pertains only to certain types of operations, rather than the census method currently used for most CPB data collection
  - An index of stations to identify the “health” of the system
  - A standard nomenclature for data is essential for uniform comparisons among stations
  - A range of timeframes for data collection that targets the desired outcomes– annually, quarterly, instantly, bi-annually, etc.
  
- ❖ Why do joint licensees have a difficult time reporting the surveys?
  - Non-standardized allocations of revenue and expense
  - Functional areas are integrated throughout the organization and it is difficult to determine how to allocate revenues and expenses between radio and TV
  - Pros and cons of allowing joint licensees to report only their combined data for certain areas that are not required for the separate administration of radio and television Community Service Grants
  
- ❖ Do we need to collect more information to improve the usefulness of data in the Public Radio system, and, if so, how?
  - Collect essential data from Radio stations
  - Consistency of data collection between TV and Radio stations
  - Acknowledging specific data collection needs for Radio vs. TV
  
- ❖ How do we improve the timeliness of the data?
  - Flash reporting – identify a short list of metrics that are easy to report and can be distributed quickly; consider impromptu flash surveys when vital questions arise.

- Evaluate data collection methods
- Address challenges of varying fiscal year dates between stations regarding survey completion timeline

## **WORKING GROUPS**

With CPB taking the lead and coordinating the activities, the taskforce agreed that working groups should be established to assist CPB in addressing these key issues:

- Core data needs
- Flash Reporting needs
- Methodology to capture data (e.g., census vs. sampling)
- External data sources and the possibilities of integration
- Developing comprehensive communications plan
- Managing data realization on back-end (educate on how it can be useful and lead the application process)

## **TIMELINE**

October 2010 – November 15, 2010	Needs Assessment
November 2010 – April 15, 2011	Survey Development
April 2011 – September 30, 2011	Technical Survey Development
April 2011 – September 30, 2011	Reports Development
December 1, 2011	Survey Launch
March 2012 – June 2012	Survey Data Analysis

## **Attachment A**

### **PUBLIC MEDIA DATA TASKFORCE**

#### **Station Representatives**

Polly Heath, CFO	WETA (Arlington, VA)
Janice Heskiss, CFO	Oregon Public Broadcasting (Portland, OR)
Ted Krichels, GM	WPSU (State College, PA)
Steve Graziano, COO	Louisiana Public Broadcasting (Baton Rouge, LA)
Jenny Gentry, VP Finance & Legal	Colorado Public Radio (Denver, CO)
Mary Grace Herrington, CEO	Iowa Public Radio (Des Moines, IA)
Julie Raskin, VP Finance/Accounting	WMHT (Albany, NY)
Christine Maloney, CEO	TPT (St. Paul, MN)

#### **Consultants**

Damon Frazier	BI Solutions
Kevin Thompson	BI Solutions

#### **National Representatives**

Emil Mara, VP Finance Admin.	Association of Public Television Services (APTS)
Jeffrey Davis, VP Communications	Association of Public Television Services (APTS)
Joyce MacDonald, VP Member and Program Services	NPR
Loren Mayor, VP Strategy and Ventures	PBS
Tom Thomas, co-CEO	Station Resource Group (SRG)
Doug Eichten, President & CEO	DEI (Development Exchange Inc.)

## Attachment B

### WORKING GROUPS

#### Steering Committee

**Purpose:** Develop an approach to data collections and reporting that takes into account the key elements outlined in the statement of purpose.

There are seven proposed subgroups the steering committee will assist CPB with its oversight to restructure its data collecting process and reporting goals. The timelines, participants and plan of actions for all groups, the exception of the Flash Reporting group, are yet to be determined.

- 1) **Core Data group** – this group will assist CPB in determining the essential core data needs and the appropriate methodology for data collection
- 2) **Flash Reporting group** – this group will assist CPB in determining mission-critical timely data needs and the appropriate methods for collecting that data.
- 3) **External data sources group** – this group will assist CPB with identifying and integrating key external data sources
- 4) **Communications group** – this group will assist CPB with a comprehensive communication plan to stations and key stakeholders
- 5) **Data realization group** – this group will assist CPB leading the system to increased application of the data
- 6) **Radio data group** – this group will assist CPB in focusing on specific radio data needs
- 7) **Joint licensee data group** – this group will assist CPB with data standardization for joint licensees to increase reporting value

**Group Members:** TBD

**Timeline:** CPB project management team will develop and coordinate. Goal is to complete by May 2011.

#### Sub-Group - Flash Reporting

**Purpose:** Analyze and develop short list of meaningful data points that are easy to report and can be turned around quickly, and to identify appropriate data collection method(s) for each type of flash data.

**Group Members:** Tom Thomas, Polly Heath, Doug Eichten, Loren Mayor

**Timeline:** November 15 – Report back to large group

December 15 – Large group feedback / recommendations to CPB