



Report in Brief

Background

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) awards most of its appropriated funds each year in Community Service Grants (CSG) to public broadcasting licensees. CPB's Fiscal Year 2015 budget included \$338.4 million in CSGs for 477 licensees. In order to receive a CSG, CPB requires the station to annually certify its compliance with the requirements in five areas of the Communications Act (Act), as amended, – open meetings, open financial records, Community Advisory Board (CAB), equal employment opportunity (EEO) reporting, and donor lists and political activities.

In our audits of licensees, we have often found that they do not satisfy all of Congress's requirements, in spite of CPB's efforts to educate and encourage compliance.

We produced this summary of compliance findings from 2005 – 2015 to highlight the problem and to make recommendations that we believe will improve compliance and accountability throughout the system.

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Summary Report on Licensee Compliance with Communications Act and CPB Requirements, Report No. CVJ1509-1610

What We Found

Our audits of the five areas of compliance at 69 public broadcasting licensees from 2005 – 2015 found noncompliance with 64 of 286 (22%) Act requirements tested.

Specifically, we found licensees did not:

- give seven-day advance notice of public meetings;
- make financial information available to the public;
- hold CAB meetings; and
- make EEO employment statistics available to the public.

We found that 47 of the 69 licensees (68%) did not meet one or more of the above referenced requirements.

In response to our draft report, CPB expressed concern that our findings may be erroneously construed to reflect the performance of all public broadcasting stations. CPB also noted that compliance improved 25% between the two periods of our analysis, and it cited a number of initiatives that it believes are in the spirit of our recommendations and appropriate to address today's compliance issues.

While we agree that these findings should not be projected to the universe of licensees, we regard the rate of noncompliance found as significant. We also recognize that CPB initiatives have improved compliance for some requirements but believe additional CPB actions are warranted.

What We Recommend

To achieve greater compliance and the public accountability that Congress intended, we recommend that CPB:

- expand its transparency requirements so that stations post more information about their Act responsibilities on their websites; and
- conduct annual compliance reviews of stations by reviewing their on-line transparency information.

CPB management will make the final determination on our findings and recommendations. We consider our recommendations unresolved pending CPB's determination.

The 22% rate of noncompliance with the Act in the licensees we audited is significant, but our results cannot be projected across the universe of CSG recipients because we selected grantees for audit on a judgmental, not statistical, basis.