

**Pilot project for
Community Broadcasting Involvement Services**

Introduction

Further to BOA Paper No. 2/2011 on the subject, this paper sets out RTHK's preliminary proposals for launching a pilot project for community broadcasting involvement services (CBI services), and seeks the views of the Board of Advisors.

Background

2. In September 2009, the Government proposed that RTHK should devote part of its airtime and resources within the development of its digital services to provide a platform for community participation in broadcasting, and that, as a pilot, RTHK would set up a Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund (CBIF) to encourage community organizations to bid for resources for producing television and radio programmes. RTHK would administer, with the advice of the Board of Advisors, the CBIF and arrange to broadcast these contents on RTHK's channels. In December 2010, the Government announced that \$45 million had been earmarked for a three-year pilot project under the proposed CBIF.

Objectives of CBI services

3. Hong Kong is an open society where different forms of mainstream media strive vibrantly, providing a variety of platforms for different quarters of the community to express their views freely. For example, there are phone-in and interview programmes on the radio and television for individuals and community groups to voice their opinions on a wide range of topics. In recent years, the internet has developed into yet another media: internet radios, discussion forums and social networks provide further platforms for the free expression and exchange of opinions in the cyber world.

4. Against this background, we consider that for the pilot project for CBI

services, the objectives of these services should not be confined to merely providing one more platform for the expression of opinions, but should embrace the promotion of a wider range of social gains¹ to the community, notably, -

- (a) plurality and diversity (e.g., social inclusion and mutual respect of ethnic groups);
- (b) positive social values (e.g., respect for others, empathy and civic mindedness);
- (c) creativity and talent nurturing (e.g., through participating in the production of programmes); and
- (d) community involvement (e.g. in providing tangible services to and interactions with specific community groups).

CBI participants

5. In line with the spirit of CBI set out above, we suggest that as a general principle, priority should be accorded to participants that are bona fide groups based in Hong Kong serving community groups in Hong Kong (e.g., groups who share a common geographical, ethnic, educational, professional and/or social background or interests), or the community at large.

CBI participants' roles

6. We propose that the CBI participants should take up the primary responsibilities of producing their CBI programmes, including research, script writing, recording, editing, etc. This will help cultivate broadcasting skills for the participants, and provide them a true sense of participation in programme production.

¹ In relation to a community radio service, "social gain" means the achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives - (a) the provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved by such services, (b) the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion, (c) the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and (d) the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

<http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/radio/community/thirdround/notesofguidance.pdf>

7. According to the RTHK Charter², RTHK should ensure that all its radio and TV programmes broadcast on its platforms comply with the codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority (BA). As CBI programmes will be broadcast by RTHK through its platforms, CBI participants should also comply with these codes of practices, and the Director of Broadcasting should have the final decision in this respect.

8. CBI participants who receive funding support from the CBIF should also comply with the associated financial requirements that will be promulgated in due course.

RTHK's roles

Platform and geographical coverage

9. RTHK's current radio broadcast services (AM and FM) and future digital radio and television services will cover the whole territory of Hong Kong.

10. For the CBI pilot scheme, RTHK intends to carry the CBI services through timeslots in one of its digital audio broadcasting (DAB) channels; hence the CBI services will have coverage of the entire territory of Hong Kong.

Programme formats and timeslots

11. Our preliminary view is that the CBI programmes should be broadcast on one of the RTHK DAB channels to be launched later in a designated timeslot, to foster an identity for CBI programmes.

12. We propose that, for the three-year pilot, the CBI programmes should be firstly pre-recorded programmes to ensure compliance with the BA codes of practices.

² Charter of RTHK (Paragraph 22): RTHK should ensure that unless otherwise approved by the BA, all television and radio programmes broadcast on its platform or supplied for broadcasting by licensed broadcasters in Hong Kong should comply with: (a) the relevant codes of practices issued by the BA to regulate the standards of programmes broadcast by broadcasters holding licences issued under the Broadcasting Ordinance or the Telecommunications Ordinance; and (b) any amendments to the codes of practice issued by the BA from time to time.

http://www.cedb.gov.hk/ctb/eng/psb/Charter_RTHK.pdf

13. In addition, depending on the prior broadcasting skills / experience of CBI participants, we propose that the more capable CBI participants may be invited to co-produce programmes with RTHK or to produce commissioned programmes, to enhance the variety of CBI programmes.

Topics for CB programmes

14. We propose that CBI programme timeslots should be allocated on a quarterly basis in blocks of 13 weeks, and that topics for each block should be agreed by RTHK before participants are invited, having regard to the objectives of CBI programmes in paragraph 4 above.

Coaching service

15. We envisage that different community groups will have very different prior training and/or experience in programme production. To assist the CBI participants in their programme production, we propose that RTHK should provide coaching services to CBI participants according to their respective needs (e.g., it is necessary to ensure that all the CBI participants fully understand the BA codes of practice). The details of the coaching services need to be further developed.

CBIF

16. RTHK has been tasked to administer the CBIF. We propose that the Fund should be used to help defray reasonable actual costs incurred for programme production. To safeguard the proper use of public funds, CBIF recipients will have to submit budgets, enter into a funding agreement for the approved sums, and submit audited financial statements.

17. We envisage that a Vetting Committee needs to be set up to advise the Director of Broadcasting, who will be the Controlling Officer of the CBIF, on the selection of participants, allocation of airtime and CBIF funding (if applied for). More details will need to be developed on the operational details.

Way forward and timetable

18. The paragraphs above outline the preliminary proposals by RTHK.

Subject to the views of the Board of Advisors, we intend to consult the community groups that are likely to be interested in producing CBI programmes (e.g. District Councils, members of the RTHK Programme Advisory Panel and ethnic minority groups) in the next few months on the above general approach. We will then further develop the implementation details and seek the views of the Board of Advisors again, with a view to consulting the public at large by end 2011 and, allowing time for preparations, introducing the CBI services by end 2012/early 2013.

Advice sought

19. Members are invited to offer their views on the proposals above.

Radio Television Hong Kong
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