

**Pilot project for
Community Broadcasting Involvement Services**

Introduction

On 20 May 2011, RTHK consulted the Board of Advisors (the Board) on its initial views on the preliminary proposals for the pilot project of the community broadcasting involvement (CBI) services set out in the BOA Paper 6/2011. Subsequently, RTHK has conducted four focus group meetings with RTHK Programme Advisors (Programme Advisors) in June and July to collect their views on the subject. A summary of the meetings with the Programme Advisors is at Annex

2. On the basis of the views and suggestions collected at these meetings, RTHK has refined the proposals for the pilot project. This paper seeks the views of the Board on the refined proposals.

Objectives of CBI services

3. The Board agrees to the objectives of the CBI services proposed by RTHK in paragraph 4 of the BOA Paper 6/2011.

4. The views collected from the Programme Advisors are –

(a) there is no disagreement to the proposed objectives;

(b) some Programme Advisors are concerned about the choice of word “positive social values” used in one of the objectives for CBI services which reads “...*(b) positive social values (e.g. respect for others, empathy and civic mindedness);...*”. They consider that “positive social values” may give one the impression that it emphasizes the reinforcement of conventional thinking and values, and this may be in conflict with another objective of CBI, namely, to promote diversity and plurality; and

- (c) some Programme Advisors also consider that CBI programmes should be unique and different from those programmes already available in the market.

5. Taking into account the concerns of the Programme Advisors, we suggest revising the objectives of CBI services set out in the BOA Paper 6/2011, by rephrasing the objectives to embrace the Programme Advisors' comments and making the wording more succinct, as follows-

“...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 gains to the community, notably,-

- (a) plurality, diversity and social inclusion¹;
- (b) mutual respect, social empathy and civic mindedness;
- (c) creativity, uniqueness and talent nurturing, and
- (d) community involvement”.

Chinese term of Community Broadcasting

6. At the meetings with the Programme Advisors, there have been suggestions that the Chinese term of community broadcasting “社區廣播” may cause confusion because the general public may interpret the term “社區” as a community defined by geographical demarcation rather than a broader sense of groups of people sharing common interests, social values, culture, ethnicity, religions etc. Some Programme Advisors suggest using “社群廣播” instead.

7. We consider that “社群廣播” may be a literally more accurate Chinese term for community broadcasting. However, the term “社區廣播” is

¹ The original version of the objectives in BOA Paper 6/2011 is as follows-

- (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).

well accepted in Mainland China and Taiwan referring to community broadcast. We therefore propose to retain the use of the term “社區廣播” in Chinese.

CBI participants

8. The Board considers that applicants for CBI services should be registered organizations.

9. The Programme Advisors did not have any strong views on this proposal.

10. Since the impact of this requirement on the response to the pilot project and our operational capacity is not known at this stage, we suggest that this requirement should be applied to the first year of the 3-year pilot project, and that the arrangement should be reviewed at around the 9th month of the first year.

Broadcasting platform

11. The Board has no comment on launching the CBI pilot project on DAB channels.

12. The Programme Advisors did not have any particular comment on this either.

13. As currently RTHK's own radio programmes are simulcast live and available for 12 months for replay on RTHK's website (rthk.hk), we will explore the practicability of providing the same arrangements for CBI programmes. However, legal implications such as copyright issue will need to be considered.

14. Some Programme Advisors have raised the question that as the CBI programmes will be provided on the DAB platform, whether such programmes will also be able to make use of the data transmission functions of DAB. We consider that these functions should be provided to the CBI programmes as well; however, as these functions will also be new to RTHK, we will extend such functions to CBI programmes when RTHK is technically ready to do so.

Programme Formats

15. The Board agrees that pre-recorded programmes as the preferred modality would help ensure the quality of the programme and compliance with relevant broadcasting guidelines; however, live programmes could also be considered on the merits of individual cases in achieving social gains.

16. Programmes Advisors have diversified views on this issue. Some agree with the view that pre-recorded programmes will facilitate better assurance of programme quality and should be adopted at the initial stage of the pilot project, whereas some consider that the public may prefer some live programmes for their liveliness but how to ensure the accuracy of the content of live programmes needs to be considered.

17. Having regard to the concerns expressed by the Board and the Programme Advisors and the growing public expectation of editorial freedom in recent years, we propose to adopt a more open approach. There will be no pre-determined requirements on programme format. The CBI Fund Vetting Committee will decide whether the format proposed by the applicant is acceptable on the basis of the programme need and also the merits in achieving the CBI objectives, and having regard to RTHK's capacity to handle both pre-recorded and live productions.

Topics for CBI Programmes

18. Considering that the scope of CBI services is rather broad, the Board considers that when RTHK considers setting a programming framework for each quarter, the topics need to be broad enough to encompass creativity and talent nurturing, and different bands of airtime should be allocated for each category.

19. The Programme Advisors hold the same view.

20. We consider that such arrangements can also serve the following useful operational purposes:

- (a) identifying potential applicants and vetting committee members more effectively;
- (b) establishing the identity of a particular band of airtime;

- (c) assessing market demand for different subject matters, and
- (d) ensuring a wide range of topics within a 3-year period.

21. At this stage, our initial proposed range of topic categories include education; art & culture; social services; ethnic minorities; politics & current affairs; economy & finance; district affairs; health; environment; religion & philosophy; science & technology; etc.

Non-Chinese Service

22. Neither the Board nor the Programme Advisors have discussed the topic of non-Chinese services in depth so far. However, as ethnic minorities are one of the main potential user groups of CBI services, we consider that we need to look into this subject in greater depth.

23. We notice that some ethnic groups have been advocating their request for access to community broadcasting in Hong Kong for years. We also notice that the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) is providing integration programmes and support services to six ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong, namely, the Filipinos, Indonesians, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese and Thais.

24. While HAB's practice could serve as a reference, we propose to adopt a more open approach for our non-Chinese CBI services, by not confining to only ethnic groups from South Asia and South East Asia, but by including other English and European language communities to ensure a wider reach to various ethnicities. We propose to organize a separate consultation session dedicated to non-Chinese speaking communities for Non-Chinese CBI services some time in September or October.

Training

25. Both the Board and Programme Advisors support the idea of providing training to community producers. We will explore the possibilities of inviting tertiary institutions to provide training on production techniques before we decide on the depth and breadth of the curriculum. The availability of training facilities of the institutions is a concern in this regard.

26. Regarding an earlier proposal that training should be provided to all

potential applicants prior to their actually making an application, having regard to resource constraints and the impossibility to predict the demand, we do not consider this proposal to be practicable. In other words, we will provide training to successful applicants only.

27. Programme Advisors also support that successful applicants should be required to undergo induction training provided by RTHK to familiarize themselves with the codes of practices issued by the Broadcasting Authority, public service broadcasting values, programme standards and best practice before they commence programme production.

Community Broadcasting Involvement Fund (CBIF)

28. Programme Advisors have enquired about the operational details, e.g., how to apply for the CBIF, etc. We have explained that such details have yet to be mapped out.

29. We explained that, as a common practice adopted by other public funding scheme open for application, CBIF applicants should be required to submit funding proposal to the vetting committee for consideration, and funding would be granted on the basis of merits of the project proposal and the justifications for the funding need.

30. We have since also given further consideration to the funding amounts and now propose that -

- (a) the funding support for the production should be subject to a ceiling rate of HK\$15,000 each hour; and
- (b) while technical costs can be estimated on the basis of actual usage, remuneration for manpower involved in the production such as producers, presenters, scriptwriters, researchers, etc, is difficult to be assessed objectively. As the CBI service is not a commercial procurement exercise, we consider that we should adopt a standardized payment in the form of honorarium per person for manpower input howsoever it is named.

31. The Board has suggested that the vetting committee should comprise

a sufficiently wide range of expertise so that vetting panels with the relevant expertise could be formed to consider applications with particular focuses. Programme Advisors generally share the same view. Some Programme Advisors have floated the idea of recruiting lay members of the public who volunteer to join the vetting committee. However, we do not consider this is appropriate because the vetting committee is tasked not only to reflect public views, but has powers and duties to ensure proper management of public funds in pursuing the objectives of the CBI services.

Legal matters

32. We will seek legal advice as we further develop more concrete proposals to implement the CBI pilot project on various issues relating to the implementation of the pilot project such as contracts with successful applicants, terms and conditions of CBI services, copyrights, etc.

Advice sought

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

Radio Television Hong Kong
August 2011

**Pilot Project of Community Broadcasting Involvement (2011)
Consultation with RTHK Programme Advisory Panel**

Date: 6:30pm – 8pm, 27 June 2011

Attendants: CHUNG Ting-yiu Joseph; LEUNG Yuk-ming Lisa; CHOI Chi-sum; Boy SIU; ZHOU Mimi; MAK Kwok-fung Michael; TIK Chi-yuen

Date: 6:30pm – 8pm, 30 June 2011

Attendants: WONG Ting-kwong; TSO Kai-lok; LO Wing-lok

Date: 10am – 11:45am, 2 July 2011

Attendants: Gilbert MO; SHEE Shing-chung Eddie; Elizabeth QUAT; CHOW Chan-lum Charles; Fermi WONG; NG Wai-ching Irene; SO Sai-chi; LEE Tat-yan

Date: 6:30pm – 8pm, 8 July 2011

Attendants: Martin OEI; LAM Woon-sum Maria; CHAN Man-hung; KAN Tai-keung; William IP; YU Sau-chu Jessie

Summary of Opinions:

(I) Overall Direction

1. Members taking part in the discussion unanimously agreed with the idea of introducing such service, which would promote plurality and boost the development of innovations. As the spirit of community broadcasting lies on the participation of all segments of society, the format and contents of programmes should be different from those of mainstream broadcasting with programmes of alternative and diversity offered to cultivate creativity. The room and depth of expression should be expanded, while excessive censorship that would choke the essence of community broadcasting and trust in a civil society should be avoided. However, the project is a completely new item to most Hongkongers and they might have understand its essence, with a literal understanding of the Chinese term “社區” in the

project's name that was prone to confining the concept within a geographic zone and without necessarily linking it to the essence of being an activity for social groups or civilian organizations. Adopting a new Chinese name for the project, with a robust effort on elaborating its meaning beforehand, was therefore recommended.

2. As for the notion of community broadcasting should achieve social gains, how should we define social gain (vs social loss)? Should we conduct market research? Community broadcasting tends to challenging conservative mainstream values and trigger controversies; hence care should be taken to draw a boundary for the sake of balance as we attempt to broaden the spectrum of values.
3. Besides funding support, professional coaching and technical support should also be provided to minority and underprivileged groups to ensure the quality of programmes and the ethical standard of programme producers.
4. Clear screening mechanism, evaluation procedures and overall rules should be devised. One specific group of members strongly recommended the formation of a review/appeal mechanism. Reference can be made with the appropriation mechanisms of the Chinese Opera Development Fund, the Quality Education Fund and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council regarding sponsorship for art groups. Meanwhile, the selection of vetting panel members should also take into account their professionalism, legitimacy and neutrality, in order to gain public trust.
5. Public funds should be well-used and monitoring is necessary to ensure the healthy development of community broadcasting. British experience can be drawn regarding funding approval, with an emphasis on legacy, training and quality, so as to achieve organic development of community broadcasting.
6. The objective may be set as “enriching broadcasting and encouraging non-commercial voices of diversity”. Public funds should be utilized to aid groups with the least resources in society, whereas applications from other commercial enterprises should be given the least priority. A public launching fair should be held as the project is launched and responses would reveal which groups are the most enthusiastic towards the project.

7. Advisors among the attendants generally supported the introduction of community broadcasting, deeming the project highly feasible and expecting enthusiastic responses. As long as content and topics are related to society and communities, the programmes should be able to draw public attention. On the other hand, certain advisors were concerned that there might not be many listeners in the first two years, which would be project's initial stage, and thereby having limited success in terms of audience ratings.

(II) Expectations on the Functions of Community Broadcasting

8. The introduction of community broadcasting may at the same time cultivate public understanding in the concept of public broadcasting, and in turn promote the spirits of impartiality, free speech and seeking social justice, as well as offering a channel of empowerment for civilian communities.
9. RTHK shall be a platform for different groups in society to showcase their talents and produce programme contents; the only thing RTHK has to do is to provide a framework on broadcasting arrangements with basic rules set.
10. RTHK should focus on training and facilitation to nourish talents that produce quality programmes; sense of responsibility should be a required quality in participants of the project, such that the project may sustain.

(III) Service Targets

11. Inclusion and empowerment of underprivileged communities should be the focus; communities may realize their own position through participation.
12. Producers may be communities/groups or minorities, but programme coverage should extend to the entire Hong Kong.
13. Given that the framework of the project is not necessarily formulated in a geographical sense, it is recommended that the project be renamed “社群廣播” in Chinese.

(IV) Programme Types

14. The scope of content should be broadened to diversify programmes offered. Programmes may be arranged in types – call-ins, talk-shows, commentaries, world music, cultural and art performances, as well as radio dramas and so forth are all acceptable choices. Certain members also proposed the introduction of programmes in dialects to meet the demands for services currently not provided.
15. May consider designating fixed time slots each week to broadcast contents of different themes, such as public livelihood/current affairs; educational/knowledge-based programmes (including productions by tertiary or secondary students); art and culture; social services; ethnic minorities; local organizations; un-organized individuals, and so forth. Also suggested was a categorization of people groups, such as youth; seniors; women; new immigrants; physically challenged, and so forth.
16. An issue to be considered is whether seasonal programmes should be permitted to change their themes freely during the course, or that contents should be listed in details in the programme proposals submitted.
17. Application criteria can be less stringent for groups in general, while political parties may also be allowed to apply. As for religions/churches there are too many sects and it is difficult to distinguish among them. Reference can be made to foreign experience regarding the assessment of political and religious contents.
18. On the technical front, as programmes will be broadcast on digital channels the transmission of visual images and texts should be taken into account, besides audio broadcasting itself.
19. Other opinions noted that while a laissez-faire approach would be acceptable, the idea of having RTHK setting relevant targets in the 3-year pilot scheme period, such as requiring all programmes to discover the characteristics and issues of different communities (districts), should be considered as well.

(V) Selection Criteria

19. Openness is the emphasis of community broadcasting and the more participants the better. Both groups and individuals should be allowed to participate, but different arrangements should be made.
20. Programmes by registered organizations may account for a higher proportion of all programmes, so as to ensure programme quality.
21. It is intended that applying parties under the pilot scheme would be registered organizations (corporations/groups/registered charities) and such an arrangement is acceptable. If individual applications are included as well, reserving a certain proportion of slots for such applications can be considered, but priority should in any case be given to organizations ahead of individuals.
22. As for individual applications, reference can be made to the assessment criteria of the Arts Development Council.
23. Should there be 2 different applications, the sizes of audience or the respective content's distinctiveness would be taken into consideration. In fact, comparing the applications' respective social gain involves many co-existing but conflicting standards, and accordingly the vision of the vetting panel will be essential. Members of that panel should possess core ideas of a macro nature while respecting other views and opinions. Of this point reference can be made to foreign experiences.

The approval criteria should focus on whether the application possesses distinctiveness, innovation and a core idea, while RTHK should maintain quality control. Initial performance should not be disappointing and publicity efforts are required, while relevant application criteria should be elaborated with the public. The introduction of penalties, such as termination of programme, to those failing to reach the set benchmarks, should be considered as well. Also possible would be the introduction of interim assessment.

24. Due to differences in terms of resources, underprivileged communities are weaker in terms of their capability and standard in drafting proposals;

references can be made to the Equal Opportunities Commission's and the Hong Kong Jockey Club's administrative aid arrangements with funding applications to facilitate such procedures.

25. The vetting panel may comprise members from different fields. Selection of members should be determined by individual expertise and suitable candidates should not be rejected out of political affiliations. The vetting process should be alright as long as it is open, fair, and impartial. Other opinions suggested that individuals related to a certain content theme should not be tasked with vetting that particular application, so as to avoid marginalising voices of the underprivileged.
26. Review mechanism was recommended for procedural reviews only.
27. Individual applications and reasons for unsuccessful application should only be disclosed in summary.

(VI) Production Mode

28. From an administrative perspective pre-recorded programmes are easier to control, but citizens tend to prefer the lively atmosphere of live broadcasting. If the nature of a particular programme, such as current affairs, demands live broadcasting, ensuring the truthfulness of information revealed in the programme is an issue to be dealt with.
29. In the early stage of the project there can be a majority of pre-recorded programmes, and live programmes may be considered only when there is a better grasp of the skills involved.
30. A mixed production mode having both self-produced programmes and joint productions will be adopted, such that professional technical aid is available while creativity is exercised. Competition leads to progress and there should be little concern over programme quality, as there is immense creativity among the youth.
31. May also consider an outsourcing model under which non-profit organizations or District Councils will coordinate the contents, so as to attract more individuals to take part in various segments of such

programmes. Sufficient guidance and coaching are required, however (train the trainer).

32. Should we allow ethnic minorities to relay programmes from their native countries?

(VII) Other Opinions

33. May select quality productions for broadcasting on mains radio channels as encouragement.

34. The 3-year \$45 million appropriation fund may be inadequate, but still an incentive: if participants manage to deliver results additional funding support may be considered. Should community broadcasting emerge to be a success, application may be made to the Legislative Council to seek additional appropriation for the fund.