



July 10, 2014

Request for Proposals

**Ombudsman
For the
Corporation for Public Broadcasting**

Proposals due August 15 , 2014

This Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks competitive proposals from candidates for the position of Ombudsman for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The Office of the Ombudsman was established by the Board of Directors (Board) in April 2005 as an independent office that informs CPB's Board and its President on issues related to public television and radio programming, particularly programming funded by CPB. Its broader purpose is to encourage public dialogue that fosters high standards of excellence in public television and radio programming. To that end, the Ombudsman will receive and selectively respond to comments on programming from diverse sources, and will annually review CPB-funded programming for its objectivity, balance, fairness, accuracy and transparency, all as more particularly described in the Charter of the Office of the Ombudsman attached hereto. In addition to the Charter, the Ombudsman will be subject to guidelines developed in consultation with CPB and generally consistent with standards of the United States Ombudsman Association, which may be found at:

http://www.usombudsman.org/documents/PDF/References/USOA_STANDARDS.pdf.

Although not an employee of CPB, the Ombudsman, and any staff retained to serve his or her office, will also be subject to CPB's Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Employees, found at:

<http://www.cpb.org/aboutcpb/cpbethicsguide.pdf>

Please consider and comply with the following information and requirements in submitting proposals in response to this RFP:

1. Independent Nature of the Position

The Office of the Ombudsman is not a department within CPB, and none of its personnel are CPB employees. The person selected to serve as Ombudsman shall be an independent contractor whose responsibilities and compensation will be specified in a contract negotiated with CPB as part of this RFP process. Based on proposals received, the position may be full- or part-time and may require the assistance of staff. The Ombudsman shall be responsible for any office facilities,

equipment, staff or other support services that may be required, and proposals must include the full cost of the Office of the Ombudsman for the term of the contract.

2. Term of Contract

The Ombudsman's contract shall be for a term of three years, which may be extended for additional terms at the discretion of the Board. The contract will likewise be subject to early termination at the discretion of the Board.

3. Conflict of Interests

The Ombudsman may not hold any position in any other organization within or outside of public broadcasting that might compromise or give the appearance of compromising his or her role as the CPB Ombudsman.

4. Scope of Work

The work required will be defined in the Ombudsman's contract. For the purpose of submitting proposals, candidates should expect to routinely perform the following tasks:

- review and respond to comments;
- conduct inquiries and report findings;
- develop and evaluate options and recommendations;
- identify complaint patterns and trends;
- issue an average of three reports per month on programming and other issues, and post a weekly blog article;
- prepare an annual report on objectivity, balance, fairness, accuracy and transparency in CPB-funded programming; and
- advocate excellence, objectivity, balance, fairness, accuracy and transparency throughout the public broadcasting system.

5. Qualifications

Candidates for the position of Ombudsman should have the following qualifications which shall be weighed in evaluating proposals:

- A bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution of higher education;
- five or more years of experience as a professional journalist;
- familiarity with social media, and other digital platforms;

- demonstrated ability to write and communicate effectively and persuasively about issues related to journalistic integrity, accuracy, balance, objectivity and transparency;
- recognition in the field of journalism for knowledge, judgment, , integrity (personal and professional) and adherence to journalistic ethics;
- a strong interest in public media and public broadcasting;
- the ability to work independently and without supervision; and
- other qualifications that the candidate considers relevant.

6. Selection Criteria

Proposals received in response to this RFP will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- the eight “Qualifications” specified in the preceding Section 5; and
- the annual cost proposed for the Office of the Ombudsman.

7. Submission of Proposals and Questions

Proposals must be submitted electronically to CPB’s Office of the Corporate Secretary at ocs@cpb.org no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday August 15, 2014.

Candidates may submit questions concerning this RFP in advance of the proposal due date. All questions must be submitted in writing electronically to the same email address. CPB will post relevant questions (but not their sources) and its response to each question on its website.

8. Selection Process

CPB will evaluate the proposals and select one or more candidates it considers best qualified. It will then negotiate specific terms of service with the candidate(s), ultimately selecting one individual to serve as Ombudsman. CPB expects to select the Ombudsman by September 2014.



Office of the Ombudsman

Charter

The founders of public broadcasting saw a clear need for a “system-wide process of exerting upward pressure on standards of taste and performance.”¹ In addition, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was expected to become the “center of leadership” with a “primary mission...to extend and improve...programming.”² Consistent with those goals, in April 2005 the CPB Board of Directors (Board) established the Office of the Ombudsman as an independent office with responsibility to inform its Board and its President on issues as described in this Charter.

This Charter establishes the role for one individual to serve as the CPB Ombudsman. The Ombudsman shall serve at the pleasure of the Board for a term of three years which the Board may, in its sole discretion, choose to renew. The person selected will be recognized for his or her experience within the news media and/or public broadcasting, and for a demonstrated capacity to write and communicate about issues of journalistic integrity, accuracy, transparency, balance and objectivity as they relate to public broadcasting.

The Ombudsman will receive comments from the general public, government officials and individuals within the public broadcasting system itself regarding programming aired on CPB-supported television and radio stations. The Ombudsman will encourage public dialogue aimed at achieving high standards of excellence in public broadcasting, and shall annually prepare a written review of CPB-funded programming for its objectivity, balance, fairness, accuracy and transparency.

The Ombudsman shall be free to respond to any comments received and seek answers to questions and concerns raised about programming from sources within and outside the public broadcasting system. The Ombudsman shall review, address and report on all issues concerning public broadcasting programming independent of any influence from CPB management or other external sources. The Ombudsman's function, performance and behavior shall be governed solely by the Ombudsman's integrity and professional experience, and by operational guidelines which shall be developed in consultation with the Ombudsman and shall be generally consistent with standards

¹ The 1967 Carnegie Commission Report, p.36

² Ibid, p. 40 and p. 5

adopted by the United States Ombudsman Association. In addition, the Ombudsman shall adhere to CPB's Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Employees.

In carrying out its role, the Office of the Ombudsman will confine its programming comments to content that has been broadcast to the public on-air or on-line, and shall not engage in pre-broadcast commentary. The Ombudsman may also comment on the responsibilities of the Office of the Ombudsman and may submit such comments to the President or the Board, either publicly or privately. In every case, the Office of the Ombudsman will initiate its own reports and shall have the sole responsibility for all decisions to review programming and issue reports.