



PUBLIC NOTICE

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OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF CRITICAL INFORMATION NEEDS RESEARCH DESIGN

The Federal Communications Commission's Office of Communications Business Opportunities (OCBO) announces the release of the Research Design for the Multi-Market Study of Critical Information Needs (Research Design). The Research Design and subsequent studies are intended to inform the Commission's 2012 report to Congress on barriers to participation, also known as the Section 257 Report. Section 257 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, requires that the Commission review and report to Congress on: (1) regulations prescribed to eliminate market entry barriers for entrepreneurs and other small businesses in the provision and ownership of telecommunications and information services or in the provision of parts or services to providers of those services and that can be prescribed consistent with the public interest, convenience and necessity; and (2) proposals to eliminate statutory barriers to market entry by those entities, consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.¹

In April of 2012, the Commission entered into a contract with the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism to provide a literature review of research into the critical information needs of the American public and the barriers to participation in the communications industry that might limit the extent to which critical needs are met.² Under the direction of The University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, a multi-disciplinary team of communication experts, journalists, legal scholars, and social scientists prepared and submitted the review to the Commission in July 2012 ("USC Literature Review").³ The USC Literature Review defines a range of critical information needs of the American public and explains how these needs are met as well as the existing barriers to meeting them. In addition, the review presents an overview of further social science and communications research that may assist the Commission in assessing the need for

¹ 47 U.S.C. § 257(c).

² See *The Office of Communications Business Opportunities and the Media Bureau Announce the Release of a Request for Quotation for Study Examining the Critical Information Needs of the American Public*, BO Docket No. 12-30, Public Notice, DA: 12-56 (BO, *rel.* Feb. 6, 2012).

³ University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communications & Journalism, *Review of the Literature Regarding Critical Information Needs of the American Public* (July 16, 2012) ("USC Literature Review"), available at http://transition.fcc.gov/bureaus/ocbo/Final_Literature_Review.pdf.

government action and in developing targeted policies to address existing gaps in the ability of various “media ecosystems” to serve, and deliver critical information to Americans. The review makes several observations, including that (1) there are clear and significant information needs of Americans at the individual and community level; (2) available research indicates that many of those needs are not being met; (3) access to information, as well as the tools and skills needed to navigate information, are essential to civic and democratic participation; and (4) low-income, minority, and marginalized communities and “lower-information” areas are likely to be systematically disadvantaged in both personal and community opportunities when information needs lag or go unmet.⁴

Building on this literature review, OCBO contracted with Social Solutions International, Inc., (SSI) a research and evaluation firm, to design a research model that would provide the Commission with a tool for understanding access to and barriers in providing critical information needs in diverse American communities. To inform the Research Design, SSI convened a subject matter expert conference on September 13-14, 2012. The meeting included a review of the literature review, and discussion of methodology, protocols and procedures best suited to implementation of both a Media Market Census and a Community Ecology Study. Based on the discussion and insights garnered from the conference’s participants, SSI developed this Research Design.

To develop policies that ensure that the critical informational needs of Americans are being met and that would advance the goal of diversity, including the promotion of greater women and minority participation in media, the Commission needs to conduct or commission research that illuminates the diversity of views available to local communities, the diversity of sources in local markets and the diversity of critical information needs of the American public, including women and minorities. This Research Design provides the Commission with a research tool to examine in a variety of markets how the public acquires critical information, how the media eco-system operates to provide critical information, and what barriers exist to participation. Although it was commissioned pursuant to Section 257, analysis resulting from the USC Literature Review and the Critical Information Needs Studies will be relevant to the Commission’s future analysis of broadcast ownership issues in upcoming Quadrennial Reviews, including issues related to minority and female ownership.⁵

The public is also invited to submit written comments in response to the research design. A copy of the research design is available on the OCBO website (<http://www.fcc.gov/office-communications-business-opportunities>). Interested parties may file written comments in FCC Docket 12-30 not later than July 23, 2013. Comments may be filed using the Commission’s

⁴ An annotated bibliography, consisting of academic studies, reports, and additional resources, accompanies the literature review and is available at http://transition.fcc.gov/bureaus/ocbo/Final_Annotated_Bibliography.pdf.

⁵ OCBO’s critical information needs studies are not designed to focus on any particular type of media in any particular market. They will, instead, encompass any and all Commission regulated and non-regulated media outlets and will be constructed to provide a comprehensive census of the critical information available from various resources in each studied market.

Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS). See *Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceeding*, 63 FR 24121 (1998).

- Electronic Filers: Comment may be filed electronically using the Internet accessing the ECFS: <http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs2/>. Courtesy copies should also be directed to Daniel Margolis via e-mail at daniel.margolis@fcc.gov.
- Paper Filers: Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and one copy of each filing. If more than one docket or rulemaking number appears in the caption of this proceeding, filers must submit two additional copies for each additional docket or rulemaking number. Filing can be sent by hand or messenger delivery, by commercial overnight courier, or by first-class or overnight U.S. Postal Service mail. All filings must be addressed to the Commission's Secretary, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission.
- All hand-delivered or messenger-delivered paper filings for the Commission's Secretary must be delivered to FCC headquarters at 445 12th St., SW, Room TWA325, Washington, DC 20554. The filing hours are 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. All hand deliveries must be held together with rubber bands or fasteners. Any envelopes and boxes must be disposed of before entering the building.
- Commercial overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail) must be sent to 9300 East Hampton Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743.
- U.S. Postal Service first-class, Express, and Priority mail must be addressed to 445 12th Street, SW Washington DC 20554.

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