

*"I listen to radio – but not always on the radio."*

# **Toward a Vibrant, Sustainable WBAI**

## **A Work-in-Progress Report**

*(Notated)*

*"These are difficult times, but WBAI really can be more of a force again."*

With contributions by:

**Kat Aaron**, WNYC Associate Producer  
**Professor Ralph Engelman**, PhD; Long Island University  
**Lonnie Hicks**, MBA; former Pacifica CFO  
**David Hinckley**, *New York Daily News*  
**Professor Robert McChesney**, PhD; University of Illinois; Free Press  
**Professor Mario Murillo**, MA; Hofstra University  
**Phil Osegueda**, KPKA/Berkeley  
**Anthony Riddle**, BRIC (Brooklyn Information & Culture)  
**Mimi Rosenberg**, WBAI producer  
**Valerie Van Isler**, former General Manager, WBAI

...and the numerous suggestions of WBAI and Pacifica listeners and paid and unpaid staff over time.

April 2014

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## Backgrounds of Those Interviewed

**Kat Aaron** is Associate Producer at WNYC (NPR station) and former Project Editor and Writer with the Investigative Reporting Workshop. Previously (from 2005-2008) she was Co-Executive Director of People's Production House (radio reporting training center for high school and middle school students) and was a producer of "Wakeup Call" (morning drive-time show) and "Rise Up Radio" (youth collective program) on WBAI (from 2001-2008).

**Ralph Engelman, PhD**, is Chair of the Journalism Department and Senior Professor of Journalism and Communication Studies at Long Island University. He is also Faculty Coordinator of the George Polk Awards. He is the author of "Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History" (Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996). He is also a former Chair of the WBAI Local Advisory Board and a former member of the Pacifica National Board (in the 1970s).

**Lonnie Hicks, MBA**, is the former Chief Financial Officer of Pacifica (2003-2009). Before that, he was the Executive Director and CFO for a 300-employee family service agency in San Francisco and an organizer for the California Nurses Association. He currently runs a publishing website for poetry and music.

**David Hinckley** has been the Radio and Television Correspondent for the *New York Daily News* for more than 25 years.

**Robert McChesney, PhD**, is the Gutgsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was co-founder and first President of Free Press, a national media reform organization ([www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)). He hosted a weekly "Media Matters" program on NPR-affiliate WILL-AM (2002-2012). He has written or edited 27 books, the most relevant to our purpose being the award-winning *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Away from Democracy* (New Press, 2013), *The Death and Life of American Journalism: The Media Revolution that Will Begin the World Again* (Nation Books, 2010), co-authored with John Nichols; and *The Political Economy of Media* (Monthly Review Press, 2008).

**Mario Murillo** is Professor and Chair of the Radio, Television, and Film Department, Lawrence Herbert School of Communications, Hofstra University, and Faculty Advisor to WRHU (88.7 FM), the Hofstra student station. Previously he was Public Affairs Director at WBAI and host of the Friday "Wakeup Call" and "Our Americas" programs.

**Phil Osegueda** is Subscriptions Director of KPKA/Berkeley. Previously he had been Assistant General Manager/Development Director at KPFA and Development Director in the Pacifica National Office from 2004-2008.

**Anthony Riddle** is Co-Director of Community Media, BRIC (Brooklyn Information & Culture). Previously he was Interim Development Director for Pacifica, General Manager of WBAI, Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media, and Executive Director of Manhattan Neighborhood Network.

**Mimi Rosenberg** has been a WBAI producer for 46 years and is a former elected unpaid staff representative on the WBAI Local Advisory Board. Along with Ken Nash, she is the co-producer/co-host of *Building Bridges: Your Community and Labor Report*. She is also an attorney with the Legal Aid Society.

**Valerie Van Isler** is a former General Manager, Program Director, and International Affairs Director of WBAI.

## Acknowledgements

This report was a collective product of the work of numerous people concerned about WBAI's future. Mimi Rosenberg proposed the concept of interviews with experts as an important way to advance the dialogue. Bob Lederer conducted the interviews and initiated the writing process. Besides Mimi Rosenberg, others who reviewed drafts and contributed to the shaping and the writing of the report included Local Station Board members John Brinkley, William Heerwagen, John Riley, Cerene Roberts, and Sharonne Salaam, and former Pacifica National Board member Nia Bediako. Lonnie Hicks developed the Immediate Fundraising Plan, and former WBAI Treasurer Baruti Bediako reviewed and formatted the budget for the Plan.

The report builds on years of hard work and creative thinking by scores of listeners, volunteers, paid staff, unpaid staff, and managers at WBAI and other Pacifica stations, and in independent media. We do not claim that the most of these ideas are original, but they are pulled together in one place and updated, with some new innovations.

We want to thank all the interviewees who generously gave of their time and insights, as well as those WBAI and Pacifica folks whose prior proposals we summarized. *However, responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations contained herein lies strictly with those who worked on the overall writing process.* We look forward to further dialogue with the interviewees and many others to further define proposed directions for the path forward.

We are optimistic that WBAI can embark on a path toward a vibrant, sustainable future.

## **Introduction: The Urgency of Making WBAI Sustainable**

In 2013, WBAI's longstanding financial crisis, which had been growing for many years, worsened dramatically. Many of us in the WBAI community began to feel existential fear for the survival of this precious gem of unbought, grassroots broadcasting that, at its best, provides access to the voices of poor, working, disenfranchised, and progressive communities and movements, as well as to diverse cultural offerings not available through mainstream media.

Most dramatically, litigation by the Empire State Building against Pacifica due to seriously delinquent rental payments for WBAI's antenna almost led to its eviction from that essential venue for reaching the tri-state area. Once alerted, listeners rallied with generous donations to prevent that catastrophe, but the financial problems have persisted, as they are deep-seated. The result has been ever-lengthening pledge drives emphasizing premiums, now amounting to more than a third of the days of each year. This in turn has squeezed the time for regular programming, contributing to a mounting alienation and tune-out by more and more long-time listeners.

In August, Pacifica mandated a painful, massive round of staff layoffs – 19 of 29 positions – including the producers and hosts of the morning and afternoon drive-time programs and the WBAI Evening News.

At about the same time, the Pacifica National Board (PNB) began considering the possibility of leasing the station's signal to an outside entity (Local Marketing Agreement or LMA, or Public Service Operating Agreement, or PSOA), which would control programming decisions for several years. Bidders were invited to submit proposals. WBAI listeners and staff on all sides of the spectrum spoke out against this prospect.

In February 2014, the new PNB voted to postpone any negotiations on a possible lease, and directed the WBAI Local Station Board to come up with proposals by early April for alternatives to leasing the station.

For years, many WBAI paid and unpaid staff, managers, volunteers, board members, and listeners have made suggestions and lists of tools to expand fundraising and build listenership. But while some useful projects have been carried out, the station has yet to embark on a comprehensive effort to change its fundamental business model, which needs serious repair. This entails re-examining not only the station's on-air and off-air funding methods, but also its strategies (or lack thereof) for marketing and promotion and – in a rapidly changing technological world – provide digital access to its rich programs across multiple platforms.

There's also been little fundamental dialogue about how WBAI sees its mission in 2014, and how it distinguishes itself from public radio/TV and liberal media. This would include, among others, questions of:

- how to serve the general listening area while addressing the specific needs of communities (defined by ethnicity, class, immigration status, language, geography, and other factors) that are underserved and/or disenfranchised

- how to involve young people in a serious way, and
- how the station can restore a sense of community connectedness that many view as necessary for its survival.

Mimi Rosenberg suggested that one important way to jumpstart these conversations would be to interview experienced media professionals and scholars – including present and former WBAI staff as well as professionals and academics from outside institutions – who might offer some fresh insights. In addition, we combed previous reports recommending various stabilizing strategies for WBAI and Pacifica, and relevant articles from research institutes, trade publications and websites serving public radio. This report is a contribution to starting the dialogue.

Due to time constraints, there are important gaps in this research. In particular, more work needs to be done to underline both listening/viewing/online trends and programming needs among Latino, Asian, African, and Caribbean immigrants and youth interested in social change. There should also be deeper exchanges with creators of successful community media projects serving those and other communities in the tri-state area. There also needs to be further investigation of the most effective modes of digital distribution, not only for radio (audio) segments, but also for video and text.

**Please note that the recommendations offered here are not meant to be a blueprint or a set-in-stone prescription.** They are merely a framework for planning, a work in progress. Many other station stakeholders should weigh in on the questions and possibilities raised here for charting a path forward. A more in-depth version of this report will be published in the future. If you have suggestions, please email [wbaireport@gmail.com](mailto:wbaireport@gmail.com).

## **Making Sustainability A Reality**

As detailed later, key to the further development, modification, and implementation of any plan will be the **rapid hiring of a paid fundraising/project-management consultant** (reporting to the General Manager but working collaboratively with staff and board) who will coordinate the implementation of the huge amount of detail necessary to make such a plan succeed. That would include setting up working groups to brainstorm further in each area of specialization and to make sure the concrete tasks actually get done within a deadline. (For details, see page 11.) This position is quite fundable through gifts/grants and loans from major donors and mission-matched foundations.

Ultimately, it's not simply about good ideas – there are many. It's about setting up the right structure to make sure that overall directions and priorities for audience development are clearly decided, that plans are carefully thought-through, that tasks are assigned to accountable people, and that *the work gets done*. That is how, working together, we can save our beloved station.

# **Proposed Immediate Fundraising Plan for WBAI: Pay As You Go\* (Summary)**

**By Lonnie Hicks**

This proposed plan, based on years of experience at Pacifica and other non-profits, has strong potential to bring in significant revenue within weeks. Its first phase can be completed within 60 days – some of which can bear fruit considerably earlier – followed by a second phase that will take 30 more days to complete (although some of the work will also continue beyond that, and will plant seeds for future relationships). The plan takes into account the very limited paid staff at WBAI, and anticipates additional involvement by trained volunteers. Those tasked with personal outreach to major donors should be experienced in fundraising and carefully chosen based on knowledge and skills.

***\*Funds will be spent on a pay-as-you-go basis: As a sufficient amount is raised for an activity (say, the first month's fee for the fundraising/project-management consultant), that activity will begin.***

**For a detailed step-by-step plan and budget, see Appendix A, p. 24.**

## **Phase I Action Items - Within 60 Days**

- Develop and implement plan

**IF1** Add direct donations portal to wbai.org

**IF2** Establish and implement dedicated WBAI Recovery and Sustainability Fund to finance fundraising consultant and other costs of long-term planning and implementation

**IF3** Utilize 6 specially-trained volunteers for outreach to major donors, requesting donations for immediate fundraising efforts and launch of long-term sustainability plan.

- Before calls, send any unspent premiums
- Call donors with script – offer and carry out station tours & lunches
- Send thank-yous to those who donate again

**IF4** Meet with selected major donors to request bridge loans or loan guarantees.

**IF5** Seek bridge loans and loan guarantees from progressive foundations

**IF6** Apply to progressive foundations for emergency grant for sustainability consultant

**IF7** Seek/screen candidates for and, as funds allow, hire fundraising/project-management consultant

**IF8** Call pledgers of \$150+ who have not fulfilled pledges and resolve any premium complaints

**IF9** Clean up donor list

Prepare for and implement fund-appeal mailing/emailing, as funds allow.

***Phase I Estimated total expenses: \$7,250 - \$8,400***

***Phase I Estimated total income: \$33,750 - \$36,250***

**Phase I Estimated net income: \$26,500 - \$27,850**

**Phase II Action Items - 60-90 days**

- Continue calls to pledgers who have not fulfilled pledges

**IF10** Do outreach to progressive orgs re list swap

- Use proceeds of first phase to finance:

**IF11A** sending fund-appeal mailing and donor event invitation to WBAI donors (all levels)

**IF11B** sending fund-appeal mailing to swapped list

- expanding work of fundraising/project-management consultant

**IF12** Send email fund appeal with short video to WBAI donors and people on acquired lists

- Complete additional tours/lunches with donors, utilizing specially-trained volunteers

**IF13** Hold donor appreciation event for 120-150 people

***Phase II Estimated total expenses: \$32,690 - \$35,690***

***Phase II Estimated total income: \$64,700 - \$106,100***

***Phase II Estimated net income: \$32,010 - \$70,410***

***Phase I + II Estimated net income: \$58,510 - \$98,260***

***Allocation of proceeds:***

- ***For Recovery & Sustainability Fund: \$27,010 - \$31,060***
- ***For general operations: \$31,500 - \$67,200***

**Projected Impact:**

This focused outreach to major donors will be the beginning of building ongoing positive relationships. It will have significant long-term value far beyond the (substantial) dollar amounts of the initial donations.

Similarly, the efforts proposed here will produce a protocol for regular fund-appeal mailings both to WBAI's donor lists and to external lists. There should be ongoing efforts to acquire new lists through additional swaps with progressive organizations, and mailings of increasing size after testing the viability of each list with a small "starter" mailing.

**IF14** Based on best practices of Pacifica and other nonprofits, both forms of outreach/fundraising should be institutionalized **three times annually**. If this is done, WBAI will generate major additional ongoing funding streams.



## Goals for Sustainability

Given the station's current needs and deficiencies, the following is a beginning list of some goals for short-, medium-, and long-term efforts to make the station sustainable.

First and foremost, to address the station's imminent financial crisis, the most immediate goal must be to:

- **Secure funds to meet current operating expenses**

Despite the drastic layoffs of paid staff last year, which reduced payroll expenses by about \$1 million a year, and the reduction in studio rent from \$37,000/month on Wall Street to \$10,500 between the City College studio and the Brooklyn office, WBAI continues to struggle to pay its ongoing bills. The most onerous is the \$51,000/month charged for rental of the transmitter on top of the Empire State Building (scheduled to steadily rise to \$77,000 by 2020). Thus the station has been unable to address unpaid bills of the last fiscal year, which include a large tax payment related to the recently paid severance to laid-off workers and this year's "shared expenses" due to the Pacifica National Office. Pledge drives continually have had to be extended to come close to meeting goals.

One way to help restore financial viability is to:

- **Retain and increase the number of members/Buddies**

Key to sustaining the station will be building the committed membership. Currently there are about 14,000 members (anyone donating \$25 or more or volunteering for at least 3 hours in the past year). But up to one-third may not be renewing each year. The reasons for this drop-off must be understood and reduced.

In 2012 the station formalized its longstanding sustainer program as the "BAI Buddy." Anyone committing to have at least \$10 deducted monthly from their credit/debit card or checking/savings account obtains discounts at station events and community cultural and business partners, and gets other benefits. This program, designed to reduce the pressure on pledge drives to support the station, has steadily grown from \$6,000 to \$16,500 monthly (1,050 Buddies) as of March 2014.

If WBAI can get out of its immediate crisis by beginning to meet its current bills and developing a modest reserve to pay ongoing operating costs, there can be the possibility to move to the medium-term stage of sustainability:

- **Raise funds for needed capital projects**

WBAI's most immediate capital need is to construct at least one broadcast studio at its downtown Brooklyn offices. This would enable the station to consolidate in one location (the current studio is at City College in Harlem, about an hour away by subway) and would save \$5,000 a month in rent. In addition, some of the station's broadcast equipment is outdated, and the transmitter at the Empire State Building is antiquated and will eventually need

replacement. There are other potential capital projects that should be decided through a broad-based discussion of long-term priorities and directions.

Finally, for the long term, while there are many goals that still need to be worked out, at least one is abundantly clear:

- **Develop an increased, more diverse, and younger listenership**

With a signal reach to some 20 million people, WBAI has immense potential to grow by appealing to many of the region's geographic, demographic, and political/artistic communities.

In particular, the tri-state area's population is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. Particularly with the growing presence of immigrants from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, WBAI will have to find ways to attract more of them as listeners and supporters.

The lack of younger listeners at WBAI has been painfully clear for years. Professor Robert McChesney said: *Progressive media tends to skew older. It takes a concerted effort to bring young people in. The tragedy is that Pacifica stations should have been far more equipped to do that than any other progressive media – they can bring in people as hosts of public affairs and music shows.*

# Implementation of Short- and Long-Term Plans

## 1. Planning/Implementation Timeline

The Immediate (Short-Term) Fundraising Plan should be launched right away to quickly bring cash in the door that will allow the station not only to survive, but also to create a more stable financial basis for the future. But since the station's urgent crisis will ultimately not be reversed without expansion, rethinking and restructuring, the work to develop and implement a long-term plan *must also start immediately*, concurrently with the short-term fundraising plan. It cannot wait.

As stated in the Introduction, the proposed Long-Term Sustainability Plan outlined in this report is a merely a rough draft offered for consideration by all interested parties. It needs more research, consideration, exploration of available resources, adding missing pieces, and ultimately, decisions about which projects to prioritize. Even after a final plan is devised, it should be seen as *fluid* – constantly subject to change as experiments succeed or fail, and local/national conditions evolve.

A full plan will have to be determined and refined by management and staff with the input of station stakeholders. This should include Town Hall meetings in different communities to get input, as well as an online and paper survey of listeners and applicable non-listeners from communities around the signal area. All of this will need careful shepherding by the Fundraiser/Project Manager so it's not unwieldy and unending, with task-focused working groups, timelines/deadlines, and accountable individuals.

**Hiring a Fundraiser/Project Manager:** At this point, the station lacks the staff and institutional structure to pursue a creative reinvention process *and then implement* an achievable sustainability plan. Furthermore, devising and project-managing all the details of these new initiatives cannot be piled onto the responsibilities of existing staff who are overloaded handling daily survival functions.

For those reasons, **it is essential that funds be raised for a full-time position to coordinate the sustainability plan, both short-term and long-term.** We are proposing that this position be the primary focus of the major-donor "asks" and grant-writing in the initial 90-day fundraising period. If funds are initially only available for a part-time consultant, such a hire of a proven and experienced individual should be made quickly on that basis, with expanded hours as funds allow. Fundraising efforts should continue to support such a position for three years. However, we are not suggesting that management should wait for the hiring of such a person to begin the planning and work.

**Working Group to Implement Plan:** We recommend that the General Manager designate a temporary staff convener (later to be replaced by the Fundraiser/Project Manager) for a working group meeting open to stakeholders - listeners and staff willing to do serious, committed work on the plan. The working group should create subgroups to do detailed prioritizing, planning, and timelines-setting for implementation of each component part. The subgroups might include (but would not be limited to): on-air fundraising; off-air fundraising; promotion/outreach; community partnerships; college/university partnerships; digital distribution; etc. One group should focus on developing a community survey (both online and printed) usable with both current listeners and non-listeners in the signal area. All subgroups

should be encouraged to recruit interested members of community organizations that can help advance the work.

The subgroups should not only discuss which projects are feasible and should be prioritized, but also start planning how they can be implemented. They won't have authority to commit the station, but rather to make recommendations to management. Management should be encouraged to implement the "low-hanging fruit" as early as possible.

**Timeline:** The working group should start its work as early as possible in the 90-day Immediate Fundraising Plan, and then continue through the three-year period of the Long-Term Sustainability Plan. Here is a proposed timeline, starting from WBAI/Pacifica's approval of the idea for such plans (the Fundraiser/Project Manager will join as soon as s/he is hired):

- (Week 1) The WBAI General Manager appoints a staff person as temporary convenor of the working group. (Once the Fundraiser/Project Manager is hired, s/he will play that role.)
- (Week 2) First working group meeting. The group creates the subgroups. Those subgroups meet separately at their own pace, and should submit brief written progress reports shortly before each meeting of the working group.
- (Week 5) Second working group meeting. This should include time for each subgroup to report on those projects they feel are ready to go, status of those still in the planning stage, and any suggested additions/deletions of projects.
- (Week 8) Third working group meeting. Among other tasks, make final big-picture decisions on the community survey. Set date and general location (borough or city) for first of 4 Town Hall meetings (each in different parts of the signal area) to present draft plans and get community feedback and additional ideas and offers to help with the work.
- (Week 10) After confirming venue, publicly announce the date/time/address of the first Town Hall meeting (to be held four weeks later).
- (Week 12) Launch community survey online, in print at community events, and in any printed station mailings that follow for next 3 months
- (Week 14) Hold first Town Hall meeting.
- Continue monthly meetings of working group throughout the 3 years of the Long-Term Sustainability Plan.
- Hold 3 more Town Hall meetings in different regions at approximately 2-month intervals.

The Fundraiser/Project Manager should report periodically on the working group's progress to meetings of the paid/unpaid staff, the LSB, and the Community Advisory Board (CAB). S/he should send notes and reports every month to each of those bodies, as well as to the WBAI webmaster for posting on the website. Every month, Management, including the Fundraiser/Project Manager, should give well-announced on-air Reports to the Listener, so as to keep listeners apprised and solicit their ongoing input and help.

## **2. Peoplepower Required**

To implement the Immediate Fundraising Plan and the Long-Term Sustainability Plan, people with a wide variety of skills and experiences will be required. The success of these plans will depend on ensuring that specific individuals are assigned to each task and given the access they require (such as workspace, phones, computers, printers, Internet access, etc.). Many tasks can be done by volunteers and students, but others can only be done consistently and with high skill levels by paid people, whether staff or consultants.

Besides the station's currently budgeted managers and paid staff (currently 9 people), the 200-plus unpaid staff, and scores of volunteers, Local Station Board members (see special note), and Community Advisory Board members, below are some initial lists of the types of people that will be needed to implement the various plans. As stated above, we believe that **a full-time paid Fundraiser/Project Manager for the Sustainability Plan** will be essential to be responsible and accountable for the completion of all projects. Once hired, that person can further specify the types of additional peoplepower that s/he would need to carry out the work.

### **A. Immediate Fundraising Plan**

- **Current paid staff**

- **General Manager** – finalize plan; assign personnel to responsibilities; set up WBAI Emergency Recovery Fund; seek and screen candidates for development consultant
- **Interim Development Director** – generate donor list to call from database; arrange for premiums to be sent to donors who are overdue to receive them; tasks listed under “Fundraiser/Project Manager” before such person is retained – once retained, work under the direction of such person on fundraising projects
- **Webmaster** – add direct donation portals to site

- **New paid position**

**PP1 Fundraiser/Project Manager** (working with Interim Development Director on fundraising aspects), write grants and deal with foundations and major donors; arrange list swaps; obtain and clean-up mailing lists; manage fundraising mailings and e-mailings; meet with banks and credit unions; coordinate the sustainability working group; and supervise implementation of sustainability projects.

**PP2 Volunteers** (experienced, knowledgeable producers, volunteers, or board members):

- 6 people to call major donors and do station tours/lunches with them
- Writers for fundraising appeals (working with consultant listed below once they're retained) – separate formats for letters, email, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube video, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.
- Coordinator and volunteers for Donor Appreciation Event - to arrange space, food/drink, special gifts, etc.
- Other volunteers as needed

**PP3 College interns**

## **Material Support Required**

- Workspace
- Phones
- Computers
- Printers
- Internet access

These resources can be made available either through the station's offices in Brooklyn, but also supportive nonprofits and unions can be asked to make their offices available on a periodic basis.

Clearly, there are no funds available currently to provide consistent volunteers with reimbursement for expenses (such as transit fare, lunch, or childcare), but a long-term goal would be to build such expenses into the budget.

## **B. Long-Term Sustainability Plan**

### **Fundraising/Development**

**All of the above, plus:**

**Permanent WBAI Development Director** (supported by a team of volunteers and interns)

**PP4 Shared development staff with Pacifica.** Pacifica should again hire a National Development Director who could develop shared resources, offer technical assistance, and provide independent funding for national projects, easing the burden on individual stations.

**PP5 Partnerships with university fundraising/nonprofit management programs.** In 2008, then "Talk Back" producer/host Hugh Hamilton interviewed one faculty member from Columbia University's master's program in fundraising management and another from the master's program at NYU's Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising, and discussed their possible assistance in designing WBAI's fundraising efforts. Those contacts should be pursued.

**PP6 Short-term consultants or professional fundraising companies if needed for specific expertise.** Each would need careful vetting with others in Pacifica and community radio.

**PP7 Volunteers with professional experience.** There are highly talented professionals, including retired and unemployed persons, among WBAI's listenership who have fundraising/marketing skills and experience, and great loyalty to the station. Announcements on the air, website and e-newsletter could invite such listeners to volunteer. Outreach should also be done to organizations of experienced volunteers such as SCORE (which provides seasoned managers in marketing, finance, technology, etc. - [www.score.org](http://www.score.org)), Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Community Service Society (which places volunteers 55 and older in nonprofits - <http://www.cssny.org/programs/entry/retired-and-senior-volunteer-program>), Easter Seals (which provides senior citizens for capacity-building internships - [http://ny.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NYDR\\_job\\_training](http://ny.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NYDR_job_training)), and others.

- **College interns**
- **Online resources.** Public Radio Association of Development Officers (PRADO) - <http://www.pradoweb.org>

### **Advertising/Marketing**

#### **Current staff and volunteers, plus:**

- **Volunteers with professional experience** (See details above)
- **College interns**

### **Programming/News**

#### **Current staff and volunteers, plus:**

- **Permanent Program Director**

**PP8 Partnerships with diverse college journalism programs**

**PP9 Partnerships with high schools**

**PP10 Partnerships with community media projects**

**PP11 Exploration of possible collaborations/partnerships with First Look Media** (<https://firstlook.org/> - a new online independent multi-media outlet with investigative journalists Glenn Greenwald, Jeremy Scahill, and Laura Poitras, backed by billionaire Pierre Omidyar)

**PP12 Partnerships with community-based nonprofits & activist groups**

**PP13 High school and college interns**

### **PP14 - A Note on the Role of the Local Station Board**

In virtually all other nonprofit organizations, board members play a role in fundraising. The WBAI Local Station Board should be no exception, and should do such work in conjunction with management and staff. This should include involvement in the volunteer roles listed above.

In 2008, the LSB adopted a plan for its involvement in off-air fundraising, but while a few board members have taken some initiatives, much more can be done. Since several of the LSB plan ideas came from the Unpaid Staff Organizing Committee, there's a fair reliance on staff participation. The following options are still relevant today:

1. Direct appeals to contacts: A letter will be developed that LSB members can use to appeal to their individual circles. This letter will include links to specific parts of the WBAI website. LSB members can adapt as they see fit.
2. Events featuring station personnel: Events will be organized featuring station personnel, including public forums, debates, performances, and film showings. Staff will be polled to determine willingness to participate. In addition to promotion on WBAI, some events will be advertised in other media, with the goal of attracting a larger audience.
3. Events in conjunction with other organizations: Joint fundraising events with other organizations whose principles are consistent with WBAI's will be done. These events can be advantageous to WBAI in that we reach out to members of the other organization.
4. Other events: If possible, events will be organized around other speakers and/or performers consistent with WBAI's mission, perhaps including donated performances of plays. In particular, there will be a major Annual Awards Dinner with well-known supporters of the station, organized with the help of a professional fundraiser.
5. Grant-writing: The LSB will investigate grant-writing, to be done in conjunction with station staff and management.

In addition, in early 2013, through a contact provided by WBAI producers, an LSB member coordinated phone banking by LSB members and other volunteers at Local 1180 of the Communications Workers of America to request donations for the Transmitter Fund from those who had pledged but not fulfilled their pledges. Thousands of dollars were raised in a few weeks. A similar effort was resumed recently by the WBAI Community Advisory Board and dozens of listener volunteers, using phone lines at the station's Brooklyn offices. LSB members should join in a renewed effort, and the Proposed Immediate Fundraising Plan (see p. 7) includes a recommendation for a specific category of pledgers to be targeted for the ongoing calls.

Given the Local Station Board's frequent inability to work together to help the station, it should seriously consider undergoing board training. This would be aimed at more clearly understanding the proper role of nonprofit boards in governance and support of the institution, and where the borderlines are between governance and management. There are several respected agencies that offer such training. This training should be offered after each election.

In the near future, we must re-examine the overall institutional structure of Pacifica. Such was the stated intention when the bylaws were revised a decade ago. It is clear to all that we must eliminate the internal barriers to the effective dialogue and work necessary to ensure the survival of our five stations in an increasingly challenging financial and technological climate.



### **3. Community Accountability**

A key requirement for rebuilding WBAI's listenership and winning back former donors will be ensuring that accountability for management and board decisions and actions are built into its operations from now on. That requires the following:

- Prompt, full disclosure by management, the LSB, and PNB of all policy decisions concerning sustainability strategies and plans. This should be done online, on the air, and at LSB and staff meetings, with time/space for feedback. Specifically, management and the Fundraiser/Project Manager should have a monthly on-air Report to the Listener – with plenty of time for call-ins.
- Prompt, full, ongoing publishing of WBAI budgets, financial projections, audits, and other financial records.
- Creation of a long-term structure to ensure prompt delivery of premiums to supporters, and to respond quickly to complaints registered through the special phone number and email address (building on the positive efforts of the Community Advisory Board and many listener volunteers). Also, regular updates on the air and online about progress in mailing out premiums, including calls for volunteers as needed.
- Periodic evaluations, fully disclosed publicly (and to the staff, LSB, CAB, and PNB), of the successes and failures of the sustainability plan.

## **Long-Term Sustainability: Findings and Recommendations (Summary)**

*Note: The detailed version of these findings and recommendations, with explanatory excerpts from interviews where relevant, will be included in the full-length version of this report, to be released at a later date. As noted below, some proposals are explained in the Proposed Immediate Fundraising Plan, pp. 7-8.*

### **1. The Vision of Pacifica/WBAI**

- In today's hyper-competitive media climate, WBAI needs to define its "niche" as distinct from National Public Radio.
- WBAI should move toward becoming a broad multi-media/ cultural/community center for those working for social justice.

### **2. Media Trends and WBAI's Challenges**

- WBAI's listenership and membership have significantly declined in recent years
- Arbitron ratings are problematic for measuring value of community radio and making programming decisions
- Arbitron ratings have been found to undercount listeners of color
- Media consolidation has narrowed area outlets for progressive and Black community voices
- Immigrants – particularly Latin Americans and Asians – are increasingly turning to radio.
- Terrestrial radio is declining as online access and mobile devices become the technologies of choice, especially among youth.
- The digital divide among different racial/ethnic groups is narrowing, especially among the young.
- Pacifica and WBAI have fallen far behind NPR in digital conversion.
- All these factors show the urgency of adopting a Long-Term Sustainability Plan.

### **3. Strategies for Long-Term Sustainability**

#### **a) On-air fundraising and pledge fulfillment**

N1 Address the content, cost, and number of premiums

N1.1 Return to more frequent use of political history/analysis/expose documentaries and books – a successful strategy in the past - vs. the overemphasis on personal health and conspiracy premiums.

N1.2 Stop using consumable health products that border on commercial promotion and could cause problems in case of medical complications.

N1.3 Reduce use of health and other premiums that cost the station more than 10% of pledge rate (a rule followed at KPFA)

N1.4 Reduce the huge number of premiums used in each pledge drive to simplify work of Call Center and WBAI staff who must order items.

N2 To enliven pledge drives, try the proposal by many producers for a **Radiothon** (Jerry Lewis-style marathon fundraiser with performers, intellectuals, and activists, and one generic premium); link with a live event, recorded to provide a later premium.

N3 Use more Pacifica Radio Archives recordings as premiums – to save money (\$3 per CD) and share the invaluable history stored there.

N4 Record community events (both WBAI-sponsored and others) and use them as premiums.

N5 Change methods of pitching

N5.1 Pair up two hosts who don't usually work together.

N5.2 Have producers join together in blocks of 4-5 hours.

N5.3 Make pitches shorter but more often in each hour – a successful method used at KPFA.

N6 Take more steps to increase pledge fulfillment.

N6.1 Expedite invoicing by using email addresses.

N6.2 Call more pledgers who after a time have not yet paid (see specific proposal in Immediate Fundraising Plan – Detailed Action Steps, p. 25).

N6.3 Institutionalize systems to ensure prompt delivery of premiums to donors, including allotting a percentage of pledged monies for payment for premiums.

## **b) Off-air fundraising**

Building on the station's current array of off-air fundraising strategies, with the help of a new position of Fundraiser/Project Manager, do the following:

- F1 Overall approach: Being nice to listeners is KEY
  - F1.1 Due to frequent turnover, constantly reintroduce the station to the listeners.
  - F1.2 Do more on-air promotion of the schedule to promote more listener loyalty.
  - F1.3 Use surveys, contests, and other free methods to invite listener involvement, to begin reversing the station's reputation for ignoring listeners.
  - F1.4 Thank donors in every way we can think of, as profusely as possible, which will lead to more donations.
- F2 Strengthen the WBAI membership and BAI Buddy programs.
  - F2.1 Reintroduce membership cards and obtain more discounts at cultural sites and businesses to enhance benefits for both members and BAI Buddies.
  - F2.2 Creatively promote membership and Buddies more actively on air and online, and set campaign goals.
  - F2.3 Send more frequent membership renewal notices and use email.
  - F2.4 Develop a special e-newsletter for BAI Buddies and major donors, as many non-profits do.
- F3 Hold donor appreciation events, including well-known guests. (See details in Immediate Fundraising Plan, p. 7)
- F4 Cultivate major donors (phone calls, meetings, parties) (See details in Immediate Fundraising Plan, p. 7)
- F5 Reach out to wealthy progressives who are not current donors.
- F6 Expand and publicize corporate match programs that allow employees to designate recipients of employer's donations to non-profits.
- F7 Enhance the fundraising potential of the WBAI website
  - Improve donation portals so it takes fewer clicks to reach them and the donor can type in the amount of their choice (urgent to do for Immediate Fundraising Plan, see p. 7).
  - Make the shopping cart more prominent, attractive and easier to use.

- F8 Use social media more consistently for fundraising.
- F9 Hold more local events with DVDs and CDs as premiums
  - F9.1 Hold a major annual dinner/awards ceremony honoring prominent people – raise large donations, attract publicity, promote the station (usually requires paid consultant to do months of preparation).
  - F9.2 Hold benefit concerts / music parties, based on producer contacts.
- F10 Encourage major donors to hold fundraising house parties for WBAI.
- F11 Set up program to seek bequests and planned giving programs.
  - F11.1 Have on-air series on planned giving (as KPFA did)
  - F11.2 Hold free community seminars on planned giving (as KPFA did)
- F12 Establish a WBAI Gift Annuity Program – for supporters to turn stale stocks into steady payments, a tax break, and a major gift to WBAI.
- F13 Reinstigate direct mail three times annually (for details, see Immediate Fundraising Plan, p. 8)
  - F13.1 Use internal BAI lists (mail and email)
  - F13.2 Obtain and use external lists from list brokers or (via swaps or rentals) progressive organizations
- F14 Seek donations from progressive organizations and unions
- F15 Establish organizational memberships (offering possible mailing list swaps, WBAI training in audio/web skills, help recording events, web posting of audio/video, etc.)
- F16 Expand grant-writing
- F17 Explore crowdfunding (e.g., indiegogo.com and kickstarter.com) for particular projects
- F18 Seek advertising on website and in e-newsletter (but not on air) from nonprofits and small businesses meeting ethical standards
- F19 Redirect rental income from WBAI's 2 side channels from National Office back to station (as per Oct. 2013 LSB motion)
- F20 Explore building coalition/campaign with public broadcasters renting antenna space on Empire State Building to push for discount rate. Competition from the new World Trade Center may create an opening.

- F21 Explore possibility of partnering with a college radio station to build HD (formerly “Hybrid Digital”) transmitter to create 2 extra channels (a 2008 proposal to WBAI by a college station could have yielded six-figure annual income but was vetoed by the National Office).
- F22 Develop capital campaign for several construction and acquisition projects (see p. 9-10), including seeking:
  - grants/building donations from the Mayor, Borough Presidents, City Council, State Legislature, and members of Congress
  - F22.1 private donor fundraising
  - F22.2 bank loans
  - F22.3 tax-exempt bond loan
  - F22.4 loans from Public Radio Fund ([www.publicradiocapital.org/fund/](http://www.publicradiocapital.org/fund/))

**c) Audience/membership expansion**

- M1 Plan advertising/promotion/outreach campaign
  - M1.1 Do station and program-level promotion via multi-media
  - M1.2 Advertise in diverse range of print publications
  - M1.3 Seek banner exchanges with progressive websites
  - M1.4 Strengthen WBAI website
    - M1.4.1 Beef up news/analysis with frequent updates from WBAI producers and other progressive news sources
    - M1.4.2 Make the site interactive, using comment sections, forums, surveys, and polls
  - M1.5 Revive the *Folio* (Program Guide) as a printed and online outreach/program promotion tool
  - M1.6 Develop coordinated social media campaign
  - M1.7 Investigate subway/bus ads and billboards
  - M1.8 Become media sponsor of music events, festivals and community events (providing mention on ads, program, stage, etc.)
  - M1.9 Regularly issue promotional materials (flyers, palm cards, brochures, bumper stickers) and set up outreach schedule at progressive events.
- M2 Review, expand and innovate programming

- M2.1 Restore local news by building partnerships with City University of New York and a network of tri-state journalism schools and the City Limits news website, backed by specialized grant-writing.
- M2.2 Restore local drive-time programming integrating partnerships proposed above and below, making news a key part of programs.
- M2.3 Build partnerships with community-based social change organizations to jointly do public-affairs, arts, and news programming and contribute to revitalized news and drive-time shows.
- M2.4 Periodically organize week-long series of issue-themed special programming.
- M2.5 Evaluate programs to determine effectiveness, community service, needed resources/training, possible changes.
- M2.6 Record lectures and discussions at universities, cultural institutions, and community events for later airing.
- M2.7 Support students and producers in creating radio documentaries.
- M2.8 Train producers for improved programming and technical skills to improve air sound.

#### **d) Fully Harnessing Digital Technology**

- T1 Expand digital distribution methods with focused marketing, promotion of Audioport offerings, and use of Public Radio Exchange.
- T2 Publicize the Pacifica app (with a WBAI channel) online and on air
- T3 Create a WBAI-specific app and publicize it
- T4 Redesign WBAI online audio archives so it is much easier to access segments and search for particular topics and names
- T5 Plan for creation of WBAI Internet channels/streams based on particular types of interests in news, issues, music, and languages

#### **e) Involvement of Youth and the Question of Power**

- Y1 Set up high school partnerships and try innovative times of segments.
- Y2 Build relationships with departments and programs at City College and other area colleges/universities
- Y3 Create a welcoming climate for young people at the station.

Y4 Relinquish air time to young people sharing WBAI's mission as they are trained.



# **Appendix A:**

## **Proposed Immediate Fundraising Plan: Detailed Action Steps, Budget, and Goal Monitoring Document**

*Note: Several steps below are simultaneous, not sequential.*

### **Phase I Action Steps - Within 60 days**

1. Develop implementation plan for 60- and 90-day efforts: Set goals and objectives, utilizing Goal Monitoring Document with week-by-week work plan (see template in appendix). Identify persons accountable for each part of plan. Develop script for conversations with major donors, including specific “asks” (such as hiring fundraising/project-management consultant and postage/printing for fund appeal). (2 weeks)
2. Arrange for WBAI webmaster to add *direct* donations portal on wbai.org – separate from give2wbai.org – to make donations easier (requiring fewer clicks). (2 weeks)
3. Implement WBAI Recovery and Sustainability Fund as separate internal account **restricted for revenue-producing projects in this plan, as well as implementation of the Long-Term Sustainability Plan.** The Fund will be strictly monitored, with a detailed accounting statement published every 90 days. (1 week)
4. Generate list of major donors and send premiums to those who are owed them – or send donor a letter with date by which requested or substitute premium will be sent. (3 weeks)
5. Recruit and train six carefully-chosen volunteers with fundraising experience to do outreach to major donors, with specific fundraising goals. (2 weeks)
  - a. Call identified major donors (with script) – Start with highest donors, and work through lists as time allows. The approach:
    - Thank them for their most recent donation
    - Identify and resolve any unresolved premium issues
    - Invite them to the station for a personal tour and lunch
    - Invite them to a donor-appreciation event later in year
    - If receptive but unable to meet in person:
      - Let them know what WBAI’s specific needs are
      - Ask for new donations earmarked to the Recovery and Sustainability Fund.
  - b. Arrange donor visits to the station followed by lunch (2-3 visits per volunteer per week; total of 25 lunches); ask for donations and/or loans/loan guarantees. (3 weeks)

***Estimated cost - \$3,000 (for lunches)***
6. For selected major donors, arrange station visits and lunches to focus on requesting a bridge loan or loan guarantee to enable rapid hiring of fundraising/project-management consultant.

7. Follow up on donor contacts with thank-you email or letter. Ensure that all promised premiums have been mailed to donors. (3 weeks)
8. Work with volunteers to call \$150+ pledgers within 2-4 months of invoice, seeking pledge fulfillment and resolving any premium complaints. Use script, checklist, and recordkeeping protocol. (ongoing)
9. Seek, screen candidates for, and hire consultant (as funds become available) to coordinate emergency fundraising and begin planning and implementing long-term sustainability projects. (3 weeks)

***Estimated cost: \$4,000-\$5,000 (one month, 20 hours/week, as funds become available)***

10. Meet with progressive foundations, banks, and/or credit unions seeking bridge loans or loan guarantees totaling \$50,000-\$100,000 for one year to cover expenses of WBAI Recovery and Sustainability Fund (with specific repayment plan based on current financial prospects). (3 weeks)
11. Prepare and submit grant proposal for fundraising/project-management consultant (\$25,000 as seed money – usually the maximum that foundation staff can approve without board review). (3 weeks)
12. Clean up station's donor list – use outside service such as [melissadata.com](http://melissadata.com) to:
  - a. compare against USPS's NCOA (National Change of Address) and MCOA (Multisource Change of Address) lists, and update lists
  - b. identify and eliminate duplicates
 (1 week)

***Estimated cost: \$250-400 (depending on size of list submitted)***

13. Prepare for fund-appeal mailing/emailing (2 weeks) (see list of specific steps below)
14. Begin contacting local and national progressive organizations to inquire about swapping mailing/email lists and ongoing relationships. (2 weeks)

### **Phase II Action Steps - 60-90 days**

1. Continue working with volunteers to call \$150+ pledgers seeking pledge fulfillment. (ongoing)
2. Continue contacting progressive organizations re: swapping lists. (2 weeks)

- b. expand work of fundraising/project-management consultant (4 weeks)

***Estimated cost: \$8,000-\$10,000 (one month, 40 hours/week, as funds become available)***

- 3. Send out email appeal with video link to WBAI donors and acquired names. (1 week)

- 4. Complete 12 additional tours/lunches with donors. (4 weeks)

***Estimated cost - \$1,440***

- 5. Plan and hold donor appreciation event (preceded by reception with prominent people for \$100 donation), with slide show and entertainment. Auction off donated items at event. Proceeds to go to WBAI Recovery and Sustainability Fund.

***Estimated costs:***

- ***\$500 (room rental)***
- ***\$750-\$1,250 (food & drink for special reception)***
- ***\$1,000-\$1,500 (food & drink for main event)***

### **Specific Steps For Fund-appeal Mailing/Emailing**

1. Create plan for mailing appeal letters (using list broker or mailing house) and for sending email appeal with video link.
2. Draft, review, and produce two fund-appeal letters (one for current WBAI donors, one for acquired names) and well-designed thank-you flyer with invitation to donor appreciation event.
3. Draft, review, and produce fundraising appeals for email, Twitter, and Facebook (including photos and link to 1-2-minute YouTube video to be produced by volunteer).
4. Identify list of all donors over past 2 years, but exclude those with undelivered premiums; determine timetable to mail their premiums. If funds are limited, cross-match overall list with available email addresses (under-\$500 donors only) and send those appeals via email.
5. Outreach to local and national progressive organizations re: list swapping and relationship-building:
  - a. Ask producers to forward suggestions with contact information
  - b. Check free lists of nonprofits at [www.melissadata.com](http://www.melissadata.com)
  - c. Begin calling/visiting nearby organizations about building ongoing relationship, starting with swapping mailing/email lists.
  - d. Develop a follow-up plan targeting organizations elsewhere in tri-state area to seek potential relationships.
6. Print and mail (using mailing house and/or list broker) fund-appeal letter and thank-you/event invitation to all WBAI donors over past two years, plus names obtained via swaps. (Note: For past national and local station mailings to longtime supporters, the return rate was 10%, with average gift of \$50-60. Given the large number of WBAI members who are new, estimate 5-7% return rate for member lists, with average gift of \$50-60. Return rate for swapped lists from progressive organizations has been similar.)
7. If test mailing of 1,000 addresses drawn from progressive organization's swapped list has a strong return, prepare for larger mailing to names on that list after Phase II.
8. Three weeks after mailing, send out email appeal with video link to WBAI donors and acquired names.

**Estimated Budget: Immediate Fundraising Plan  
("Pay as You Go")**

*(Note: Projected incomes are estimated ranges based on historical experiences at Pacifica.)*

<u>Phase I - First 60 Days</u>	<u>Low Estimate</u>	<u>High Estimate</u>
<b>Income</b>		
Grant for fundraising/project-management consultant	\$25,000	\$25,000
Major Donor Outreach		
Phone Outreach	2,500	3,750
25 donations over phone – via credit card or check @ \$100-\$150		
Personal visits/lunches	6,250	7,500
25 donations during tours/lunches @ \$250-\$300		
	<u>8,750</u>	<u>11,250</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<u>33,750</u>	<u>36,250</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Consultant (one month, 20 hours/week, if funds allow)	4,000	5,000
Personal visits and lunches (25 @ \$60 x 2 people per lunch)	3,000	3,000
Mailing list clean up	<u>250</u>	<u>400</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>7,250</u>	<u>8,400</u>
<b>Phase I Net</b>	<u><u>\$26,500</u></u>	<u><u>\$27,850</u></u>

<b>Phase II - 61-90 Days</b>	<b>Low Estimate</b>	<b>High Estimate</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Major Donor Outreach		
Phone Outreach	\$1,200	\$1,800
12 donations over phone – via credit card or check @ \$100-\$150		
Personal visits/lunches	3,000	3,600
12 donations during tours/lunches @ \$250-\$300		
	4,200	5,400
Donations from mailings		
From WBAI list – 20,000 letters @ 5-7% @ \$50-60	50,000	84,000
From progressive org - 1,000 letters @ 5-7% @ \$50-60	2,500	4,200
Donations at/after donor appreciation event		
Special reception – 40-50 @ \$100	4,000	5,000
Main event – no charge, but silent auction & follow-up calls – 80-100 @ \$50-\$75	4,000	7,500
	8,000	12,500
<b>Total income</b>	64,700	106,100
<b>Expenses</b>		
Fundraising/project management consultant (one month, 40 hours/week, if funds allow)	8,000	10,000
Fund Appeal Mailings (printing, processing and postage)		
To WBAI's last-2-year-donor list (20,000 letters @ \$1)	20,000	20,000
To progressive org's list (1,000 letters @ \$1)	1,000	1,000
Lunches with major doors (12 @ \$60 for 2 people)	1,440	1,440

<b>Phase II - 61-90 Days</b>	<b>Low Estimate</b>	<b>High Estimate</b>
<b>Expenses (Continued)</b>		
Donor appreciation event		
Room rental	500	500
Food & drink for special reception (50 people @ \$15-25)	750	1,250
Food & drink for main event (100 people @ \$10-\$15)	1,000	1,500
	<u>2,250</u>	<u>3,250</u>
 <b>Total expenses</b>	 32,690	 35,690
 <b>Phase II Net</b>	 <u><u>\$32,010</u></u>	 <u><u>\$70,410</u></u>
 <b>Phase I + II Net</b>	 <u><u>\$58,510</u></u>	 <u><u>\$98,260</u></u>