U.S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

Challenges Facing the Broadcasting Board of Governors

What GAO Found

The Broadcasting Board of Governors has responded to a disparate organizational structure and marketing challenges by developing a new strategic approach to broadcasting which, among other things, emphasizes reaching large audiences through modern broadcasting techniques. The existence of five separate broadcast entities has led to overlapping language services, duplication of program content, redundant newsgathering and support services, and difficulties coordinating broadcast efforts. The Board’s new approach seeks to overcome these problems by treating all broadcast entities as part of a “single system” it oversees to ensure that broadcast content meets the needs of individual markets. Other challenges include a lack of target audiences within broadcast markets, outmoded program formats and styles, poor signal delivery in many areas, and low audience awareness in several major markets. The Board’s approach calls for new initiatives (such as Radio Sawa broadcasts to the Middle East) and existing language services to systematically address these deficiencies.

To streamline its operations, the Board has used its annual language service review to address such issues as how resources should be allocated among language services on the basis of their priority and impact, what degree of overlap should exist among services, and whether services should be eliminated because they have fulfilled their broadcast mission. Since 1999, the Board has identified more than $50 million in actual or potential savings through this process.

In response to our recommendations on the Board’s strategic planning and performance management efforts, the Board revised its strategic plan to make reaching large audiences in strategic markets the centerpiece of its performance reporting system. The Board also added broadcaster credibility and audience awareness to its array of performance measures and plans to add a measure of whether VOA is meeting its mandated mission.