

Pan Caribbean Radio News and Current Affairs System

Caribbean Center for Development Administration

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Summary

Demerara Waves Media Inc; an incorporated entity under the Laws of Guyana, proposes to extend its operations beyond the borders of Guyana to provide a low-cost and efficient means of disseminating news and current affairs content to the Caribbean and the large Diaspora. Though our primary focus will be on issues and events in the Caribbean Community, we intend to keep our readers and listeners abreast of major developments in Latin America.

The principal aim is to maximize the application of modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the gathering and distribution of fresh, accurate and timely content. Technological convergence in today's world guarantees both high technical quality and immediacy in the acquisition and transmission of data and other types of information; facilities that Demerara Waves Media Inc. intends to further harness.

Demerara Waves Media Inc. will rely on the repository of trained and experienced regional journalists across the Caribbean to inform the region about the latest developments on a variety of issues. Such information, wherever possible, is expected to aid the various publics in making rational decisions.

The successful commencement and sustainable provision of Caribbean content shall, however, depend on adequate financing for human resources and technical capacity. Our aim is to reduce or eliminate our reliance on grant-funding by gradually commercializing the revenue base through aggressive marketing and advertising.

We, therefore, commend this proposal to you for your kind consideration in the provision of financing. Through financial support, together we can achieve our mutual objectives for the development of the Caribbean.

Intellectual Property *The concepts, ideas and related strategies, being the intellectual property of DWM's Board of Directors and its principal advisor, shall not be adapted, reproduced or implemented without the prior consent of the entity.*

1. Context

Demerara Waves Media Inc. (“DWM”) is incorporated under the laws of Guyana to engage exclusively in the practice of journalism and broadcasting. The incorporation is part of the evolution of various stages of the entity, which ranged from initially a blog then a website and more recently an Internet Radio/Webcaster. The natural culmination is now as a major provider of news updates and breaking news in Guyana.

Our mission statement is: “To deliver timely news and current affairs content in a cost-effective manner, aimed at educating and informing peoples through a professional medium that adheres to the highest standards of journalism.”

Currently, DWM is Guyana’s only Online provider of same-day news updates and breaking news, guaranteeing readers fresh content throughout the day rather than have them wait on evening newscasts or tomorrow’s newspapers. The vast majority of our news content is delivered not only on the website and through E-mail alerts, but also through the Social Media networks of Facebook and Twitter. As a value-added, we are a periodic live audio webcaster/ Internet Radio on current affairs content and developments. This includes in-depth coverage of important matters before the courts, conferences and discussion programmes. To ensure that some of the audio content is available to site-visitors at their own convenience, we offer them as podcasts.

While DWM’s content is currently largely confined to Guyana, our articles are often used and credited by other Online and traditional newspapers and radio stations across the Caribbean. This is an example of our reach and input in the information dissemination community; and further highlights the untapped potential of DWM.

2. Impetus for Expansion

Guyanese at home and in the Diaspora have been provided with a service that has been well-received and a growing staple of the news diet. Now Demerara Waves is poised to expand its target audience to the wider Caribbean. This is accordance with our primary objective of educating and informing the Caribbean peoples through news reports, special features interviews and analyses on a wide variety of subjects. DWM believes that a well-informed Caribbean populace both in the region and the far flung Diaspora can form the nucleus of a significant catalyst in forging true regional unity. This will aid in the pursuit of our common goals through the Caribbean Community (Caricom) Single Market and Economy. In addition and for the first time, readers and listeners will be treated to a regular and wider variety of news from Latin American countries that will be of direct and more than passing interest to not only decision-makers, but the broad masses of Caribbean peoples.

Further, there is dire need to fill the void left by the closure of the Caribbean Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a development that has exacerbated the decades-old indigenous Caribbean efforts. The instances of the Caribbean's direct and indirect reliance on extra-regional sources for funding and information have also reiterated the imperative for the Caribbean to have a low-cost and effective means of information and public awareness education, and ready, seamless access to both.

3. Target Audience

The intended audience is expected to cover a geographical area with 7.5 million people in Caricom, Associate Caricom States and St. Maarten. This does not include the Diaspora in the United States, Canada and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom (UK). The age-range is expected to be between 17 and 65 years old, most of whom already share common historical, cultural and social bonds and similar interests in news and current affairs. In large measure, the great masses of Caribbean peoples also aspire to achieve almost identical personal and national goals and aspirations.

This demographic and mind-set are key to the extent that youths can and do influence their contemporaries; while older persons are often opinion leaders and influencers in their communities and organisations.

4. Format:

Through technological convergence with conventional terrestrial radio stations in the Caribbean and North America, DWM proposes to broadcast two bulletins of news five days per week. These shall be complemented with Text News updates and Podcasts of radio news bulletins. Consideration is also being given to a once monthly panel discussion on a topic of regional interest, among other things.

The duration of the news bulletins shall be five minutes (5':00") in the mornings and fifteen minutes (15':00") in the evenings. The format shall include, for the most part, reports from a network of correspondents across the Caribbean, direct interviews with decision-makers, other personalities in the news and the ordinary people whose voices are seldom heard. As stated earlier, excerpts from the main news stories will be posted on the website as text news, in addition to podcasts of the programmes. The emphasis will be on fast-moving, timely, accurate, relevant and air and balanced reporting on all issues.

5. Human Resources

The Guyana-based operations of DWM will continue to be managed by a small core of proven personnel. It will be responsible for coordinating and receiving coverage from a team of tried and tested journalists in the region who had been working for the BBC Caribbean Service up to the time of its closure in March, 2011. Moreover, DWM intends to utilize experts in a variety of fields from universities and regional institutions to share their analyses on issues and events of a topical nature. The Board of Directors will constantly review our operations with a view to making them more efficient and effective. There will be four (4) editorial, production and technical staff members supported by a versatile administrative assistant. The network of freelance correspondents and contributors will ideally number fifteen (15).

Within one year of our Caribbean operations, DWM intends to increase its permanent in-house staff complement by three (3) to include two journalists and one studio engineer. Marketing and advertising will be outsourced to service providers.

6. Cost and Sustainability

The total annual operational cost is budgeted to be a minimum of two hundred and seventy-five thousand and eighty-eight United States dollars (US\$275,088). This amount does not include the cost of occasional intra-regional travel to cover major issues and events. Members of the corporate community, other than those who may finance our news programmes, shall be approached to underwrite any portion of this proposed expenditure. The main components of the budget are:

- 1) Human resources including payments to freelance news correspondents
- 2) News agency subscription
- 3) Dedicated Internet Server
- 4) Headquarters Lease Expense
- 5) Telecommunications.

While reaching out to the corporate community, and anticipating some level of financial support from this source, DWM Inc. believes it necessary to solicit, and hereby do, your financial support in the full amount of the budgeted operational costs. This amount is in keeping with our objective of being a low-cost operation that yields maximum efficiency, reach and impact through the application of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in the acquisition and dissemination of news and current affairs content. It is expected that through aggressive marketing, attractive content and proliferating reach that DWM shall attract substantial intermediate and future sponsorship, as part of efforts to diversify its sources of revenue.

The sustainability of DWM Inc.'s Caribbean operations is closely linked to the provision of adequate and reliable grant funding and/or advertising revenue. The recent experiences of other indigenous Caribbean efforts have demonstrated tangibly that cash-flow

difficulties result in correspondents not being paid promptly and eventually reducing or ceasing their contributions. The consequence is a significant qualitative and quantitative depreciation of content, ultimately resulting in diminished value and demand for the news products.

7. Next Steps

Consequent upon the acquisition of financing, the following will occur:

1. radio stations in the Caribbean and the Diaspora will be advised of the date of commencement of DWM's newscasts to afford them an opportunity to amend their broadcast schedules
2. Correspondents will be recruited on a free-lance basis and provided with guidelines, expectations, and terms and conditions. At DWM's headquarters in Guyana
3. Three (3) additional persons will be recruited at DWM's headquarters in Guyana
4. DWM will subscribe to a leading Latin American news provider to satisfy the objective of being the news and information link between Latin America and the Caribbean and
5. We shall be upgrading our servers to ensure greater reliability and stability in our delivery to a much larger audience.

8. Advertising

Advertising and marketing costs will be minimal because subscriber radio stations in nearly all the territories will be relaying the programmes to their domestic audiences. During the programmes, listeners will be urged to visit DWM's website for daily news updates. The introduction and holding of soft-launches such as cocktail receptions will occur in several major Caribbean capitals, as well as New York and Toronto; interested parties and related entities will be approached with the aim of acquiring and expanding local news coverage.

9. Benefits

Notwithstanding the visual advantage of television, radio still remains the most cost-effective means of mass communication to a large number of persons. Unsurprisingly, technological convergence between Internet Radio/Webcasting and terrestrial AM/FM radio will drastically cut transmission costs compared to costs associated with the rental of satellite time. For instance, one hour of satellite time can cost at least four hundred United States dollars (US\$400) which is much more than the monthly cost of Internet Audio webcasting. For these reasons, DWM, and by extension Caricom will be poised to demonstrate regionally, and even globally that, despite its relatively small size, it can educate and inform itself and its constituent members through the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to gather and disseminate news on a real-time basis.

The benefits to the Caribbean will be:

- a) A more publicly educated and informed Caribbean populace to enable them to engage in rational decision-making
- b) The fostering of a greater appreciation of and involvement in the Caribbean Community (Caricom) Single Market and Economy through public education and information
- c) Bridging the information gap between the Caribbean and major Latin American countries that both border and are major trading and political partners with the region
- d) Providing critical information-education support during times of disasters and similar environmental episodes
- e) Fostering and stimulating interest as well as an appreciation for the economic, business, political, social and cultural realities of the Caribbean and its neighbours
- f) Engaging the Caribbean Diaspora in decision-making and welfare of their home-region
- g) Stimulating interest by the Caribbean Diaspora in investing their human and financial capital in their home-region

10. Measurement and Metrics

The success of DWM's Pan Caribbean Radio News service will be evaluated and gauged by the extent of feedback from readers and listeners to the website and the management of subscriber radio stations. We will also measure the number of listeners utilizing tools that will advise us of the geographical locations and numbers of listeners.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, DWM Inc. wishes to assure that it will share periodic feedback from listeners and readers to the grant-financier and/or sponsor. We are confident that together we can significantly contribute to the creation and development of a sustainable Caribbean news system whose integrity will be comparable to those that we have long considered credible news sources.