Improving Value for Money in Media Monitoring Services

Principles

1. Media Monitoring is a daily service for agencies intended to provide recent and relevant media articles that match defined search parameters. While needs and demands will differ from agency to agency, the introduction of some simple practices can assist to reduce and limit the costs associated with the service. Key areas in which agencies may improve services include identification of actual needs; refining of key words; delivery; education; user pays and sharing of services.

Practice

Need to have vs. nice to have

1. The cost of media monitoring services is proportional to the breadth of the search terms used to capture information. Agencies should seek to limit monitoring to those information sources that are relevant to the agency as the capture of unnecessary information increases the cost of the service.

Key words

2. The number of key words can often be substantially reduced without an appreciable reduction in the quality of the service. Some agencies have advised that they have cut the number key words by as much as 70 per cent with no appreciable loss of quality of information. Keywords can also be qualified to restrict searches to major stories and not be included in passing mentions. In addition, monitoring of key words may result in providers crediting the cost of irrelevant content, where identified, back to the agency.

Format and frequency

3. Format and frequency in which press clippings are provided are key parameters of the service. Clippings can be provided as hard copy or electronically. Each of these services adds to the information, but also to the complexity and cost of the service. Archiving media clips within the agency will also remove additional costs for recalling clips.

Contract Structure

4. Agencies need to consider what style of contract may best suit their needs. For example, would a contract with a flat rate covering licence fees for a set number of licences within the agency be more cost effective than paying for individual clips and key words?
Education

5. Many staff would be unaware of the cost incurred each time an article is accessed online. Informing staff of this cost as well as ensuring that access is limited to relevant staff can help to reduce costs. Consideration should also be given to informing line areas of the range of free information/news services available on the internet and encouraging the use of those resources.

User pays

6. Avoid media monitoring being a wholly corporate funded activity where appropriate. While common key words can be charged to a corporate expense, topics specific to a business group should be back charged to that group. This provides a useful mechanism for users to focus on the value of the service and ensures an interest in keeping key words relevant. The provision of media monitoring services to Ministers’ offices should also be costed and monitored and provided to the Ministers’ office on a quarterly basis.

Sharing of media services between departments

7. Economies of scale may be achieved by two or more agencies approaching the market together (known as clustering) where they share common interests, or by joining the contractual arrangement or standing offer arrangement of another agency. There are also opportunities to gain efficiencies by agencies sharing particular aspects of the service.

Reporting Requirements

8. Agencies should ensure all media monitoring contracts are reported in accordance with Commonwealth procurement publishing obligations.