
The Brain Trust Initiative

A vision to unleash the power of digital media as
a force for change across Sub-saharan Africa

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Abstract

Media in sub-Saharan Africa is at a crossroads. Journalism as a change agent within sub-Saharan Africa has lagged, due primarily to the lack of commercially vibrant media and editorially independent media institutions. This has weakened sub-Saharan Africa's democratic governance processes and its socio-economic development.

The purpose of this document is to propose the design of a **Brain Trust** that would help create for sub-Saharan Africa a dynamic, stable, and financially sound digital ecosystem spanning the mediums of print, radio, and television.

A critical mission of the **Brain Trust** would be to unleash the creative potential and reach of sub-Saharan Africa's state-owned and private sector media industries and to create a streamlined and efficient digital content publishing infrastructure that would generate culturally uplifting content with which Africans and people of African descent can identify.

A priority for the **Brain Trust** would be to develop a sound policy framework that would enable state-owned and private sector media enterprises across Africa to transition from an entrenched analogue operational infrastructure to a converged digital ecosystem. Collaboration between the state-owned and private sector media would ensure sustainability for both approaches.

To guide the successful implementation of its vision and mission and to ensure a neutral, research-based Center, the **Brain Trust** would be launched in collaboration one of the world's leading universities. The Brain Trust would undertake research and policy-focused initiatives aimed at unlocking the financial and intellectual resources needed to build a commercially viable sub-Saharan African digital ecosystem.

Significant institutional and foundation support would be required to realize this objective. The returns on this support - a more learned, prosperous, united, and democratic sub-Saharan Africa - would far exceed the investment, with the dividends extending decades into the future.

Section One: A vision for change

1.1 Introduction

Africa is endowed with rich reserves of natural resources including diamonds, iron ore, gold, sugar, salt, cobalt, uranium, copper, bauxite, silver, petroleum, cocoa beans, forest, tropical fruits, solar energy, arable farmlands and waterways. Such resources in other areas of the world have ensured a firm and stable economic base.

Yet, due mostly to an intellectually bankrupt nation-building infrastructure inherited from its colonial past, and to decades of gerontocracies, the continent is plagued by inefficiency and malfeasance. Most countries south of the Sahara are presiding over an underperforming economy; are lacking in progressive information ecosystems; and are heavily indebted to the North. Many are increasingly turning to India and China for economic assistance.

A “Fourth Estate” that is able to effectively mitigate the political, economic and social challenges faced by sub-Saharan Africa is urgently required. The challenges include good governance, economic growth, developing human capital, promoting healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyles, nurturing an informed and empowered citizenry, and deepening the roots of democracy and political participation. There are many in Africa who lack a strong sense of identity and have been deprived of constructive mentoring in democracy. Many of these are under 30 years of age. Hundreds of millions of young Africans lack a public-sphere imagination. This is an enormous opportunity to lift up the new generation of Africans.

History tells us that the greatest civilizations on Earth flourished because of an unshakeable confidence in the creative power of their belief systems and their myths. Africa’s compelling folktales and the insights they convey have historically been undervalued and uncelebrated. Yet, African cultural heritage weaves a complex, rich and colorful fabric of deep knowledge and wisdom; a heritage that must be elevated to the forefront of a new indigenous African media system that will work to educate and empower people living on the continent. With a surge in the growth of accessible technology, mobile handheld devices have the potential of becoming an electronic classroom, bridging the gaps between haves and have-nots, rural and urban, literate and illiterate, male and female, young and old. In an age where market demand is what underscores the economic viability of all forms of media, including public service broadcasting, Africa urgently needs a form of privatized, digitized public service media which offers exciting content that entertains, educates and informs.

Within this context, public service media could play a powerful role in shaping the thoughts and aspirations of sub-Saharan Africans. Public service media, including aspirational educational programming, have a unique role to play in Africa; a role that cannot be quantified in monetary terms alone.

But, given the entrenched system of political patronage on which the media industrial complex across Africa continues to evolve, it is highly improbable that its indigenously driven media industries can achieve economic and editorial independence without assistance. The indigenous media is persistently undermined by weak guarantees of press freedom and the vulnerability that comes from depending on government for revenue.

Africa's indigenous media needs to be restructured and recapitalized and aesthetically re-engineered into a conduit through which hope is restored, civic responsibility rebuilt, and citizens duly equipped with life-coping skills.

Ownership by proxy has also given those African governments that are generally opposed to press freedom undue influence over the media, and the politically powerful in most African countries have resisted the rise of a prosperous and editorially independent Fourth Estate. Currently, only a handful of international media entities, such as the BBC, have the economic resources to drive Africa's narrative. That narrative would be different, and stronger, if indigenous media outlets had the resources and freedom to take the lead.

1.2 The Landscape

Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a mobile telecommunications revolution as mobile phone subscriptions have jumped from 90 million in 2007 to an estimated 930 million by 2019. With the projected widespread deployment of affordable broadband, a market is emerging with hundreds of millions of smartphone and tablet users consuming live television, catch-up services, social networks and other media services across 3G, 4G and eventually 5G networks. Within the next five years, when it is expected that Africa will have a strong and low priced continent-wide terrestrial broadband signal, it is anticipated that there will be more than 400 million 4G and 5G mobile television viewers.¹ End users of mobile phone technologies, which have outpaced other forms of communications infrastructure on the continent, will account for almost one-tenth of African GDP by 2020. The mobile sector alone contributed \$100 billion to sub-Saharan Africa's economy in 2014 and is expected to account for three times that in 2020 as handsets and data become more affordable.²

In expectation of increasing their respective market shares, the largest multi-country operators within the sub region – including Vodaphone, Airtel, Orange and MTN – are actively investing in new delivery technologies to drive a differentiating growth model in which data (and information technology), mobile banking, media and mobile advertising will become the main drivers of revenue growth. Consequently, the African sub-region – including Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania – will continue to attract significant levels of growth capital that will be channeled into the construction of a strong digital ecosystem

¹ GSMA Intelligence, "The Mobile Economy: Sub-Saharan Africa 2018" (GSMA, 2018), <https://www.gsmainelligence.com/research/?file=809c442550e5487f3b1d025fdc70e23b&download>.

² GSMA Intelligence, "The Mobile Economy 2018" (GSMA, 2018), <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-Mobile-Economy-2018.pdf>.

comprising affordable internet broadband, cheap smartphones and data services, terrestrial last mile connectivity, digital terrestrial television infrastructure, and satellite-based direct-to-home television services.³

Already, the continent's leading mobile network operators are actively engaged in the process of seeking cost-effective business models by which each can meet its customers' increasing demand for data-intensive activities such as web browsing and streaming video. However, unlike more advanced markets where the goal of incremental profitability can be achieved within a relatively short acquisition cycle, Africa's content production and delivery markets remain underdeveloped.

Outside of Africa, a typical strategy for a mobile network operator would be the acquisition of direct-to-home television/digital terrestrial television platforms and established content publishers with an assured customer base and/or strong brand recognition. In essence, the bench mark for each acquisition is whether customers can consume readily available content via simple feature phones for which an acquisition driven mobile network operator would provide affordable data packages. Whereas in Africa, the challenge which mobile network operators are reluctant to tackle is the lack of a high-volume library of compelling African-originated content, which can be readily monetized.

1.3 The Opportunity

With the advent of digital technology, television media—which was once viewed as an elite phenomenon throughout rural Africa—is no longer a luxury. Therefore, an excellent opportunity exists for redefining the place of media in the continent's development. Thus far, the majority of nations across the continent - including Nigeria and South Africa - have failed to create a holistic business strategy to guide the country's switch to a commercially viable digital ecosystem.

Consequently, a handful of international and African owned digital media operators, including the Vivendi Group, MultiChoice, Econet and Star Times, have sought to create a strong, market-driven alternative multimedia market. Nonetheless, it is the state-owned (and a select number of privately-owned and indigenous-media) enterprises across sub-Saharan Africa that are still sitting on a vast economic opportunity that can be harnessed to entertain, educate and inform hundreds of millions of new African digital media consumers.

In essence, the indigenous African media, comprising both state-controlled and privately owned entities, together represent a powerful media complex whose commercial profitability and relevance to the economic, cultural and social advancement of the African continent has not yet been tapped.

An efficiently organized effort to unleash and maximize the full potential of the African continent's electronic media industries is lacking. The indigenous media

³ For more on the spread of broadband across the world see James Cashel's upcoming paper published by the Shorenstein Center, "Broadband Everywhere: Media Implications of Internet Access for the Next Three Billion."

need an effective intellectual organization to structure a vision that can attract significant long-term development capital.

There is a unique opportunity for a think tank with ample convening power to devise a compelling investment framework that would ensure the active transformation of Africa's indigenous content publishing and distribution infrastructure that would inform the creation of culturally inspiring Afrocentric content targeting the African and Diaspora markets.

As a think-tank, the Brain Trust would gain strong support from Africa's indigenous media if it is able to:

Assist in the development of culturally iconic, subscription-based television brands that are oriented towards low-income mass market households. More importantly, there is a huge opportunity to establish a public-service-oriented digital content production and distribution ecosystem that is efficient, affordable, platform agnostic and supportive of the monetization of content. Indigenous African media owners, including its state-owned enterprises, are seeking to build an ecosystem that would ensure the participation of all Africa's public and private broadcasting corporations and within which they can each operate profitably. As a whole, Africa's broadcasters are sitting on a vast commercial opportunity to entertain, educate, and inform tens of millions of low-cost television subscribers. Turning this opportunity into concrete economic benefit, however, requires a commitment from investors who have a long-term focus and are supported by enforceable legislation for protecting and securing intellectual property rights associated with the generation and distribution of new African content across multiple platforms.

- Advocate and lobby for the creation and establishment of a commercial African Digital Content and Media Investment Fund, much like other nations with a strong cultural insistence such as Canada's Council for the Arts Grants, to assist Africa's burgeoning digital media entrepreneurs. There is a significant demand for and a huge opportunity to invest in the production of culturally engaging content. The goal would be to support the digital transformation of African societies while retaining interconnectivity and diversity, and to rekindle Africa's spirit of cultural creativity by establishing robust and creatively inspiring, Afrocentric, digital content-publishing brands. To ensure a continuous flow of quality content that is made by and for Africans and peoples of African descent, the think tank would need to provide empirical data to international development financiers and private equity investors on the market size and potential commercial value of quality Afrocentric content. The think tank would also point progressive African governments to the financial value that culturally inspiring content can generate in the digital age. For Africans on the continent and across the Diaspora, African cultural heritage contains a yet-to-be-unleashed rich and colorful fabric of deep wisdom.
- Highlight through empirical research how a commercially viable public service television system can be tapped to enlighten African viewers by

utilizing an independently funded African network of transformed state-controlled and private sector media to “infotain” and “edutain.” The immediacy of television and the way in which it can so convincingly convey stories can be tapped to restore the aspirational virtues and integrity of Africa’s past civilizations and to motivate a new generation of Africans who are desperate for social, economic, and political change.

Within these contexts, the think tank would aim to provide the necessary intellectual infrastructure and knowledge tools to facilitate a cohesive, cross-sector stakeholder buy-in encompassing academic research scholars, traditional and digital media entrepreneurs, and radio, print and television journalists. The unique selling proposition of the Brain Trust would be its ability to attract intelligent minds to deliberate on the best methodology by which a tailored set of design-thinking tools could be applied to generate investor confidence in sub-Saharan Africa’s emerging digital content publishing industry. The think tank would also seek to create a financially sound model by which Africa’s emerging digital ecosystem could be developed into a potent catalyst for effective political governance and economic change. Perhaps most importantly, the think tank would be well positioned to exhaustively explore how Sub-Saharan Africa’s lucrative smartphone-led data revolution can be efficiently exploited to enable the establishment of a financially robust digital media environment that is also editorially independent.

Section Two: What is the Brain Trust and how would it work?

The Brain Trust would be an Afrocentric digital media policy and content innovation think tank that would seek to undertake extensive research with the goal of facilitating the creation of an independent and commercially sound digital ecosystem and public service content hub. The broad goals of the Brain Trust would be:

1. To ensure the creation of an economically viable Afrocentric digital ecosystem that would project a positive and culturally inspiring image of Africans and peoples of African descent, and
2. To address the absence of an editorially liberated public service media across post-colonial Africa that is focused on the effective emancipation of Africa in the 21st Century.

Africa's second telecommunications revolution opens up limitless possibilities to accelerate the pace of social and economic change in Africa through informative reporting on health, education, government services, business approaches, human rights, and other areas. Africa's failing and/or challenged nation states cannot prosper without embracing the paradigm shift that the second telecommunication revolution will bring. The Brain Trust can assist in that process by developing progressive policy frameworks in areas such as intellectual property rights, press freedom, and telecom regulation.

A critical mission of the Brain Trust would be to unleash the creative potential and reach of sub-Saharan Africa's state-owned and private sector media industries and to create a streamlined and efficient digital content publishing infrastructure that would generate culturally uplifting content that Africans and peoples of African descent can readily and easily relate to. Consequently, a priority for the Brain Trust would be to develop a policy framework that is underpinned by a robust financial strategy that would enable both state-owned and private sector media enterprises across Africa to make an economically viable transition from an entrenched analogue operational infrastructure to a converged digital ecosystem.

The Brain Trust would be able to achieve its goals by tapping the knowledge and expertise of individuals and organizations that have the capacity to unleash the audio-visual power and creative immediacy of Africa's emerging digital ecosystem.⁴ The Brain Trust would incubate and nurture a new generation of African digital enterprises into maturity and contribute to the strengthening and expansion of dependable democracies across sub-Saharan Africa.

⁴ Africa-OnTheRise, "How Digital Transformation Can Drive Growth and Job Creation across Emerging Economies," Africa-OnTheRise, June 14, 2018, <https://www.africa-ontherise.com/2018/06/how-digital-transformation-can-drive-growth-and-job-creation-across-emerging-economies/>.

2.1 Location and Organization

The Brain Trust would be an evidenced-based organization that could thrive and flourish only in a university environment where exceptional value is placed on the adoption, processing and consumption of knowledge. Regretfully, no sub-Saharan African research university meets this standard at this point in the continent's development. Limits on human and financial capital in sub-Saharan Africa has translated into an inability to sustain a substantial research agenda relating to the telecommunication revolution. Elsewhere, among universities capable of sustaining such an agenda, there is a lack of resources for the intelligent application of that agenda in an African context. Finally, even among universities that have research agendas covering both the telecommunications revolution and African studies, only a few have the international reputation that would make them highly credible with African leaders, investors, and scholars. For these reasons, the Brain Trust would be ideally located at one of the world's most renowned research universities and be chartered with a minimum five year commitment, with an extension of that period dependent on the host university's satisfaction with the Brain Trust's record.

Although the Brain Trust would be located outside of Africa, it would build strong relations with African-based universities, both for access to the intellectual resources they can provide and to contribute to a strengthening of their research capacity in the telecommunications area. The Brain Trust would also work closely with dynamic African media companies and key African entities, such as the African Union and the Africa Development Bank system, in order to help African media outlets and governments to better understand the value and utility of a strong Africa digital ecosystem. Given its outreach mission, the Brain Trust would require an Advisory Board consisting of thought and industry leaders who support the vision of unleashing the social, economic, cultural, and political potential of the African continent's electronic media. The Advisory Board would facilitate access to brainpower and knowledge, effective political and industry networking, and significant funding. The members of the Advisory Board would:

- guide the performance of the Program Director.
- act as a strong resource base to the Brain Trust.
- encourage and support the exploration of new ideas.
- provide an understanding of the African market and industry trends.
- provide unbiased insights and ideas from a third person point-of-view.
- provide access to networking platforms to boost the credibility of the Brain Trust.
- provide counsel on issues relating to African Governments and industry regulators.

The Brain Trust would be staffed in a manner consistent with its university setting and its mission. A key member would be the director of the Brain Trust. The ideal director would be an innovative thinker who has the ability to turn new ideas and technologies into a creative vision that can be applied to transform Africa's indigenous media enterprises. Although it would be desirable, the director would not necessarily have to have deep knowledge of Africa and African media, provided that the Brain Trust's faculty and staff collectively had such knowledge.

2.2 Mission

The mission of the Brain Trust would include constructing a credible and tangible roadmap that is able to reverse the stunted growth of Africa's indigenous state-owned and private media assets. Five growth-inhibiting challenges need to be resolved:

- The absence of a compelling vision that would transform selective sub-Saharan Africa state-owned and private media enterprises into commercially viable and editorially independent public service media entities.
- The absence of a sound legislative framework across sub-Saharan Africa that would ensure the effective development of digital public media services.
- The absence of a robust and compelling investment strategy to build a viable digital ecosystem, which can make a significant contribution to the Internet Gateway Device Protocol (iGDP) of nations across sub-Saharan Africa.
- The absence of an effective management skillset to drive the switch from an analogue media infrastructure to a turnkey digital ecosystem.
- The absence of an effective intellectual property rights framework relating to the acquisition and development of media content.

The Brain Trust's roadmap would seek to achieve a systematically structured approach towards transforming sub-Saharan Africa's indigenous media sector. It would do so through consultative dialogue and research in order to identify how sub-Saharan Africa's indigenous media sector can achieve significant profitability, which is essential if it is to achieve editorial independence. Among its contributions, the Brain Trust would provide frameworks for:

1. conceptualizing, designing, and fostering paradigm-shifting knowledge partnerships in order to establish a compelling investment proposal; garner support from African sovereign funds, multilateral agencies, private equity institutions; and commitments from strategic trade investors within the technology, media, and telecoms sectors.
2. determining the most effective manner in which financial resources can be

utilized to develop commercially effective and viable public-private media partnerships and how Afrocentric content can be marketed beyond Africa.

3. formulating concrete strategies on how the accelerated creation of a robust and independent media sector and a consequential Fourth Branch can be achieved across Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone sub-Saharan Africa.
4. developing a creative framework through which the effective use and representation of images, words, and characters can be established to convey empowering ideas and values related to the culture and identity of Africans and people of African descent.

In these efforts, the Brain Trust would seek advice and work with accomplished academic faculty and researchers, digital media entrepreneurs, professional African news media entrepreneurs, accomplished African journalists, and innovators.

2.3 Programs

The Brain Trust's work would be organized primarily around four programs: Knowledge Hub, Digital Lab, Ideas Factory, and Media Endowment Fund.

Knowledge Hub. Focusing on digital content publishing and dissemination, the Brain Trust will design a research-focused knowledge hub with the aim of becoming the leading African-centric think tank. Its research will stimulate and guide investment in Africa's digital media industry by:

- developing evidence of the contribution that a robust digital media ecosystem can enhance democratic governance and economic growth across sub-Saharan Africa. This evidence would help persuade the African Development Bank (including the Africa 50 Initiative), the African Export-Import Bank and progressive African governments to invest in a smart transition to digital media systems.
- acting as an authoritative source of basic and applied research that can guide development-focused policymakers and private equity institutions. The purpose would be to ensure an efficiently capitalized African digital ecosystem, which major development investors, including the World Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and others could be persuaded to fund. The goal would be to promote a bilateral and multilateral agency movement to nurture the development a robust Africa-wide Fourth Estate into being.

Digital Lab. The Brain Trust's digital lab would specialize in the development of tailored solutions in the form of ideas, analysis and an advisory service (targeting indigenous media enterprises) to achieve to a specific set of goals in the short to medium term and a set of desired outcomes in the long term. First, in the short term, the Brain Trust's digital lab will work towards the establishment of an enterprise and research

resource partnership via Ghana's New Times Corporation, to help with the development of its business model as it switches from analogue printing into a digital printing and online multimedia app. Second, in the medium term, the digital lab would bring together design thinkers to develop a viable business model that would support the switch by sub-Saharan Africa's print, radio and television media from analogue to digital technology-driven enterprises. The goal would be to ensure that sub-Saharan Africa's splintered indigenous media enterprises are re-organized into an efficiently streamlined digital ecosystem in order to improve productivity and profitability. Third, on a long term basis, the Brain Trust would devise a set of digital democracy applications that would seek to improve participatory democracy with the goal of ensuring accountability and transparency in governance. Digital democracy apps will be designed to inform and empower the upcoming generation of sub-Saharan Africans.

Ideas Factories. The Brain Trust will help create 'ideas factories' within aligned universities across sub-Saharan Africa to address issues related to Africa's digital media and entertainment industries. As new content production and distribution paradigms continue to evolve, a viable monetization model is yet to be identified in Africa (beyond the free service which WhatsApp currently offers). The ideas factories will be designed to reverse the deficit. First, there is a need for a digital lab focusing on an extensive experimental innovation across Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the next five years, viewers in more than 100 million Africans homes will have the option of seeing shows, video clips and movies on smart, low-cost, mobile television devices. At present, government agencies in Africa have no strategy for responding to the opportunity. Second, there is a need for research on, for example, which new digital technologies can be efficiently tapped and which identity-inspiring stories can be told. Third, within the context of a global digital ecosystem, there is a huge skills deficit across sub-Saharan Africa. A curriculum of short-term, graduate level, media and communications courses needs to be developed to address the skill deficit. Curriculum development is another area where the Brain Trust can leverage existing journalism and media transformation programs.

Media Endowment Fund. There is a need for an endowment fund, external to the Brain Trust and managed in Africa by Africans, to assist in indigenous efforts to create a free and independent media. The Fund would support independent journalism, independent public-service news outlets, and public-service social media. The Brain Trust would assist through guidance in the establishment and operation of the endowment fund.

For strategic reasons, although the Brain Trust would have the whole of sub-Saharan Africa as its concentration, its initial effort would focus on Ghana, which was recognized in the 2018 world press freedom index as one of only four countries in Africa that has fully embraced press freedom as a core pillar of

its evolving democracy.⁵ Moreover, political and industry leaders in Ghana are receptive to the motivating concerns of the Brain Trust. Before beginning my fellowship at the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University, I had the opportunity to meet with officials of Ghana’s government to discuss the transformation of the country’s state-controlled media assets, including the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, into commercially viable and editorially independent enterprises.

These meetings included a presentation to the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. I was able to secure an in-principle interest from Ghana Trade Fair Company Ltd, a prime property owner to establish a partnership that would build and operate a digital media city complex. I also held a series of meetings and business development sessions with the New Times Corporation, a 67-year-old print publishing company and owner of two national news brands, *The Ghanaian Times* and *The Spectator*.

There are currently no large-scale, independent, indigenous African media networks. For this reason, prior to coming to the Shorenstein Center, I undertook business development research with an intent to identify how Africa’s indigenous media could be successfully transformed. The research led to the creation of the concepts of an [African Public Broadcasting Foundation](#) (APBF), [Abicoos Interactive](#), and an [African Broadcast Network](#) (ABN).

The Board and Management of the New Times Corporation have subsequently agreed to work with the Brain Trust and with the new African media entities (i.e. ABN and Abicoos) to transform itself into an online, multimedia brand. The Ghana strategy is premised on the notion that success in one African country will convince other African countries of the value proposition inherent in the smart development of the digital media industry. The Brain Trust will have credibility through its host university, mission, and staffing, but would gain stature and influence through demonstrated success in Ghana.

2.4 Strategic Partners

Even with a well-versed, research heavy, talented Brain Trust, partnerships with existing media partners will be pivotal. The African Broadcast Network would develop relationships with the three large networks that currently serve Africa. One of these networks, and the only one that has a clear public service mission, is the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which broadcasts across sub-Saharan Africa via its BBC World Service, BBC Media Action and BBC Worldwide Enterprise subsidiaries. CNN is another of these networks and is the most prominent in terms of communicating American values. The third is Al-Jazeera, which through its subtle embrace of science and modernism is a strong influence across Islamic Africa.

However, notwithstanding their significant contributions to the continent,

⁵ “2018 World Press Freedom Index,” Reporters Without Borders, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

these networks are not indigenous to Africa, and their missions do not align with an African-centric identity. The entities I envision – the African Public Broadcasting Foundation (APBF), Abicoos Interactive, and the African Broadcast Network (ABN) are central to the creation of a transformative system. The Brain Trust’s involvement is required in order to properly equip the African Public Broadcasting Foundation, Abicoos Interactive, and the African Broadcast Network with tools that will result in the multidimensional transformation of Africa’s indigenous media industry.

African Public Broadcast Foundation (APBF). For its part, the African Public Broadcast Foundation (APBF) seeks to motivate millions of Africans by curating and originating Afrocentric content that will aim to inspire social, political and economic development. For more than a half century, researchers have been amassing an archive of African knowledge ranging from its archaeological and historical roots to its literary and folkloric traditions. Initiatives such as the African Writers Series, which has been sponsored by Heinemann Educational Publishers since the 1950s and which enabled writers like Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe to get started, now has a substantial literary archive. Similarly, the six-volume Dictionary of African Biography, published in 2012 by Harvard University Professors Emmanuel Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, provides a rich source of information about African events and leaders stretching over the past 5,000 years. For example, as the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome reached their zeniths, the two empires that could rival them were both in Africa. Another example is Africa’s rich oral tradition—the stories that have been told each evening for centuries in villages across the African continent. Such material provides an ample basis for creating African-centric content for distribution through Africa’s indigenous state-owned and private television networks.

Through such efforts, in close collaboration with the Brain Trust, the APBF would contribute to the creation of a Pan-African public service broadcasting industry that heretofore has been virtually non-existent. The industry will develop an alternative narrative of Africa that can inform and inspire current and future generations of Africans.

This development will, among other things, require the nurturing of a form of professional journalism that is objective and has integrity. In conjunction with the Brain Trust, the African Public Broadcasting Foundation would help create training programs for journalists and journalism students that seek to impart ethical journalism norms and practices.

African Broadcast Network (ABN). For its part, the African Broadcast Network (ABN) is designed to act as a central content scheduling operation that would provide programming feeds to terrestrial television stations and pay television providers. In collaboration with a select number of indigenous broadcasters and content providers across the continent, APBF and ABN would commission and package short-form and long-form content for dissemination through Afrocentric television channels and mobile devices. There is the potential to develop African history, fables,

and myths into a highly profitable production industry, which would guarantee the financial basis for continuing production of such content. ABN has already been endorsed by a number of indigenous state-owned and private broadcasters, which will enhance its partnership with the Brain Trust. That partnership will seek to promote programming content that is:

- cosmopolitan with strong cultural roots
- entrepreneurial with a focus on the pursuit of excellence
- committed to developing a vibrant knowledge-based service economy
- evolving beyond aid and focused on building its trading capacity and
- able to exercise freedom of speech and grounded in the rule of law

Abicoos Interactive. The third entity is Abicoos Interactive, which has been developed on the premise that Africa's second telecommunications revolution, which is occurring through the rapid spread of mobile smart phones, can transform sub-Saharan Africa's mostly analogue print, radio and television industry. The introduction in the next few years of advanced broadband technologies, including stratospheric balloons, drones and low earth orbit satellites, will result in the rapid expansion of broadband internet to tens of millions in Africa, creating enormous opportunity for sub-Saharan Africa's indigenous state-owned and privately-owned media enterprises.

Abicoos Interactive would provide an aesthetically inspiring digital lifestyle platform that would resonate across Africa and the Diaspora. The Brain Trust would establish a strategic long-term partnership with Abicoos to nurture a new breed of emerging African digital enterprises into competitive Afrocentric publishing brands. It is a large challenge, given that the new African markets are mostly rural. Success will require research, which the Brain Trust would provide, on the development of sustainable new business models.

An alternative information ecosystem consisting of the African Public Broadcasting Foundation, the African Broadcast Network, and Abicoos Interactive, with guidance from the Brain Trust, would provide a powerful creative and audio-visual framework through which Africa's historical and cultural memory can be articulated; its governance, power, and authority can be better understood and more thoughtfully applied; its political economy of development can be more closely examined; its health, healing, and ritual practice can be renewed and updated; and its talent celebrated.

2.5 Funding Sources

After the first step of securing an agreement-in-principle with a host university, the creation of the Brain Trust would rest on sufficient funding. Consequently, the Brain Trust will seek significant operating funding in order to secure the best team possible who can produce the most effective research and ideation that would transform sub-Saharan Africa's media landscape into a digital media driven industrial complex.

It is probable that substantial capital would be obtained from institutions and high net-worth individuals from Africa and elsewhere whose ideals align with those of the Brain Trust and whose interests are in the public good. Gifts from individual donors would be best used if they were accepted only with limited terms, if any terms at all, other than recognition of the donation and a possible seat at the advisory board. Foundations are also a likely source of funds and would align with our goal of creating a free press for the public good.

Altogether, Africa's social, economic, and political development is a high priority for a substantial number of foundations, and the Brain Trust's mission aligns with the particular interests of many of them, including the Hivos Foundation (with its emphasis on developing countries, digital activism, and freedom of expression), Ford Foundation (with its interest in how cultural narratives can contribute to fairer and more just societies and its aim of spreading digital access to underserved areas), the MacArthur Foundation (with its interest in Africa in expanding internet access and strengthening the media in the service of democracy), the Skoll Foundation (with its commitment to global development), the Omidyar Network (with its emphasis on market-based solutions to creating more stable and open societies), and the African Development Fund (an initiative of the African Development bank, with an emphasis on capacity-building projects).

To conclude, the ultimate goal of the Brain Trust would be to collaborate with key policy actors and decision makers within the African Union and Africa Development Bank system, in order to help African governments to better understand the value and utility of a strong Africa digital ecosystem. A well-funded research network would ensure the ultimate realization of its goal.

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