

Government of India
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
A Wing, Shastri Bhawan
New Delhi-110001

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Revised Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India

Foreword

- (a) In December 2002, the Government of India approved a policy for the grant of licenses for setting up of Community Radio Stations to well established educational institutions including IITs/IIMs.
- (b) The matter was reconsidered in the year 2006 and the Government decided to broad base the policy by bringing ‘Non-profit’ organisations like civil society organisations and voluntary organisations etc, under its ambit in order to allow greater participation by the civil society on issues relating to development & social change. The revised Policy Guidelines were issued in the year 2006. The Policy Guidelines issued in the year 2006, were subsequently amended in the year 2017, 2018 and 2022.
- (c) To ensure financial sustainability of Community Radio Stations and to ensure growth of the Community Radio Sector, the Government has carried out further amendments in the Policy Guidelines. Now, the Revised Policy Guidelines are as under :-

1. Basic Principles

An organisation desirous of operating a Community Radio Station (CRS) must be able to satisfy and adhere to the following principles:

- a) It should be explicitly a ‘not-for-profit’ organisation and should have a proven record of at least three years of service to the local community;
- b) The CRS, to be operated by it, should be designed to serve the local community in its coverage area;
- c) It should have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve;
- d) It must be a Legal Entity i.e. it should be registered under any such act relevant to the purpose and the registration, at the time of application, should be at least three years old;

- e) NGOs, registered societies and Public Charitable Trusts shall be registered on NITI Aayog's NGO Darpan portal and the applicant shall provide its Unique ID along with the application.

2. Eligibility Criteria

- a) The following types of organisations shall be eligible to apply for Community Radio licences:
 - (i) Community based organizations, which satisfy the basic principles listed in para 1 above, shall be considered eligible for making an application for grant of permission for setting up Community Radio Stations in India. These would include State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Autonomous Bodies, Civil Society Organisations, Voluntary Organisations, Registered Societies, Public Charitable Trusts, not-for-profit organizations set up by Self Help Groups (SHGs) and not-for-profit Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs);
 - (ii) Educational Institutions.
- b) The following shall not be eligible to run a CRS:
 - (i) Individuals;
 - (ii) Political Parties and their affiliate organisations; [including students, women's, trade unions and such other wings affiliated to these parties.];
 - (iii) Organisations operating with a motive to earn profit;
 - (iv) Organisations expressly banned by the Union and State Governments; and
 - (v) Religious bodies.

3. Selection Process & Processing of the applications

- a) The applicants shall be required to apply online, on a portal specified by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), with a processing fee of Rs. 2500/- and the applications shall be processed in the following manner:
 - (i) An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) shall be constituted under Chairmanship of Secretary (I&B) to consider applications from eligible organizations.
 - (ii) Applications received from Government institutions/ Organisations shall be placed before IMC. After approval by IMC, Letter of Intent (LOI) shall be issued, subject to availability of Frequency spot, provided by Ministry of Communication, at the location proposed by the applicant in its application.
 - (iii) Applications received from Private institutions/ Organisations shall be placed before IMC. After approval by IMC, Letter of Intent (LOI) shall be issued subject to receiving clearance from Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence and subject to

availability of Frequency spot provided by Ministry of Communication, at the location proposed by the applicant in its application.

- b) A time schedule for obtaining clearances shall be as follows:-
- (i) Within one month of receipt of the application, the MIB shall process the application and either communicate to the applicant deficiencies, if any, or will forward the application to the other Ministries for clearance as prescribed in para 3(a)(ii) and 3(a)(iii) above, as the case may be.
 - (ii) The Ministries concerned shall communicate their comments/ clearance within three months of receipt of the application. However, in the event of the failure of the concerned ministry to grant the comments/clearance within the stipulated period of three months, the case shall be referred to the IMC for a decision for issue of LOI.
 - (iii) The validity of LOI shall be one year from the date of its issue. The validity of LOI may be extended for another period of three months, on the request of the applicant giving reasons thereof, which may be considered on case to case basis.
 - (iv) The LOI holder shall be required to sign a Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA) with the MIB and submit a bank guarantee for a sum of Rs. 25,000/- for a period of ten (10) years, which will enable the LOI Holder to seek Wireless Operating License (WOL) from the Ministry of Communication after deposit of requisite fees, as applicable. The Community Radio Station can be made operational only after the receipt of WOL from the Ministry of Communication.
 - (v) Within one year from the issue of LOI or within six months of the signing of GOPA, whichever is earlier, the Permission Holder shall operationalize the Community Radio Station and shall intimate the date of commissioning of the Community Radio Station to the MIB. In case the applicant fails to operationalize the CRS within the above stipulated period, it may seek permission for extension of time for another three months stating the reason. The request for extension of time for commissioning of CRS may be considered on case to case basis.
 - (vi) Failure to comply with time schedule prescribed above shall make the LOI/GOPA holder liable for cancellation of its LOI/GOPA and forfeiture of the Bank Guarantee.

4. Grant of Permission Agreement conditions

- a) The Initial period for “Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA)” shall be for ten (10) years.
- b) Grant of Permission Agreement shall be extended for a period of five (5) years at a time. Extension shall be granted on the basis of an application and verification of adherence to the terms and conditions of the permission. The application for extension shall be submitted one year before the expiry of existing GOPA. The GOPA of existing CRS will remain valid as per the agreement signed with the licensee.

- c) A report on continuous operation of CRS may be sought by Ministry from local Akashvani Kendra or a person/officer deputed by the Ministry during the GOPA period.
- d) The Grant of Permission Agreement and the Permission letter shall be non-transferable.
- e) No permission fee shall be levied on the Permission Holder. However, the Permission Holder will be required to pay the spectrum usage fee to WPC wing of Ministry of Communication.
- f) In case the permission holder shuts down broadcasting activity for more than 3 months after commencement of operation, its permission is liable to be cancelled.
- g) An eligible organization/ institution that operates in multiple districts shall be allowed to set up a **maximum of six (6) CRS in different districts of operation**, provided it fulfils the following conditions
 - (i) Continuous operation of the previous commissioned CRS for at least one year at the time of applying for setting up subsequent CRS. The licenses for multiple CRSs would not be issued en masse but one at a time. Only one CRS per district will be allowed to the organisation.
 - (ii) The organizations setting up multiple CRS should ensure participation of the local community and broadcast content relevant to the community served by the respective CRS.
- h) The organization seeking to setup multiple CRS may be required to submit an undertaking, confirming that the programs shall be prepared locally.
- i) The Permission Holder shall be required to submit compliance report on the GOPA conditions as and when sought by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the prescribed format.

5. Content regulation & monitoring

- a) The programmes should be of immediate relevance to the community. The emphasis should be on developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programmes. The programming should reflect the special interests and needs of the local community.
- b) The Licensee shall setup an advisory and content committee comprising members from the local community which will decide upon the content being broadcasted on Community Radio. At least half of the members of Advisory and Content Committee should be women.

- c) At least 50% of content shall be generated with the participation of the local community, out of which at least half of the content should be focussed on women empowerment and the themes should go beyond nutrition, breastfeeding, pregnancy, recipes and beauty.
- d) Programmes should preferably be in the local language and dialect(s).
- e) The Permission Holder shall have to adhere to the provisions of the Programme and Advertising Code as prescribed by Prasar Bharati for Akashwani.
- f) The Permission Holder shall preserve all programmes broadcast by the CRS for three months from the date of broadcast.
- g) The Permission Holder shall not broadcast any programmes, which relate to 'news and current affairs' and are otherwise political in nature. However, CRS can broadcast news and current affairs contents sourced exclusively from Akashwani in its original form or translated into the local language/dialect. Akashwani shall source its news to CRS without any charges. It will be the responsibility of the CRS permission holder to ensure that the news is not distorted or edited during translation.

The broadcast pertaining to the following categories will be treated as non-'news and current affairs' broadcast and will therefore be permissible:

- (i) Information pertaining to sporting events excluding live coverage. However live commentaries of sporting events of local nature may be permissible;
 - (ii) Information pertaining to Traffic and Weather;
 - (iii) Information pertaining to and coverage of local cultural events, festivals;
 - (iv) coverage of topics pertaining to examinations, results, admissions, career counselling;
 - (v) Availability of employment opportunities;
 - (vi) Public announcements pertaining to civic amenities like electricity, water supply, natural calamities, health alerts etc. as provided by the local administration,
 - (vii) Such other categories not permitted at present that may subsequently be specifically permitted by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting from time to time.
- h) The Permission Holder shall ensure that nothing is included in the programmes broadcast which:
 - (i) Offends against good taste or decency;
 - (ii) Contains criticism of friendly countries;
 - (iii) Contains attack on religions or communities or visuals or words contemptuous of religious groups or which either promote or result in promoting communal discontent or disharmony;
 - (iv) Contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendoes and half-truths;
 - (v) Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promote-anti-national attitudes;

- (vi) Contains anything amounting to contempt of court or anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;
 - (vii) Contains aspersions against the dignity of the President/Vice President and the Judiciary;
 - (viii) Criticises, maligns or slanders any individual in person or certain groups, segments of social, public and moral life of the country;
 - (ix) Encourages superstition or blind belief;
 - (x) Denigrates women;
 - (xi) Denigrates children;
 - (xii) May present/depict/suggest as desirable the use of drugs including alcohol, narcotics and tobacco or may stereotype, incite, vilify or perpetuate hatred against or attempt to demean any person or group on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion, age or physical or mental disability.
- i) The Permission Holder shall ensure that due care is taken with respect to religious programmes with a view to avoid:
- (i) Exploitation of religious susceptibilities; and
 - (ii) Committing offence to the religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination.

6. Imposition of penalty/revocation of Permission Agreement

- a) In case there is any violation of conditions cited in 5(a) to 5(i), Government may *suo- moto* or on basis of complaints take cognisance and place the matter before the Inter-Ministerial Committees on Programme and Advertising Codes for recommending appropriate penalties. On the recommendation of the Committee a decision to impose penalties shall be taken. However, before the imposition of a penalty the Permission Holder shall be given an opportunity to represent its case.
- b) The penalty shall comprise of:
 - (i) Temporary suspension of Permission for operating the CRS for a period up to one month in the case of the first violation.
 - (ii) Temporary suspension of Permission for operating the CRS for a period up to three months in the case of the second violation depending on the gravity of violation.
- c) Revocation of the Permission for any subsequent violation.
- d) In case of revocation of Permission, the Permission Holder will not be eligible to apply directly or indirectly for a fresh permission in future for a period of five years. "Provided the penalty imposed as per above provision shall be without prejudice to any penal action under applicable laws including the Indian Telegraph Act 1885 and Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933, as modified from time to time".

- e) In the event of suspension of permission as mentioned in para 6(b)(i) & 6(b)(ii), the permission holder will continue to discharge its obligations under the Grant of Permission Agreement during the suspension period also.

7. Transmitter Power and Range

- a) CRS shall be expected to cover a range of 5-10 km. For this, a transmitter having maximum Effective Radiated Power (ERP) of 100 W would be adequate. However, in case of a proven need where the applicant organisation is able to establish that it needs to serve a larger area or the terrain so warrants, higher transmitter wattage with maximum ERP up to 250 Watts can be considered on a case-to-case basis, subject to availability of frequency and such other clearances as necessary from the Ministry of Communication. Requests for higher transmitter power above 100 Watts and up to 250 Watts shall also be subject to approval by the IMC constituted under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- b) The maximum height of antenna permitted above the ground for the CRS shall not exceed 30 meters. However, minimum height of Antenna above ground should be at least 15 meters to prevent possibility of biological hazards of RF radiation.

8. Funding & Sustenance

- a) Applicants will be eligible to seek funding from multilateral aid agencies. Applicants seeking foreign funds for setting up the CRS will have to obtain FCRA clearance under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976.
- b) Transmission of sponsored programmes shall not be permitted except programmes sponsored by central & state Governments and other organisations to broadcast public interest information. In addition, limited advertising and announcements relating to local events, local businesses and services and employment opportunities shall be allowed. The maximum duration of such limited advertising will be restricted to 12 (twelve) minutes per hour of broadcast.
- c) Revenue generated from advertisement and announcements as per Para 8(b) shall be utilized only for the operational expenses and capital expenditure of the CRS. After meeting the full financial needs of the CRS, surplus may, with prior written permission of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, be ploughed into the primary activity of the organization i.e. for education in case of educational institutions and for furthering the primary objectives for which the NGO concerned was established.
- d) Government shall strive to build an ecosystem for continual growth of CRS and encourage sharing of content among the CR community.

9. Other Terms & Conditions

- a) The basic objective of the Community Radio broadcasting would be to serve the cause of the community in the service area of the Permission Holder by involving members of the community in the broadcast of their programmes. For this purpose, community shall mean people living in the zone of the coverage of the broadcasting service of the Permission Holder. Each applicant will have to specify the geographical community or the community of interest it wants to cover. The Permission Holder shall provide the services of his CRS on free-to-air basis.
- b) Though the Permission Holder will operate the service under these guidelines and as per the terms and conditions of the Grant of Permission Agreement signed, the permission shall be subject to the condition that as and when any regulatory authority to regulate and monitor the broadcast services in the country is constituted, the permission holder will adhere to the norms, rules and regulations prescribed by such authority from time to time.
- c) The Permission Holder shall provide such information to the Government on such intervals, as may be required. In this connection, the Permission Holder is required to preserve recording of programmes broadcast during the previous three months failing which Permission Agreement is liable to be revoked.
- d) The Government or its authorized representative shall have the right to inspect the broadcast facilities of the Permission Holder and collect such information as considered necessary in public and community interest.
- e) The Government reserves the right to take over the entire services and networks of the Permission Holder or revoke/terminate/suspend the Permission in the interest of national security or in the event of national emergency/ war or low intensity conflict or under similar type of situations.
- f) All foreign personnel likely to be deployed by way of appointment, contract, consultancy etc. by the Permission Holder for installation, maintenance and operation of the Permission Holder's services shall be required to obtain prior security clearance from Government of India.
- g) The Government reserves the right to modify, at any time, the terms and conditions if it is necessary to do so, in public interest or for the proper conduct of broadcasting or for security considerations.
- h) Notwithstanding anything contained anywhere else in the Grant of Permission Agreement, the Government shall have the power to direct the permission holder to broadcast any special message as may be considered desirable to meet any contingency arising out of natural emergency, or public interest or natural disaster and the like, and the Permission holder shall be obliged to comply with such directions.

- i) The permission holder shall be required to submit their audited annual accounts to the Government in respect of the organization/division running the CRS. The accounts shall clearly show the income and expenditure incurred and the Assets and Liabilities in respect of the CRS.
- j) A Permission Agreement will be subject to such other conditions as may be determined by the Government.
- k) The Government shall make special arrangements for monitoring and enforcement of the ceiling on advertisements, particularly in those areas where private FM radio stations have been granted licenses.
