

COMMUNITY BROADCASTING SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW

# Summary of stakeholder discussion—Adelaide and regional South Australia

This document provides a high-level, deidentified summary of the discussion at the workshop held virtually on 29 July 2024, and does not reflect all views given.

**September 2024**

## Challenges for community broadcasters in Adelaide and regional SA

* Stations face financial challenges, including securing grants, managing costs and generating revenue amidst increasing operational costs.
* Pressure to explore alternative revenue generation (e.g. partnerships, merchandise, and digital products).
* Need to adapt to the digital age (e.g. streaming, podcasting and social media) while maintaining traditional broadcast services.
* Reaching and engaging diverse audiences, particularly young people and CALD communities.
* Outdated infrastructure and technology, limiting the ability to deliver high-quality programming.

Calls for reform

* Improve strategies to increase reach and diversity (e.g. audience research, funding for diverse programs).
* Improve transparency in the grant assessment process to build trust between CBP and stations.
* Secure long-term and increased funding for community radio stations to ensure viability.
* Streamline the grant application process to reduce administrative burden and increase success rates.
* Provide targeted support for volunteer-run stations to enhance their capacity and sustainability.
* Government investment in infrastructure upgrades and access to new technologies.

## Sponsorship

* Confusion around sponsorship vs. advertising, leading to inconsistencies in application and compliance.
* Restrictions on sponsorship and tagging limit revenue potential.
* Stations expressed frustration over limited access to government advertising, despite significant audience numbers, with smaller stations affected disproportionately.

Calls for reform

* Relax the 5-minute per hour sponsorship limit with a more flexible approach (e.g. averaging over a longer period or increasing the limit).
* Provide clearer sponsorship guidelines.
* Implement a more equitable system for allocating government advertising across commercial and community radio stations, based on audience size.

## Community participation, volunteers and staff

* There is limited collaboration between community, commercial, and public broadcasters.
* Many stations heavily rely on volunteers, which can lead to inconsistency in operations and difficulties in attracting and retaining talent.
* Retaining volunteers, particularly in the face of increasing demands and limited resources, is challenging.
* Many volunteers and staff lack essential skills in areas such as grant writing, financial management, and digital media.
* Balancing volunteer commitments with personal/professional responsibilities can be difficult. Stations must have support to implement strategies to support in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
* Opportunities for career progression within the community radio sector are often limited.

Calls for reform

* Encourage greater collaboration among stations to share best practices and resources.
* Create clear pathways for volunteers to transition into paid roles within the sector.
* Provide comprehensive training and support for volunteers (e.g. strategic planning and grant writing).
* Incentivise volunteer involvement (e.g. offering professional development opportunities or recognition).
* Provide resources and support for volunteer-led projects and initiatives.

## Licensing and regulation

* The licensing and regulatory processes are complex and time-consuming, diverting from core operations.
* The licensing renewal process is burdensome and time-consuming.

Calls for reform

* Review existing regulations to identify and remove unnecessary barriers.
* Simplify the licensing renewal process.
* Adopt a risk-based approach to licensing, focusing on stations with compliance issues rather than imposing excessive requirements on all stations.

## Grants programs

* Overall funding for CBP grants is inadequate to meet the sector's needs, resulting in intense competition.
* Grant assessment criteria are inconsistent and do not reflect challenges faced by different station types.
* Many grants are short-term, making it difficult for stations to plan and implement long-term projects.
* The application process is complex, time-consuming and requires significant resources.
* Grant guidelines often lack flexibility, limiting the ability of stations to adapt to changing circumstances.
* Many grants are project-based, rather than supporting core operations or capacity building.

Calls for reform

* Increase CBP funding.
* Offer multi-year grants to support long-term planning and sustainability.
* Simplify the grant application process to reduce administrative burden.
* Develop more transparent and equitable grant assessment criteria that accurately reflect needs.
* Ensure grant assessment criteria accurately reflect the challenges and priorities of different station types.
* Provide clear and timely feedback to applicants, explaining the reasons for decisions.
* Allow for more flexibility in grant spending to accommodate unforeseen challenges.
* Provide grants for core operational costs to support the ongoing work of community radio stations, digital infrastructure and digital innovation and capacity building (e.g. training and equipment).