



Summary of stakeholder discussion—Regional

This document provides a high-level, deidentified summary of the discussion at the workshop held virtually on 14 August 2024, and does not reflect all views given.

September 2024

Challenges for community broadcasters in regional areas

- Difficult to secure adequate funding to maintain operations and expand services.
- Applying for grants can be a complex and time-consuming process, with limited/uneven success.
- Lack of equipment and expertise keep up with technology and appeal to wider audiences.
- Negative impact of natural disasters, economic downturns, and social unrest.

Calls for reform

- Increased and long-term funding.
- Clearer guidelines and accessible resources to help stations comply with the law.
- Explore ways to increase accessibility for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.

Community participation

- Community radio stations are seen as vehicles for community engagement. They represent diverse communities and offer a range of perspectives, which helps to promote understanding and inclusivity.
- Vital role in providing local news and information, particularly in areas with limited media coverage; and provide essential information/updates to the community through emergency broadcasting.

Calls for reform

- Collaborative partnerships between stations and other community organisations could create engagement and shared resources.
- Provide volunteers with better training/resources to increase confidence, engagement and participation.
- Mentorship programs, so learning is passed from established volunteers to new volunteers.

Staff recruitment, training and retention

- Stations need staff and/or volunteers with specific skills (e.g. grant writing, technical expertise and journalism), but struggle to find/retain due competitive salaries in the commercial sector.
- Engaging new volunteers is challenging due to time constraints and lack of funds for remuneration.
- Personnel struggle to understand/apply complex regulations, and there is a lack of capacity to train them.

Calls for reform

- Specialised funding to support specific roles (e.g. youth or ethnic programmers/producers).
- A collaborative/centralised model between several stations to provide support, resources and expertise.
- Flexible staffing arrangements (e.g. part-time or contract work, and remote work – accommodates the diverse needs of staff and attracts a wider pool of candidates).

News and journalism

- Funding for news and journalism has been insufficient or inconsistent.
- Difficult to find the right balance of localism, relevancy, diversity and engagement in news.
- The rise of online platforms has increased competition for news consumption, while also creating misinformation and fake news.

Calls for reform

- Increased and strategic funding for news content, particularly local news.
- Partnerships with universities, community groups, and government agencies may provide additional support and resources (e.g. student newsreaders).

Sponsorship

- COVID significantly impacted sponsorship revenue for many stations.
- Confusing sponsorship restrictions and content guidelines create additional workload.
- Competition for sponsorship money, with stations competing for the same pool of funds.
- Regulations (e.g. 5-minute limit) are restrictive, rather than helpful.
- The way audiences consume media is changing, as they diversify their use of multimedia platforms.
- Many stations lack the resources and expertise to effectively seek and manage sponsorships.

Calls for reform

- Increased government funding for community radio, to reduce reliance on sponsorships.
- Stations need to adapt their sponsorship strategies to reach their audience effectively.
- Support for the use of digital innovation for sponsorship segments, similar to how influencers use social media and create sponsored content.
- Allowing community radio stations to have more flexibility in their advertising and sponsorship practices (e.g. increasing 5-minute limit, imposing a daily/weekly limit).

Grants programs

- Limited funding availability, with stations competing for the same pool of funds.
- Complex grant application process requires significant effort and resources from stations.
- Inconsistencies and inequality in the distribution of funds, and lack of transparency on why some stations receive funding while others don't.
- Short-term funding makes it difficult for stations to plan for long-term sustainability.
- Long-term or flexible funding options could help stations plan ahead and invest in sustainable projects.

Calls for reform

- Transparency and fairness in the grants process and distribution of funds.
- Specialised funding streams for areas such as youth programs, ethnic broadcasting, and local news.
- Training and resources on topics such as grant writing, technology, and programming.
- Greater investment in new technology and digital distribution channels, to adapt to the digital age.
- Collaboration between stations to share best practices in grant applications and funding.