

Put Your Hands on the Radio: How to Start a Low Power FM Radio Station

Presented by Prometheus Radio Project

Maggie Avener:

maggie@prometheusradio.org

Vanessa Maria Graber: vanessa@prometheusradio.org

For audio, call 512-400-4809, pass code 1223422

Webinar Agenda

1. What is an LPFM radio station?
2. History of Low Power Radio in the US
3. The Local Community Radio Act demystified
4. The Application Process and Working with the FCC
5. What do you need to apply for an LPFM license?
6. How do you check for a free channel?
7. Cost estimation
8. Fundraising
9. Community Engagement: How do you make your station Awesome?
10. Make Media!
11. Questions and Answers

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What is a Low Power FM Radio Station?

- Low power FM (LPFM) stations are noncommercial, run by non-profit organizations, schools, community groups, and churches.
- Not available to individuals or for commercial operations.
- LPFMs currently operate at 100 Watts or less and generally reach a 3-10 mile radius.



History of Low Power Radio in the US: Part 1

- Early 1900s:
 - Most radio stations are low power
 - Run by schools, churches, community groups
- 1920s:
 - Larger networks spring up
 - Licensing process force smaller stations off air
- 1938-1972:
 - Low power Class D licenses available

History of Low Power Radio in the US: Part 2

- 1990s:
 - Telecommunications Act increases media consolidation
 - Microbroadcasters fight for new low power opportunities
- 2000:
 - FCC launches Low Power FM service
 - Congress passes legislation limiting LPFM availability
- 2010:
 - Congress passes Local Community Radio Act, opening the airwaves back up!

The Local Community Radio Act

- Mandates the FCC to expand the Low Power FM Radio program
- Repeals restrictions on the LPFM spectrum put in place by Congress in 2000
- Allows LPFMs on third adjacent channels
- More details at http://prometheusradio.org/lcra_demystified



FCC Application Process for LPFM

- FCC must have a rulemaking in order to determine the rules for LPFM
- FCC will open an application window to accept license applications
- FCC will accept licenses for filing
- FCC will announce singletons and MX groups
- FCC will have a settlement window
- FCC will announce MX winners
- FCC will award construction permits

Application Requirements for LPFM

- Available channel frequency
- Must be a state registered non-profit
- 75 % of board members must live within 10 miles of the proposed transmitter location
- Nonprofit headquarters must be within 10 miles of the proposed transmitter location.
- Must have an educational mission

How do you check for a free channel?

- Short answer: There is no answer until the FCC finishes making the rules.
- Long answer: Do initial check at <http://cdbbs.recnet.net:8080/lpfm.php>
 - Yes almost certainly means yes
 - No means you might be able to apply for a waiver with an engineer's help
- Doesn't hurt to look around now, but it's too early for anyone (even an engineer) to give a conclusive answer



Questions???

Please chat your questions to us in the chat window below. We will try our best to get to everyone's questions. Thanks!

Start-up Costs

- Engineering and legal fees
 - Study for application could cost \$500-\$3000
- Studio equipment:
 - \$5,000 is minimal, sky's the limit!
- Transmitting equipment
 - \$4,000-\$12,000

Recurring Costs

- Rent
 - Free if you already have a space!
- People power
 - Free if everyone is a volunteer!
- Content licensing
 - ~\$600/year for on-air broadcast
 - Additional costs for webstreams
- Equipment maintenance, office supplies, etc.

Fundraising

- Its never to early to start fundraising!
- Start a fundraising committee
- Seek help from local fundraisers/developers
- Cultivate individual donors
- Look for support from local businesses
- Apply for community grants
- Plan fundraising events!

Engaging Your Community

- Reach out to the right people
- Hold a community meeting
- Attend lots of other organizations' meetings
- Conduct a survey or community needs assessment
- Work with local media outlets to place stories about LPFM
- Collaborate with other groups
- Look at other community radio station models



Make Media Now!

- Start producing media while you wait
- Options for media making:
 - Produce a radio show on an existing station
 - Podcast
 - Start a website or blog
 - Make videos and post online
 - Produce a show on the public access tv station
 - Write stories for the community newspaper
 - Contribute to hyperlocal news sites
 - Stream online (visit www.prometheusradio.org/k2ir_v1 for recommendations on how)
- Gain community support!

Where to Learn More

Read up at

http://prometheusradio.org/preparing_for_ipfm

Sign up for updates at

http://prometheusradio.org/want_to_start_a_station

And join the discussion list at

<http://lists.prometheusradio.org/listinfo.cgi/ipfm-applicants-prometheusradio.org>

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