

## **Guidelines for Establishing Community or/and Campus FM Radio in Bhutan**



**Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority**

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**Olakha: Thimphu**

## Guidelines for Community or/and Campus FM Radio Stations in Bhutan

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### 1. Background

The Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) are the driving tool for the developmental growth of the country. At the same time, the information dissemination to the public and the need for effective media coverage is equally important to achieve and realize the developmental goals in the country.

Since Bhutan is a developing country, there is a need to enhance its media coverage in reaching and connecting the far flung rural areas. The ICT services and its application provide numerous platforms for media coverage and one such form of media platform, the “FM Radio service” is one of the most suitable forms of media service in our country when considering the geographical location of rural areas and the sheer interest of rural population.

As there are increasing interests from different entity to set up Community Radio and Campus Radio stations in rural areas in the country, it is imperative to establish the regulatory framework to enable effective and efficient functioning of such media services. Therefore, the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority have formulated the Guidelines for effective operation of the Community and Campus FM Radio Stations in the country.

### 2. Definitions

Unless the context indicates otherwise, the terms used in this Guideline shall have the following meanings:

**Community Radio Station** is a FM radio station which is primarily controlled and operated by the members of that community or an entity, which is not governmental or political in nature, on a non-profit basis which shall carry the programme mainly to serve a particular geographic community by reflecting the special interests and the need of that community.

**Campus Radio Station** is a Community Radio managed, controlled and operated by an educational institution.

**Act** means the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2006.

**Authority** means the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority.

**Government** means the Royal Government of Bhutan.

**Effective Date** means the date of signing this license.

**Frequency** means frequency of electromagnetic waves used for providing radio services.

**Rules** means rules having the force of law and made by the Authority, as authorized under the Act, and includes the National Radio Rules.

### **3. Basic Principles**

Any Community or Campus Radio Station (CRS) must be able to satisfy and adhere to the following principles:

- a) The basic objective of the Community and Campus Radio broadcasting would be to serve the cause of the community in the service area of the CRS.
- b) It shall be unambiguously proved as a ‘non-profit’ organization or an institution and shall intend to provide the service to the local community.
- c) The CRS shall be operated by and shall be designed to serve only a specific well-defined local community.
- d) It shall have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve.
- e) Programmes for broadcast shall be relevant to the educational, developmental, social and cultural needs and intended for necessary information sharing and enabling the communal harmony in the society.

### **4. Eligibility Criteria**

**4.1.**In order to be eligible for a CRS licenses, the entity shall be either:

- a) Community based organizations, which satisfy the basic principles listed above which includes civil society and voluntary organizations.
- b) Registered Societies and Autonomous Bodies and Public Trusts registered under Civil Society Organizations or any other such act relevant for the purpose.
- c) Educational institutions

**4.2.**The following shall not be eligible to establish a CRS:

- a) Individuals;

- b) Political Parties and their affiliate organizations and any such other groups affiliated to any political parties.
- c) Religious organizations
- d) Organizations operating with a motive to earn profit;
- e) Organizations expressly banned by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

## **5. Application Procedure and Operation Modality**

- a) Any entity intending to operate the Community Radio shall apply to the Authority using the application form as set out in Annex along with the administrative processing fee of Nu. 500.00 (Ngultrum Five Hundred only).
- b) The details of submission required are mentioned in the application form. The entity shall also furnish any such other documents as and when the Authority may ask him to produce.
- c) The CRS application will have to specify the geographical community or the community of interest it wants to cover.
- d) The Authority after reviewing the application documents shall issue the In Principal Approval which is for a period of six months to complete the installation of the radio station.
- e) The entity is also required to apply for the technical clearance of the equipments for FM radio stations to be imported into the country.
- f) The Authority shall then conduct a technical inspection of the set up of radio station upon receipt of applicant's formal request for the inspection.
- g) The operation of the radio station shall then commence only from the date of issuance of the formal license by the Authority which is its effective date of operation.

## **6. Grant of License and its Renewal**

- a) The Grant of License shall be for a period of one year and the license has to be renewed annually upon its expiry.
- b) No spectrum utilization fee (SUF) shall be levied on the licensee.
- c) In the event the licensee does not commence his broadcasting operations after the issuance of formal license, the Authority can cancel the license.
- d) The Grant of license is non-transferable.
- e) An entity operate only in places that are approved by the Authority and as mentioned in the licence.
- f) The licensee will be required to pay the administrative fees of Nu.500.00 on an annual basis to the Authority before the license expiry date. However, a grace period of maximum of 30 days shall be admissible. A fine of Nu.50.00 (Ngultrum Fifty only) per day shall be charged after the grace period for a maximum of 180 days after which the license shall be automatically cancelled.

## 7. Content Regulation & monitoring

The following are the guidelines for the programmes for any Community/Campus radio stations in Bhutan;

- a) The programmes of any CRS shall be abided by and adhered to the Broadcasting code of Bhutan and any Rules on Content issued by the Authority;
- b) The programmes shall be of immediate and direct relevance to the community.
- c) The emphasis shall be on developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programmes and nation's information sharing. The programming shall particularly reflect the special interests and needs of the local community.
- d) The programmes shall meet the generally accepted social standards and respect to family, community life and values of culture and tradition of Bhutan.
- e) At least 50% of content shall be generated with the participation of the local community, for which the station has been set up.
- f) Shall ensure due accuracy, fairness and impartiality in all programming and keep away from broadcasting any material which is indecent or offensive to its community, any other communities, religion or moral of any section and ethnic of Bhutanese public.
- g) Not show any undue preference or favouritism or exercise undue discrimination in any manner or on any ground, against any person or group of persons or any sections of society or organisations or political parties or topics of discussion.
- h) Not favour any particular political parties during the course of election or during campaigns of political parties or individual politicians.
- i) Shall ensure that nothing is included in the programmes broadcast which:
  - Offends against good taste or decency;
  - Contains criticism of other friendly countries;
  - 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;
  - Contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendoes and half truths;
  - Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promote-anti-national attitudes;
  - Contains anything amounting to anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;
  - Criticizes, maligns or slanders any individual in person or certain groups, segments of social, public and moral life of the country;
  - Encourages superstition or blind belief;
  - Denigrates men, women and children

- 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.

j) The talk shows in the CRS shall;

- Take into consideration all that are mentioned above;
- address itself primarily to the needs of the people and the country;
- conduct according to the Civil Service Codes and Ethics if any involvement of the civil servants in the show;
- be truthful, fair and clear, and not contain any untrue or misleading statements and be manipulative or deceptive or distorted.
- know the difference between differences of opinion and personal attacks;
- commit to accuracy and sensitivity in the issues covered in the show;
- commit to presenting reality without resorting to sensationalism;
- verify and cross check all sources for facts; and
- Co-operate with the relevant government ministries, departments, statutory boards or official agencies in all ways possible for the provision of security and emergency services.

k) The programmes broadcasted shall be preserved by the CRS for the two months from the date of broadcast.

## **8. Language**

- a) The CRS shall preferably operate in the languages spoken in the community, however a minimum of 30% be provided in the national language in a day and limited to the local matters.
- b) The CRS may also include the few broadcasting programmes in English if need be.

## **9. Election Coverage**

- a) During the electoral campaigns and election periods, the CRS shall refrain from misuse of FM radio facility for political gains and shall abide by any laws, rules, regulations, directives or code issued by the Election Commission of Bhutan or the Authority.
- b) However, the CRS shall facilitate the information sharing on the election requirements to the public but such necessary information dissemination shall be conducted in accordance with any other laws, rules, regulations, directives or code governing the behavior of media during the electoral campaigns.

## **10. Coverage during Emergency and Disaster**

The CRS shall make announcements and notifications in public interest in the community at any time in times of emergency on a real time basis without any charges.

## **11. National Security**

Any CRS shall comply with the National Security Act and the requirements of Sections 13 and 14 of the Act and any other relevant laws of Bhutan.

## **12. Public Complaints**

Any member of the public shall have the right to register a complaint regarding any programmes with the CRS and the CRS shall adopt the procedures for handling of such complaints and shall ensure that such procedures are duly observed.

## **13. Staffs and its Competence**

- a) In order to run the CRS professionally, the CRS shall employ a dedicated personnel or Radio jockey at all times during the broadcasting period.
- b) The CRS shall also possess a technical staff that will be responsible for repair and technical operation of the station.

## **14. Technical Standards**

### **14.1. Radio Frequency**

- a) The radio frequency of 91.1 MHz will be assigned for the operation of Community and Campus Radio FM station. However, in the event of any interference the Authority could also assign other frequencies.
- b) The CRS should ensure that their equipment is tuned to the assigned frequencies and avoid interference to other radiocommunications.

### **14.2. Transmitter Power and Range**

- a) CRS shall be expected to cover a maximum range of 5 km. For this, a transmitter having maximum Effective Radiated Power (ERP) of 20 W would be adequate. Therefore, for any CRS, the power shall be limited to 20W.
- 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 shall be at least 10 meters to prevent possibility of biological hazards of RF radiation.
- c) The Campus FM Radio stations shall be permitted to locate their transmitters and antennae only within their main campuses.
- d) For NGOs and others intending to establish the Community FM Radio station, the transmitter and antenna shall be located within the geographical area of the community they seek to serve.

The geographical area (including the names of villages/institution etc) shall be clearly spelt out along with the location of the transmitter and antenna in the application form.

#### **14.3.Repeater Station**

For the CRS, the installation of any repeater stations is not permitted.

#### **14.4.Other Equipments**

The transmitting equipments should be inspected and approved by the Authority before the set up and installation.

### **15. Funding & Sustenance**

The CRS intending to seek funding from multilateral aid agencies or donor agencies shall be subject to the existing Rules and Regulations of the Royal Government of Bhutan and CRS has to obtain approval from the relevant government agencies.

### **16. Other Conditions**

- a) The CRS will operate the service under these guidelines and as per the terms and conditions of the Grant of CRS license which will be signed.
- b) Further, the CRS shall be subject to adhere the conditions that as and when any regulatory Authority establishes and comes out with any additional notifications, norms, rules and regulations prescribed and issued by such Authority from time to time.



Annex 1: **Application form for Community/Campus Radio Station (CRS) Licence**

To,  
The Director General  
Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority  
Thimphu

**A. APPLICANT DETAILS:**

1. Name of the firm/organization:
2. Address:
3. Telephone No:
4. Fax No:
5. Office Email id:
6. Contact Person/Focal Person:
7. Mobile Number:
8. Email id:

**B. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

1. Community FM Radio Station  or Campus FM Radio Station  (tick any one)
2. Name of the proposed Community/Campus FM Radio Station:
3. Location of the Station:
4. Proposed Coverage:
5. Description of the programmes that will be broadcasted (Language details):

**C. TECHNICAL DETAILS**

1. Proposed power limit:
2. Proposed antenna height:

**D. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED**

I am submitting herewith the following documents:

1. Project Proposal including investment details
2. List of equipment to be purchased
3. Location clearance from the local Authority
4. Environment Clearance from the Department of Industry
5. Details of the organization

**Declaration and undertaking**

I hereby declare that:

- a. The information given above is true and complete. In the event, if any changes occur on the information provided, I undertake to inform the Authority immediately.
- b. I understand the provision of the BICM Act 2006 and undertake to abide by the Rules on Content.
- c. I also undertake to abide by all the applicable laws, regulations and rules of Bhutan as well as all the requirements and conditions specified by the Authority in relation to my license.
- d. I have submitted all the required documents above.



Signature of the Applicant with seal

Name:

Date: