
Community Radio Fund

Advice for grant applicants

GUIDANCE:

Publication Date: 8 October 2018

About this document

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom is able to make grants to the holders of community radio licences. Each year, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) allocates a sum of money for a Community Radio Fund (“the Fund”). Ofcom awards grants to Ofcom-licensed community radio stations from the Fund. Grant award decisions are made by Ofcom’s Community Radio Fund Panel (“the Panel”) in two grant funding rounds per year.

This guidance is designed to help community radio licensees when applying for a grant and should be read together with our published [Fund guidance notes](#). It sets out the kind of information that the Panel is likely to look for when considering grant applications and highlights some of the common pitfalls that the Panel has noted.

This document is intended for guidance only. It should not be relied upon as legal advice, nor understood as modifying the effect of the statutory requirements regarding the making of grants. Ofcom makes no representation or warranty, express or implied, with respect to the information contained in this guidance, nor does having regard to this guidance guarantee that any application for a grant will be successful. The Panel is required to take account of a variety of factors when considering an application for a grant from the Fund, not all of which are included in this document. Any liability therefore is expressly disclaimed. Community radio licensees should seek their own legal advice when making applications for grants.

These guidance notes may be updated from time to time. Licensees should check Ofcom’s website to make sure they are using the most recent version.

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1. Community Radio Fund

- 1.1 Under the Communications Act 2003¹, Ofcom is able to make grants to the holders of community radio licences. Each year, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) allocates a sum of money for a Community Radio Fund (“the Fund”). Ofcom awards grants to Ofcom-licensed community radio stations from the Fund. Grant award decisions are made by Ofcom’s Community Radio Fund Panel (“the Panel”) in two grant funding rounds per year (usually in April and October).
- 1.2 Ofcom aims to award as much of the annual Fund monies as possible. In order to do so, however, we must be satisfied that the applications we receive meet the purposes for which grant awards are made.
- 1.3 The Fund [guidance notes](#) set out information as to the purposes of the Fund, which items or costs the Fund will support (and which items and costs it will not) and other information relating to eligibility and how to apply for a grant. We set out in this document further guidance as to the kind of information that the Panel is likely to look for when considering grant applications. We also highlight some of the common pitfalls that the Panel has noted.

The Panel

- 1.4 As set out above and in the Fund [guidance notes](#), the Panel makes decisions as to whom to award grants. [Further information about the Panel](#) and its members is available on our website. Ofcom’s Broadcast Licensing team supports the Panel by circulating applications, minuting meetings and administering the fund. It does not, however, take part in deciding who should be awarded a grant. As a result, it is important that applicants do not assume that the Panel knows all about them and their station – the Panel relies on the application form in order to make decisions about the applicant station. It is therefore important that the application form is sufficiently detailed so that the Panel can get a good understanding of the station and the reasons why it is seeking a grant (see section 2 for further information).

Feedback from the Panel

- 1.5 After each Panel meeting, the Panel draws up a statement listing the grant recipients, providing feedback on some of the issues from the applications it received and the decisions it made. These are published under the heading ‘[previous award of grants](#)’ on our website. This paper draws on recent feedback from the Panel, and our Fund guidance notes, to offer guidance which applicants may wish to take into account when considering how they can improve their applications for a grant from the Fund.

¹ Section 359 of the Communications Act 2003.

2. Preparing your grant application

- 2.1 Applicants are strongly advised to read the Fund [guidance notes](#) and the [application form](#), [as well as Panel feedback](#) (under the heading ‘previous awards of grants’) on our website. The notes below relate to the questions in the application form.

Tell us about your station

- 2.2 Question 2 in the application form asks for *“an overview of your station with details on target community, the objectives of the service and its broadcasting philosophy”*. The Panel has noted that the answers it receives to this question often do not provide sufficient information as to the purpose and objectives of the applicant station.
- 2.3 The Panel wants to understand what you do – who are the community or communities that you serve? What is the character of your station? How many volunteers do you have? What is the station trying to achieve? What has it achieved so far? It is very important that you set out any information and supporting evidence that you think will give the Panel an insight into your station. This is your opportunity to tell them what a tremendous project your station is, and how it is valued by the community/ies you serve.

What is the grant for?

- 2.4 As set out in the Fund [guidance notes](#), the Fund is intended to help fund the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations. The Panel is therefore likely to look for information in the application which demonstrates clearly that the grant is being sought to fund the station’s core functions (as set out in the Fund guidance notes) and will help support the station’s ongoing viability. Each application is considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the particular needs of the station; the Panel notes, however that many successful proposals have been able to demonstrate how the grant would help support the station’s overall long-term financial strategy.
- 2.5 Applicants should be clear and concise about what the funding will be used for. The application should provide clear information on the grant purpose and the station’s objectives, and a timeline for grant spend if necessary.
- 2.6 Applicants should familiarise themselves fully with the Fund guidance notes as to the items and costs for which grants can be given and the items and costs that the Fund does not support. For example, there is little point in making an application for grant funding to purchase office equipment (such as laptops) or marketing materials, as Ofcom does not award grant funding for those purposes.
- 2.7 In answering question 3, applicants should give a clear explanation of how the proposed role or project would contribute to the ongoing viability of the station and applicants should ensure that this is given an appropriate level of prominence (including in the accompanying Job Description if the application is for the purposes of funding a role). If you are not applying for a fundraiser or business development role, it is important that you

tell us how the role or project will help generate income or support other roles that do, or in what way it will enhance the station's viability.

Why is the grant needed?

- 2.8 Question 4 asks why the grant is needed. This is where applicants need to put forward their case for a grant. What will the funded post-holder or project achieve? Why is the grant important to the running of your station? Why is it important to the ongoing viability of the station?
- 2.9 Applicants should also provide details of any significant changes in station circumstances, such as changes to the station's financial position which may not be evident in the most recent published accounts. This might help illustrate how much the grant is needed.
- 2.10 The Panel also needs the station's budgetary and funding information in order to help it understand the licensee's needs. We may have to take the level of need of different applicants into account if the Panel has to decide between applications, as there is limited funding available. Explaining clearly any difficulties your station is facing may be helpful to the Panel.

About the role/project

- 2.11 The proposed job description (or project description) is an important part of the application. It should match what the applicant has said in question 3. If there is a financial or fundraising element, there should be clear targets set. Proposed new roles should match the usual expectations of the job title - some job descriptions we have received are very broad or have an unrealistic number or range of objectives, where it has not been clear to the Panel how the post-holder will have sufficient time to deliver the main tasks effectively. The application and job description will be used to draft the grant agreement, should you be awarded a grant, so it is important to make sure that these are realistic.
- 2.12 If the application is to fund a project, applicants should explain clearly the project's aims and objectives, provide a timeline setting out milestones and completion targets, explain how and who will deliver the project
- 2.13 If the application is for a joint role or project (i.e. sharing a post, or for a project that will involve more than one station) applicants should tell us who the other partners are and explain clearly how they will be involved and how they will benefit, as well as how the role will be split, or project information disseminated.
- 2.14 If the grant request is to support a new role, applicants need to consider [HMRC's guidance](#) on determining the employment status of workers when they are planning (and costing) the post. This has implications for the way tax and National Insurance (NI) contributions are calculated and whether or not PAYE (Pay As You Earn) is operated on their earnings. In particular, the Panel has found that a number of applications include inaccurate calculations for the employer's NI (see further information [here](#)), which may cast some doubt on how well thought-through the application is (question 5).

- 2.15 An application to further fund a role previously supported by the Panel should give details about why the additional funds are needed and why the role was not already sustainable (question 10). If the role did not prove to be self-sustaining what were the reasons? What, if anything, has changed with this application that justifies a continuation of funding?

Other important things to remember

- 2.16 Community radio licensees may find it useful to sign up for [broadcasting updates](#) on Ofcom's website to receive email notifications of Fund application opening and closing dates (in our monthly radio broadcast updates), and also check our [Community Radio Fund](#) webpages.
- 2.17 Community radio licensees who wish to apply for a grant should refrain from re-sending a previously unsuccessful application; rather, we would encourage licensees to consider why their application was unsuccessful and how any future application might best be improved. Further, if licensees intend to 'cut and paste' from previous applications, they should ensure that they proof-read their applications – or better still, ask a 'critical friend' to do this - so that it makes sense and is brought up to date (the Panel often sees wrong dates given, for example). Use the Panel's published statements and/or verbal feedback to amend your proposals or talk to other successful applicants for advice.
- 2.18 Applicants should check their sums! In particular, check that the breakdown of costs adds up (question 5) and that the sum is the same as the total given in answer to question 1. Again, the Panel often sees applications where these details are overlooked.
- 2.19 Applicants should ensure that they send the additional documents listed in question 11 together with their applications. They may include: job descriptions and person specifications, work plans, summaries of income and expenditure, company accounts (or equivalent) and relevant Fund reports (see question 10). (Do not send key commitments, business plans, letters of support or other supplementary information).
- 2.20 Applicants in Wales are asked to provide information about the effects of a grant upon the station's use of the Welsh language and its effect on people's ability to use the Welsh language (see the guidance notes and question 12). (All the information referred to in this document is also available on our website in [Welsh](#).) Ofcom welcomes applications in the Welsh language.
- 2.21 Applicants are reminded to get their applications in by the deadline! Each year a few applications are rejected for being late. To accept late applications is unfair on those who got them in on time.

Feedback

- 2.22 The Panel does not provide individual feedback as a matter of course, but some verbal feedback may be available, should stations wish to contact Ofcom. The Panel would recommend that stations request feedback if they intend to re-submit proposals for the same post or project in the future.