

Establishing Community Radio Station in India

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

The first radio broadcasting in India was started by the Radio Club of Bombay in 1923 followed by Calcutta Radio Club in the same year and the Madras Presidency Radio Club in 1924. They all continued broadcasting service for three to four years and halted due to various difficulties. The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) started radio broadcasting in 1927 from Mumbai (then Bombay) and Kolkata (then Calcutta) and after three years IBC went into liquidation. In 1930, the Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) under the Department of Industries and Labour started radio broadcasting and in 1936 the ISBS became All India Radio (AIR) with an objective to provide information, education and entertainment, for promoting the welfare and happiness of the masses by using AM broadcasting service (AM Radio).

The first FM broadcasting service (FM Radio) was started by AIR from Chennai (then Madras) in 1977. AIR was the only radio broadcaster in India till 1993 and AIR started to sell its time slots of FM channel to private parties, thus initiated the path to begin private FM. In 2000, FM spectrum (87 – 108 MHz) were auctioned by Government of India (GoI) to private parties with an objective to open up FM broadcasting for entertainment, education and information dissemination by commercial broadcasters; to make available quality programmes with a localized flavour in terms of content and relevance; to encourage new talent and generate employment opportunities directly and indirectly; and to supplement the services of AIR and promote rapid expansion of the broadcast network in the country for the benefit of the Indian populace. The first private FM radio broadcasting was started by Radio City at Bengaluru (then Bangalore) in 2001.

The Honourable Supreme Court of India delivered a judgement on 9th February 1995 that “The airwaves or frequencies are a public property...” and “The right of free speech and expression includes the right to receive and impart information...” which led GoI to provide permission for starting Community Radio Station (CRS). In 2002, GoI permitted well established educational institutions including IITs/IIMs to setup CRS within their campus with the objective of serving the cause of the community in the service area by involving members of the community in the broadcast of their programmes. Here community means the populace available in the serving area i.e., 10 km radius around the institution.

The first community radio broadcasting was started by Anna University, Chennai in 2004 at its Guindy campus. In 2006, GoI permitted non-governmental organizations also to establish CRS in their area of service and in 2014, GoI permitted State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), ICAR institutions and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) to establish CRS.

The major difference in the content of private FM radio and CRS is that private FM radios transmit mostly film based entertainment programmes produced by professionals, but CRS transmit programmes mostly on development issues concerning the requirement of the community it addresses and also the programmes are made with the participation of the community. The CRS is expected to cover a range of 5-10 km radius with Effective Radiated Power (ERP) of 100 watts and the tower height between 15 to 30 meters.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

An organisation desirous of operating a CRS must be able to satisfy and adhere to the following principles:

- i. It should be explicitly constituted as a ‘non-profit’ organisation and should have a proven record of at least three years of service to the local community.
- ii. The CRS to be operated by it should be designed to serve a specific well-defined local community.
- iii. It should have an ownership and management structure that is reflective of the community that the CRS seeks to serve.
- iv. Programmes for broadcast should be relevant to the educational, developmental, social and cultural needs of the community.
- v. It must be a Legal Entity i.e. it should be registered (under the registration of Societies Act or any other such act relevant to the purpose).
- vi. Applications of private institutions / organisations may come with the recommendation of district administration. Further, the private institutions / organisations desirous of setting up CRS in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas / border areas will also provide site security clearance for installation at the proposed geocoordinates from local administration.
- vii. NGOs, registered societies and public charitable trusts shall be registered on NITI Aayog’s NGO Darpan portal and the applicant shall provide its unique ID along with the application.

Eligible:

The following types of organisations shall be eligible to apply for Community Radio licences:

1. Community based organisations, which satisfy the basic principles listed above. These would include civil society and voluntary organisations, SAUs, ICAR institutions, KVKs, Registered Societies and Autonomous Bodies and Public Charitable Trusts {to be self-certified by trustee(s) that they are not blood relatives/members of family (wife or husband, son or daughter, parents, siblings)} registered under Societies Act or any other such act relevant for the purpose. Registration at the time of application should at least be three years old.
2. Educational institutions.
3. Preference may be accorded to KVKs (run by Government), to enable dissemination of information pertaining to agricultural methods, use of modern technology and practices for enhancement of output, consequently enhancing the income of farmers in line with the mandate of the Government.

Not Eligible:

The following shall not be eligible to run a CRS:

- a. Individuals
- b. Political Parties and their affiliate organisations [including students, women's, trade unions and such other wings affiliated to these parties.]
- c. Organisations operating with a motive to earn profit
- d. Organisations expressly banned by the Union and State Governments.

3. PRE-ASSESSMENT

An institution interested to apply for getting CRS license has to first gather information about whether any radio station or defence organisation or aviation is located in 10 km radius (it denotes air distance not road) exists around the institution. If no radio station exists, then the interested institution has to self-assess amongst the community about the need for setting up CRS and the requirements of the targeted community.

This self-assessment shall include the survey questionnaire recommended by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) (for questionnaire visit <https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/sur1.pdf>). The survey has to be made with more than 1000 community members in order to assess the information such as the community's interest towards reading newspaper, watching TV programmes, listening to radio programmes, their interest towards participation in radio programmes and the problems faced by the community. It will ease to publicize and involve the community in CRS.

4. STEPS INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING CRS

The eligible organisations and educational institutions desirous of establishing CRS have to obtain license to establish CRS and by purchasing equipment. The MoIB is the nodal point for dealing with the Community Radio (CR) licensing process, a five step procedure have to be followed by applicants desirous of obtaining a licence to set up a CRS.

Step 1: Application for permission for setting up CRS

For submitting the CR application to the MoIB, the applicants are encouraged to submit the application online through <https://www.broadcastseva.gov.in> by making processing fee of ₹2,500. Sometimes applicants may find difficult in submitting online application, in that case the applicant shall submit the application offline. The offline 'application form for permission to set up a new CRS' is also available at the above said website, the processing fee shall be paid through a demand draft in favour of "Pay and Accounts Officer, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi".

The following documents have to be uploaded in case of online application or to be enclosed along with seven original copies of the offline application,

For educational institutions

- i. Recommendation from district administration (in case of private colleges/institutions).
- ii. Site security clearance for installation at the proposed geocoordinates from district administration (in case of private colleges/institutions in LWE affected areas / border areas).
- iii. Copy of Act under which university/institution has been set up.
(Attested copy of the supporting document to state whether the institution is private or government aided)
- iv. Recognition and affiliation certificates of the institution, wherever applicable.

(Attested copy of the supporting document regarding recognition of the institution from central or state government i.e., AICTE/UGC approval, University Affiliation, NAAC approval, NBA approval, Autonomous approval, etc)

- v. Copy of the memorandum of association/ bye laws etc of institution/organization running the institution (in case of private colleges/institutions).
- vi. Complete balance sheets with auditor's report for previous 3 years.
- vii. Profile of the institution.
- viii. Copy of the certificate under section 12 A of Income Tax Act or any other document in support of institution being non-profit.
- ix. Map of the service area (including Geo-Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude) of the Location where antenna would be placed).
- x. Profile of community.
- xi. Details of All Governing Body Members of organization in the prescribed format (available in application) along with the bio data of authorised signatory and all governing body members.

For NGO / trust / registered society

- i. Recommendation from district administration (in case of private organisations).
- ii. Site security clearance for installation at the proposed geocoordinates from district administration (in case of private organisations desirous of setting up CRS in LWE affected areas / border areas).
- iii. Copy of the registration certificate.
The registration certificate is issued by the Registrar of Societies or the competent authority for the registration of Society/ Trust/ NGO or organisation.
(If the registration certificate is in languages other than Hindi/English, kindly provide translation in Hindi/English)
- iv. Copy of the memorandum of association/ bye laws etc.
(If it is in any other language than Hindi/ English, translation in Hindi/English should also be provided)
- v. Complete balance sheets with auditor's report for previous 3 years.
- vi. Attested copy of any grant received whose funds are to be utilised for CRS.
- vii. Map of service area (including Geo-Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude) of the Location where antenna would be placed).
- viii. Profile of organization.
- ix. Profile of community.
- x. Details of All Governing Body Members of organization in the prescribed format (available in application) along with the bio data of authorised signatory and all governing body members.

For KVK / ICAR institution

- i. Recognition Certificate from ICAR.
- ii. Profile of the institution (KVK).
- iii. Map of the service area (including Geo-Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude) of the Location where antenna would be placed).
- iv. Profile of community.
- v. Details of All Governing Body Members of organization in the prescribed format (available in application) along with the bio data of authorised signatory and all governing body members.

Map of the service area:

The service area of the CRS is the coverage of broadcasting service of the radio station, usually the service area of a CRS is 10 -15 kilometres (air distance), however, depending on the terrain of the region this reach might differ. The Government approved maps are available at:

i) National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO)

Department of Science & Technology (DST), Govt. of India,
Technology Bhawan (Reception Area),
New Mehrauli Road, New Delhi – 110016
Tel - 011-26590227

ii) Survey of India

First Floor, Janpath Barracks 'A',
Behind Tibetan Market,
Janpath, New Delhi – 110001
Tel – 011-23322288

Service area maps can also be obtained from the local offices of the departments mentioned above. If maps from these offices are not available for your area, you can also use a tourist map, but it must have latitude and longitude marked on it by a certified geographer, surveyor or architect.

Profile of the institution / organisation:

Besides the vision and mission that the institution subscribes to, this should, broadly, tell about the members who constitute the organisation's governing body or board, about the history and work of the organisation and the area, the community and people it serves through its work.

Complete balance sheets with auditor's report:

Chartered Accountant audited balance sheets for previous 3 years e.g.: If you are applying in 2019 (before September month), you need to provide balance sheets for financial year 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. If you are applying in 2019 (after September month), you need to provide balance sheets for financial year 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

Profile of community:

The analysis made in pre-assessment about the community residing within 10 Km radius of location of CRS along with the details of members took part in the assessment from community and their problems as separate report.

The applications shall be processed in the following manner:

- a. Government Universities, Deemed Universities (central and state), Government Colleges, Government Schools and KVKs (run by Government) will have a single window clearance. No separate clearance shall be necessary. A meeting of Inter-Ministrial Committee shall be convened to consider applications from such organisations. After approval by Secretary, MoIB, Letter of Intent (LOI) shall be issued subject to allocation of frequency by Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC) Wing.
- b. In case of all other applicants, including private educational institutions, LOI shall be issued subject to receiving clearance from Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence & MHRD (in case of private educational institutions) and frequency allocation by WPC wing of Ministry of Communication & IT.

The MoIB shall forward the copies of the application (complete in all respects) to all concerned Ministries (including the Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Communications & Information Technology, Civil Aviation, Agriculture and Human Resource Development) for clearance and get their concern. Meanwhile the applicants are called to present their case at a Screening Committee Meeting (SCM) organised by MoIB. The SCM comprises of a group of CR experts from different organisations working in the field of CR. The members of the SCM assess the objectives of the organisation wanting to set up a CRS. The interview process helps them to evaluate the applicant's commitment and capacity to run a CRS, especially to serve the community.

The LOI shall be issued by MoIB to the applicant after getting clearance from all the Ministries concerned and based on the recommendation received from SCM. This whole process may take 3-6 months of time normally.

Step 2: Application for allocation of frequency and SACFA clearance for a CRS

The applicant has to apply for frequency allocation and Standing Advisory Committee on (Radio) Frequency Allocation (SACFA) clearance within one month of the issue of LOI, to the WPC Wing of the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology through online <https://www.wpc.dot.gov.in> by making processing fee of ₹1,000, which shall be paid through a demand draft in favour of "The Pay & Accounts Officer, Headquarters, Department of Telecommunication" payable at New Delhi.

The WPC website works properly only in Internet Explorer and is not compatible with other browsers. Visit the home page and select 'online filing of application' under SCAFA from the left panel to create new user id and to submit the SACFA application. The organisation details along with technical parameters of the antenna and CRS location have to be provided, while providing the details select "50W (Watts)" as 'transmitter output', "180KF3E" under 'class and bandwidth of emission', "Others" under 'type of equipment to be used' and provide "VHF FM broadcast transmitter" for others, "fixed service" under 'nature of service', and "FM two-way dipole" under 'type of antenna to be used'.

After submitting the SACFA application online, fill in the application for frequency allocation available at <http://wpc.dot.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/Generalllicence.doc> and submit two printed copies of SACFA online application, two printed copies of SACFA online acknowledgement, three original copies of frequency allocation application, demand draft, a copy of map of CRS location and a copy of LOI received to The Secretary (SACFA), WPC Wing, Dept. of Telecommunications & IT, Sanchar Bhavan, 20 Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110001.

After the submission of the application along with all necessary documents, the WPC wing normally take six months to issue SACFA clearance and frequency allocated for transmission.

Step 3: Signing Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA)

Immediately after the receipt of SACFA clearance and frequency allotment letter, the applicant have to submit a bank guarantee for a sum of ₹25,000 valid for a period of five years in the format available at <https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/BANKGUARANTEE-NS250707.pdf> along with two original copies (signed in all pages) of an agreement called GOPA on ₹100 stamp paper in the format available at <https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Revised%20format%20for%20fresh%20GOPA%20%281%29.pdf> and a copy of LOI, SACFA clearance and frequency allotment letter to The Deputy Director (CRS), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi – 110 001.

The GOPA agreement contains all the terms and conditions to be followed by the applicant and normally MoIB takes two to five weeks to countersign the GOPA agreement and to return an original copy of GOPA to the applicant.

Step 4: Application for Wireless Operating License (WOL)

Immediately after the receipt of signed GOPA, the applicant has to apply for WOL, the CRS shall be made operational only after the receipt of WOL but CRS can begin its test transmission after the receipt of signed GOPA.

The applicant has to apply for WOL to the WPC Wing of the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology through online <https://www.wpc.dot.gov.in> by making annual (royalty and license) fee of ₹19,700 (for having one transmitter) or ₹20,200 (for having two transmitters), which shall be paid through a demand draft in favour of “The Pay & Accounts Officer, Headquarters, Department of Telecommunication” payable at New Delhi. It is normally recommended to have two transmitters, one for transmission and another as standby.

Visit the home page and select ‘online filing of application’ under ‘license’ from the left panel to submit the license application by using the login credentials created for applying SACFA clearance. After submitting online application, submit a printed copy of online license application along with the self-attested copies of LOI, frequency allotment letter, SACFA clearance, GOPA, copy of equipment invoice of transmitter and copy of dealer possession licence to The Assistant Wireless Advisor, WPC Wing, Dept. of Telecommunications & IT, Sanchar Bhawan, 20, Ashoka Road, New Delhi – 110001.

After the submission of the application along with all necessary documents, the WPC wing normally take two to four weeks to issue WOL for transmission. It is mandatory, that a copy of valid WOL is either pasted or kept within the CRS premises which is easily visible.

Step 5: Procurement and Installation of Equipment

Once receiving SACFA clearance and frequency allotment, the applicant shall start the process of purchasing equipment. It is mandatory to start broadcasting within three months from the signing of GOPA. Apart from the setting up of infrastructure and furniture for CRS, the minimum approximate investment cost upon equipment is 5 lakhs. The applicant is also eligible to get financial assistance from MoIB for the purchase of equipment. The standard technical compliance and application form for seeking financial assistance is available at https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Application_for_Financial_Assistance_under_CRSS_0.pdf, the applicant is eligible to apply only after the receiving of LOI. Normally a radio station is expected to have recording studio, production studio and transmission studio with power backup facilities.

An applicant / organization shall not be granted more than one permission for CRS operations at one or more places. However, Central / State Universities, including autonomous bodies and Agricultural Universities set up under them, having more than one campus, may be allowed to operate CRS at more than one place, provided, the distance between two CR Stations established by same organization should not be less than 25 Kms.

Universities, Deemed Universities, Agricultural Universities & KVKs, Educational Institutions, and also branch campus, if any, shall be permitted to locate the transmitter and antenna within the geographical area of the community they seek to serve. The geographical area (including the names of villages / institutions etc.) should be clearly spelt out along with the location of the transmitter and antenna in the application form.

5. CONTENT PRODUCTION AND BROADCASTING

The CRS is allowed to produce content to match its objective as mentioned earlier and its motto “Voice of/to/for the voiceless”. The content should be relevant to the community (their interest and needs) it serves and the importance should

be on developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programmes. One CR can broadcast programmes of other CR's and AIR with permission, but 50% of the CR's programmes broadcasted should be generated with its community's participation and in local language of the community.

The CRS shall guarantee that its programmes does not include the following,

- Offends against good taste or decency;
- Contains criticism of 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 contempt of court or anything affecting the integrity of the Nation;
- Contains aspersions against the dignity of the President/Vice President and the Judiciary;
- Criticises, 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 women;
- Denigrates 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.

The CRS shall take care its broadcasting contents with respect to religions and avoid exploitation of religious susceptibilities and committing offence to the religious views and beliefs of those belonging to a particular religion or religious denomination.

Unlike other radio's CRS is not permitted to broadcast news, current affairs and political information. However, CRS can broadcast news and current affairs contents sourced exclusively from AIR in its original form or translated into the local language/dialect. AIR shall source its news to CRS without any charges. It will be the responsibility of the CRS permission holder to ensure that the news is not distorted or edited during translation.

The broadcast pertaining to the following categories will be treated as non-news and current affairs broadcast and will therefore be permissible:

- Information pertaining to sporting events excluding live coverage. However live commentaries of sporting events of local nature may be permissible
- Information pertaining to Traffic and Weather
- Information pertaining to and coverage of local cultural events, festivals
- coverage of topics pertaining to examinations, results, admissions, career counseling
- Availability of employment opportunities
- Public announcements pertaining to civic amenities like electricity, water supply, natural calamities, health alerts etc. as provided by the local administration

In addition, CRS shall adhere to the delivery of the programme and advertising code of AIR which shall be monitored at different levels (details are available at <https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/Monitoring%20Committees.pdf>).

6. ADVANTAGES

CRS are non-commercial, so they are underwritten by local organizations, providing an outlet for those organizations to spread their message. For example, the local health department may underwrite public affairs programming and bring awareness to the public of the services they can provide. In India, most of the CRS are providing information on local engagements, power failures, water supply, local administration office announcement and recently CRS play a major role during natural calamities.

CRS can train people in radio for free and offer them vital broadcast experience and how to be a radio DJ, a radio reporter, a studio tech op and a programme controller. It can provide local musicians with valuable on air time and also promote local music.

CRS in educational institutions can change life of students as it develops verbal communication skills, teaches customer service skills, gives problem solving experience, teaches an appreciation for community issues, gives huge responsibility,

introduces to creativity in programmes and organising community events, provides better local image, improves multi-tasking and multi-talent, self-management and better access to your community.

The actual use of CRS is for the upliftment of the community by creating awareness and building self confidence among the community through its radio programmes and local events. The operational CRS are experimenting in content development, programming, community involvement and sustainability. They have succeeded in providing skill development training to community women for starting their own small enterprises, creating identity to the folk artists, train the community to develop and broadcast programmes, utilising the community to increase community participation and taking ownership in radio programmes, providing internship at CRS and more.

Apart from the above, CRS can empanel itself with the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity and receive paid advertisements (details are available at http://www.davp.nic.in/writereaddata/announce/cm_g_rate_card.pdf) and also CRS is entitled to receive funding from the Department of Science & Technology, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Agricultural Department, Local District Administration and few others for organising local events to create awareness and for broadcasting advertisements. In addition, CRS can attract local advertisements for generating revenue.

Transmission of sponsored programmes shall not be permitted except programmes sponsored by Central & State Governments and other organisations to broadcast public interest information. In addition, limited advertising and announcements relating to local events, local businesses and services and employment opportunities shall be allowed. The maximum duration of such limited advertising will be restricted to 5 (five) minutes per hour of broadcast.

7. LIST OF CRS IN INDIA

The MoIB is constantly receiving applications to setup CRS as on 30-11-2018, MoIB has rejected 1163 applications, issued LOI to 583 organisations out of which 321 organisations have signed GOPA and as on 23-08-2018, 238 organisations (list at <https://mib.gov.in/sites/default/files/List%20of%20238%20Operational%20CRS%20as%20on%2023.08.18.pdf>) have established CRS and as on 25-09-2018, 9 CRS have obtained financial assistances from MoIB.

It is wise to visit at least three nearby operational CRS to know more about equipment, infrastructure, facilities, source of income and their activities towards encouraging the community participation.

8. REFERENCES

- [1] Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India 2006.
- [2] Amendment of Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India 2017.
- [3] Amendment of Policy Guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India 2018.
- [4] Community Radio Handbook, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2001.
- [5] Consultation Paper on Issues related to Community Radio Stations, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India 2014.
- [6] <https://www.broadcastseva.gov.in>
- [7] <https://www.wpc.dot.gov.in>
- [8] <https://mib.gov.in>
- [9] <http://prasarbharati.gov.in>

About the author



Mr. G. K. Jakir Hussain received his bachelor's degree in ECE from Bharathiar University, Coimbatore in 2004 and master's degree in Wireless Communication from Karpagam University, Coimbatore in 2013. Since July 2017, he is working as an Assistant Professor (Selection Grade) in the Dept. of ECE at KPR Institute of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore. He served as an Assistant Professor in the Dept. of ECE at SSM College of Engineering, Komarapalayam from July 2005 to June 2017 and also as the station manager at SSM Community Radio Station, Komarapalayam from January 2012 to June 2017. He also served as Executive Committee Member in Community Radio Association India from 2016 to 2018 and Secretary in Tamilnadu and Puducherry State Chapter of Community Radio Station India from 2014 to 2018. He is a licensee of Amateur

Wireless Station issued by the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India. He has 13+ years of teaching experience and 5+ years of radio broadcasting experience. His research interest includes image processing, signal processing, wireless communication and internet of things.