

Review of NZ On Air Access Radio Investments

Terms of Reference

NZ On Air, in a constrained funding environment where operational funding needs are increasing, wishes to review its access radio investments to assess quality, diversity and discoverability outcomes.

Background

Access Radio stations cater to niche audiences that are otherwise not well served by broadcast media. They are not-for-profit. Access radio allows groups to produce and broadcast programmes by and for their own regions and communities. Over 50 different languages are broadcast along with other types of community content. NZ On Air is most interested in “s36(c)” content: the minority audiences specified in the Broadcasting Act.

NZ On Air has not formally reviewed the Access radio sector apart from considering sector developments during each annual funding round.

Access Radio stations are funded through the Platforms stream of the NZ Media Fund, a closed stream that provides funding for operating expenses of selected entities. 12 stations are funded from Auckland to Southland. The most recent station launched is Access Radio Taranaki, initiated by that region, which began broadcasting in 2010.

Funding for Access radio stations ranges from \$135,000 to \$250,000 annually depending on size. To encourage a degree of funding proportion among stations, NZ On Air groups stations into four tiers based on population reach:

Tier 1 – Large metro

[Planet FM Auckland](#)

Tier 2 – Large urban

[Free FM Hamilton](#)

[Wellington Access](#)

[Plains FM, Christchurch](#)

Tier 3 – Provincial city

[Access Radio, Taranaki](#)

[Access Manawatu](#)

[Radio Kidnappers, Hawkes Bay](#)

[Fresh FM, Nelson](#)

[Radio Southland](#)

[Otago Access Radio, Dunedin](#)

Tier 4 – Small regional

[Arrow FM, Masterton](#)

[Coast Access, Kapiti](#)

The ‘handbook’ for those wanting to start a station is [here](#). Due to funding constraints and environmental changes NZ On Air has not encouraged the creation of any more stations.

Scope

The review will

- Provide an environmental scan that places access radio in the context of similar services both broadcast and online (eg LPFM, streaming sites, other community-based entities targeting specialist audiences)
- Compare and contrast station operating models and comment generally on strengths and weaknesses
- Comment on delivery methods – AM vs FM, online reach, and how well this serves each station’s population base
- Review 2017/2018 station reports provided by NZ On Air and assess broad trends, both collective and by station
- Analyse reported station output, including the proportion of s36(c) content, and comment on value, diversity and relevance, particularly in relation to the region served by the station
- Discuss audience feedback and engagement with each station and assess data supplied by each. The only external qualitative audience research is a 2016 Colmar Brunton report commissioned by NZ On Air [here](#). We will provide mainstream radio ratings
- Assess support from within the regions themselves, for example local body awareness, the range of programme makers recruited and retained, programme maker churn rates
- Comment on effectiveness of local and sector partnerships and collaborations
- Comment on the effectiveness of governance arrangements
- Consider the financial position and future needs of each station. The reviewer will work with NZ On Air’s Head of Corporate Services to analyse financial data; and also compare and contrast the programme making model (eg. do programme makers raise their own funding?) and third party funding options
- Consider whether the NZ On Air’s tiered approach to funding is still the best way to apply limited public funding
- Discuss whether, individually and collectively, there is clear evidence that stations/content are found and valued by target audiences
- If so, discuss ideas for future improvement.

Travel to stations will generally not be required but Skype meetings with station managers and Chairs are expected.

We anticipate the report will be succinct, audience-focused, with detailed data presented as appendices.

Timeline:

June 2018:	Reviewer appointed
30 September 2018:	Draft report provided for comment to NZOA: comments to reviewer by 18 October
10 November 2018:	Final report delivered