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Final Report:
Future of Music Coalition's Full Power NCE Radio Project

Introduction

In 2007, the Future of Music Coalition launched its Full Power campaign to enlist nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to apply for noncommercial FM radio stations. The FCC's opening of a filing window Oct. 12-19 offered such organizations a rare chance to acquire a broadcast license, and FMC, working with a consortium of partners, aimed to help those with a focus on music and the arts to take full advantage of the opportunity.

FMC's work fell into several areas. First, we analyzed studies of the noncommercial radio band across the United States to determine where stations were available. We then worked with several outreach organizations to spread news of the filing window and recruit candidates. Our own analyses of filing opportunities in major markets, cross-referenced with membership lists provided by these outreach organizations, informed several hundred phone calls of our own to arts presenters, colleges and universities, existing public and community stations, and other prospects.

After concluding our outreach efforts, we focused on assisting our committed applicants, advising them throughout the application process and connecting them with lawyers and engineers. FMC also developed resources to clarify the complicated business of applying for and starting a noncommercial radio station. Furthermore, as candidates prepared to apply for stations, FMC built on its Full Power outreach work to strengthen advocacy for federal legislation that could dramatically increase the reach of low-power FM broadcasting.

The following report provides more detail about our work.

Broad Outreach

Conferences and Articles. FMC began its outreach campaign with presentations at conferences of Chamber Music America, the Nonprofit Technology Network, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and the International Association of Jazz Educators. Fact sheets about the application process were also distributed at these conferences. FMC provided articles about the opportunity to chicagoclassicalmusic.org; a world music blog; the newsletter of Opera America; the website of Chamber Music America; and APAP's *Inside Arts* magazine.

Later announcements also appeared on Hearing Voices, a blog maintained by a independent Web and public radio producer; the e-mail forum of the

Association of Independents in Radio, an organization of independent radio producers; and the website of the Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center.

Gathering Essential Data. Next, we created a list of ZIP codes in which stations may be available. FMC interns and staffers analyzed spectrum maps of the entire United States and created a list of 3,000+ ZIP codes. At our request, Public Radio Capital, a partner in the outreach effort, also began adding ZIP codes to its analyses of Arbitron markets, most of which ranked from 14 to 140. The resulting list of ZIP codes allowed us to focus our efforts on the areas of greatest opportunity.

Approaching Qualified Prospects. We then obtained membership lists from Opera America, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Americans for the Arts and the All-ages Movement Project, an alliance of grassroots groups that empower young people through music and activism. In addition, the American Symphony Orchestra League and the International Association of Jazz Educators Opera America received our ZIP code spreadsheet and cross-referenced it with their memberships. All of these groups contacted members in areas where stations might be available to alert them to the opportunity, encouraging them to contact FMC for more information.

Developing Resources. FMC created several resources to educate potential applicants:

- an FAQ on our website for potential applicants at futureofmusic.org/articles/FullPowerfactsheet07.cfm;
- a "Step by Step" document with a timeline detailing the process of starting a noncommercial radio station, from preparing the application to signing on, with specific board actions broken out; and
- a del.icio.us page aggregating the helpful articles and tools we find online at del.icio.us/fullpower/.

Targeted Strategy

Narrowing Our Focus on Key Markets. In addition to developing a broader strategy, we used available data on radio markets to focus on the most significant opportunities for new services. Our collaboration with APAP and A4A yielded membership lists of more than 800 organizations in areas where spectrum could accommodate a new noncommercial station. To prioritize our outreach to these groups, we created a list of markets of greatest opportunity, defined as:

- markets in the top 140 where the potential station would reach more than 50 percent of the market's population or more than 200,000 people;
- markets that lacked a classical or jazz station; and
- markets that had recently lost a classical or jazz station.

This narrowed our target cities to 45 markets, and we placed them in the following order by priority and size of opportunity:

1. markets that had lost both a classical and jazz station
2. markets that had lost either a classical or a jazz station
3. markets that have neither a classical or jazz station
4. markets that have no classical or no jazz station

We eventually contacted 282 individuals or organizations in these markets by phone or e-mail. While some contacted us, we reached the vast majority on our own initiative. When appropriate, we followed up by e-mail with prospects, sending them a brief explanation of the filing opportunity, as well as links to resources and attachments such as the Full Power Step by Step document and an application checklist furnished by Common Frequency.

Outreach to Public Radio. As we contacted individuals and organizations in the arts and cultural communities, a trend emerged. In some cases, prospects reported that they were unable to consider applying for stations for a variety of reasons, but they recommended that we reach out to public radio stations already broadcasting to their communities. These stations often have already cultivated relationships with arts and cultural groups and are known for these efforts.

We began reaching out to managers of public radio stations and, as a result of this work, discussed a more coherent outreach strategy with Public Radio Capital. At the request of PRC, we continued our calls to stations and eventually contacted 39 existing public radio stations or educational institutions that operate noncommercial stations. Many of the managers contacted went on to request preliminary channel studies from PRC. We later ended our outreach to stations at PRC's request.

Team FMC: The Slate of Applicants

Recruiting and Aiding Applicants. FMC established relationships with nine organizations applying for licenses. Four of these groups learned of the opportunity directly from our efforts:

- **Virginia Commonwealth University** in Richmond, Va. This state university, one of the largest in the country without an FM station, has an Internet service and looks forward to the opportunity to be heard over the air.
- **Berks County Community TV** in Reading, Pa., a cable access station with a commitment to community programming and service.
- **The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra**, which hopes to bring classical music to a city that recently lost its sole classical music outlet.
- **free103point9** in Acra, N.Y., a long-running arts collective devoted to using radio and sound as media for innovative and experimental arts.

We also alerted three public radio stations who were already considering applications to additional opportunities to expand service, which they are now pursuing. The stations are:

- **WKSU** in Kent, Ohio, which is pursuing a station in Canton;

- **WWOZ** in New Orleans, which is working with Louisiana Public Broadcasting to expand service to Baton Rouge and to New Orleans' North Shore; and
- **WHRO** in Hamptons Roads, Va., which expects to file several applications to expand service in its area.

FMC has also been assisting two applicants who were already in the process of applying when we first contacted them: the **South Dakota School of Mines and Technology** in Rapid City, S.D.; and the **North Kohala Community Resource Center** in Hawi, Hawaii.

Potential Partners and Future Applicants. We developed a list of 76 potential partners for other applicants in communities across the country. FMC offered this list to partners in our Radio for People coalition to facilitate collaborations between future stations and local arts organizations. In addition, we shared the list with PRC and with the Station Resource Group. FMC also pinpointed nine groups that expressed an interest in future broadcasting opportunities such as low-power FM, webcasting and program production and syndication.

LPFM Outreach. In recent weeks, we have been collaborating with the Prometheus Radio Project, one of our partners in the Radio for People coalition, to coordinate support for legislation pending in Congress that would expand the reach of low-power FM. So far, 14 of our contacts have enthusiastically responded and with FMC's guidance will send e-mails to their representatives in support of LPFM.

Next Steps: Continued Support for Applicants

Members of the Radio for People coalition have been working together to stay informed about the full power application process, and FMC has been continuing to pass on any helpful information to our applicants. We check in with them on a weekly basis and remain available at all times to answer questions and offer advice. These efforts will continue until Oct. 19, when the FCC closes the application window.

Ongoing Needs. We have identified these needs shared by our applicants:

- *Legal Aid.* It is likely that most of our applicants will find their applications conflicting with those of other would-be broadcasters vying for mutually exclusive frequencies. Applicants may wish to file petitions with the FCC seeking to deny applications filed by competitors. Likewise, they may find their own applications the target of such petitions. In these situations, they will continue to need legal counsel and the funds to pay for such assistance. The Radio for People coalition is anticipating these needs and considering possible sources for financial aid. To inform this process, FMC is currently surveying applicants and their attorneys to estimate potential costs.

- *Startup Funds.* Successful applicants may require substantial funds to start their new stations and pay for staffing, equipment, market research, program acquisition and construction of studios and offices, among other needs. FMC and its partners are examining these requirements and will have further recommendations regarding future sources of funding.

FMC is now working to educate applicants and guide them to funding sources by:

- expanding our del.icio.us page as we find additional online resources;
- offering our Full Power Step by Step guide through our website; and
- planning an article that will explain to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations how a radio station could support their mission.

Why Prospects Declined to Apply

As we pursued our outreach effort, we encountered recurring obstacles and devised ways to address them. A total of 106 organizations did not respond to our calls and e-mails. We also reached 42 organizations who were not interested in applying for stations. These prospects repeatedly cited several challenges that discouraged them from applying for stations:

Steep learning curve. Many organizations that do not currently operate a radio station find the idea difficult to grasp at first. Why would they want a radio station? How do they apply? How do they run it? What programs would they air?

Our response:

- Wrote and distributed informational articles listed above.
- Updated the fact sheet on FMC's website, created the del.icio.us page and the Step by Step document.
- Informed applicants of a phone clinic arranged by PRC and of weekly conference calls held by the Pacifica Network in which experts in noncommercial radio answered questions.

Undesirable coverage areas. Many prospects acquired preliminary market studies from PRC, then declined to apply for the stations because the potential signal's coverage was inadequate. Indeed, a large number of the potential stations located in the top 140 markets often reached only the outskirts of larger cities in the area, due to the large number of full-power stations already operating throughout the country. Promising applicants in Cincinnati and in Harrisburg and Lancaster, Pa., dropped out for this very reason late in the process.

Our response: Informed applicants of possible future opportunities to buy stations or apply for low-power FM stations.

Lack of time, staff and funding. Applying for and operating a full-power FM station is not a small undertaking. We told applicants they could expect to spend \$4,000-\$8,000 on fees to engineers and lawyers during the application process. Successful applicants will need to pay for equipment, build or rent studios, and staff their operations. For these reasons, some prospects determined they would be unable to apply.

Our response:

- Connected candidates with potential funders; contacted 24 outreach and funding networks across the country.
- Asked for additional funds from PRC and the Ford Foundation. PRC came through with a matching grant for free103point9.

Other obstacles cited included:

- Poor timing. Many high schools, colleges and universities were observing summer breaks during our outreach efforts. By the time staff and faculty returned for the fall semester, they had little time to discuss the opportunity with colleagues. Other prospects were busy planning summer music festivals and could not spare time to consider preparing an application.
- Prospects' markets were currently well served by noncommercial radio.
- Operating a radio station fell outside of the mission or purpose of the organization.

What We Learned

Our outreach efforts provided an eye-opening experience. Because no one has been able to apply for a noncommercial FM station for more than seven years, we were required to devise our strategy on the fly. Along the way, we learned lessons that we hope will strengthen future efforts focused on filing opportunities for either low- or full-power stations.

- **Networking is key.** We found several of our eventual applicants via recommendations from other contacts. A member of a Richmond music nonprofit guided us to VCU. ASOL put us in touch with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. And the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts connected us to Berks County Community TV. This demonstrates that reliable guides to local arts communities may be the most effective first contacts.
- **Individuals within organizations who have backgrounds in broadcasting are valuable assets.** Even enthusiastic applicants at times faced steep learning curves when it came to preparing applications. For this reason, organizations with existing interests in broadcasting or with board members or senior executives with broadcast experience enjoyed an advantage.

Revised Approaches for Future Opportunities

- **If possible, work toward earlier development of a spreadsheet of prioritized markets and opportunities.** Our master list of the largest markets with the greatest opportunities to reach large audiences was the most useful road map in guiding our efforts.
- **Work from existing databases of organizations in underserved markets who should be notified of future opportunities.** We will create this list by compiling phone numbers and e-mail addresses of all of the individuals we contacted.
- **Reach out to colleges and universities that operate Internet radio stations.** These institutions are readymade applicants—they have staffing, money, and in some cases the infrastructure to contact lawyers and engineers in short order. Many of them already play independent musicians and musical genres unheard elsewhere in their markets. All they lack is a radio transmitter.

We did send e-mails to contacts at college stations, but it is possible that many of them were not received due to high turnover of student staff at stations and the fact that the e-mails were sent during the summer, when many students and station advisors would be on break. It might be advisable to create a database of faculty advisors to college stations, who are probably more reliably reachable than their student staffers.

Looking Ahead: LPFM

Legislation working its way through Congress would allow low-power FM stations to be established in big cities, which is not possible under current technical restrictions. If this legislation is passed and the FCC opens a new LPFM filing window, it is likely that a campaign similar to the Full Power effort and aimed at encouraging nonprofits to apply would be organized. FMC would participate only if LPFM stations would be available in all markets.

Given what we have learned from our full-power work, we anticipate the first step of such a campaign would be to obtain a study revealing where LPFMs would be available throughout the country, if such a study were conducted. If possible, FMC could develop another master list of opportunities by ZIP code and focus again on the LPFMs with the potential to reach the largest populations.

Our first priority would be to contact prospects who expressed interest in LPFM. Because LPFMs are less expensive to operate, we could also get back in touch with applicants who felt they lacked the needed resources for a full-power FM station. Colleges and universities should receive special attention; though many public broadcasters would probably not be interested in LPFM, a low-power signal would be a great fit for many student-run stations that might be less concerned with reaching large audiences.

Special effort should be made early on to determine the costs of applying for and establishing a LPFM, and finding city, state, regional or national foundations or other funders that would potentially support applicants. Many of our educational materials could be reused and would require only minimal revision to apply to LPFM.