

Low-Power FM Radio: LPFM

The FCC has a special class of radio licenses called Low Power FM Radio to create opportunities for more voices to be heard on the radio. The LPFM radio service consists of two types of radio stations: 100-watt stations, which reach an area with a radius of approximately three and one-half miles, and 10-watt stations, which generally reach an area with a radius between one and two miles.

Who is eligible for LPFM licenses?

To qualify for an LPFM license, you must be:

- A government or non-profit educational institution, such as a public or private school or state or private university.
- A non-profit organization, association or entity with an educational purpose, such as a community group, public service or public health organization, disability service provider or faith-based organization.
- A government or non-profit entity providing local public safety or transportation service, such as a volunteer fire department, local government or state transportation authority.

In addition, applicants for LPFM licenses must be based in the community in which they intend to broadcast. An organization is considered community-based if:

- It is physically headquartered or has a campus within 10 miles of the proposed transmitting antenna.
- Seventy-five percent of its governing board resides within 10 miles of the proposed transmitting antenna.
- It is a non-profit or governmental public safety organization that intends to broadcast within the area of its jurisdiction.

Who is not eligible?

LPFM licenses will not be issued to individual or commercial entities. Also, existing broadcasters, cable television system operators, newspaper publishers, and other media entities are not eligible for LPFM licenses.

How can I apply for an LPFM station?

The FCC has developed a computer software program called LPFM Channel Finder (fcc.gov/media/radio/lpfm-channel-finder) to help potential LPFM applicants find an available channel in their area. The FCC will first accept applications for 100-watt stations, followed by applications for 10-watt stations.

The FCC will give at least 30 days' notice, via a Public Notice and/or the FCC website at fcc.gov/media/radio/lpfm when a filing window is available in your state. There is no cost to file an application for a permit to construct an LPFM station or a license to operate an LPFM station. A construction permit issued by the FCC is required before an applicant is allowed to construct an LPFM station and a license issued by the FCC is required before operation of an LPFM station can begin.

If there are a number of LPFM applications in the same area, competing applications will be resolved through a process that awards one point to each applicant based on:

- The organization's presence in the community for at least two years.
- An obligation to broadcast at least 12 hours each day.
- An obligation to broadcast at least eight hours of locally-originated programming each day.

The applicant with the most points will receive the construction permit.

If there is a tie after the points are tallied, the competing applicants will be encouraged to share a license. Formerly-competing applicants who resubmit their applications together will be permitted to total their points and compare their total with any other applicant for a license.

How much does it cost to set up an LPFM station?

The construction and operating costs of an LPFM radio station can vary widely, depending on the type and quality of studio and broadcasting equipment used, as well as by whether a tower may be required. More information on the availability and costs of radio equipment is available from a variety of sources, such as electronics periodicals.

How does my organization apply?

Applications for new LPFM stations, construction permits, or for major changes to LPFM permits or licenses can only be filed during the dates specified for an application filing window. Such applications may only be filed online via the Media Bureau's electronic filing system at fcc.gov/general/media-bureau-electronic-filing-and-public-access. An application will be returned, without consideration, if it is received at a time outside the filing window.

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