

Ghana Community Radio Network

Secretariat:

44-A Lagos Avenue, East Legon

Tel : (233).(21).516.441

/Fax : (233).(21).516.442

P O Box KA 9482, Accra, Ghana

GUIDELINES IN MANAGING A COMMUNITY RADIO STATION

These guidelines are drawn from the living practice of community radio by members of the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN). They are based on the philosophy of community radio articulated and continually revisited as a body by the founding members of GCRN from the time of the formation of the organization in December 1999. They are, perhaps most importantly, informed by honest and open sharing among GCRN members of the difficulties of realizing the principles of community radio in day-to-day practice -- even as they deepen their commitment to them.

These particular guidelines were discussed and adopted at the 4th AGM of GCRN held in Wa in December 2003.

STAFFING --- THE COMMUNITY RADIO WORKER

1. Because community radio is a different kind of radio, many qualities are required of Community Radio Workers. The most basic include:
 - Competence in local language
 - Cultural competence
 - Talent
 - Ability to learn
 - Drive or get-up-and-go
 - Flexibility and a co-operative nature
 - Involvement in community activities
 - Good standing in the community.
2. Depending on the tasks they perform, Community Radio Workers may additionally need:
 - Ability to speak English
 - Literacy in the vernacular and/or English
 - Formal education at various levels.
3. The spirit and practice of volunteerism is essential to community radio. Volunteers not only sustain the non-profit vision and operations of a community radio station; they are also a key measure of community participation. All who work at a community radio station are regarded as volunteers on the premise that they are motivated primarily by love for their community and of community radio.
4. "Staff" in community radio simply means those who contribute on an ongoing basis to the day-to-day operations of the station by performing certain functions at its physical site. The word "staff" in community radio is synonymous with "volunteer."

5. Because the words "staff" and "volunteer" mean different things in other, non-community-radio, settings or operations, anyone who works at a community radio station is referred to as a **Community Radio Worker**.
6. All Community Radio Workers need to be imbued with the principles of community radio and with the vision and mission of the community radio station in particular.
7. Prior orientation is a must for all Community Radio Workers, whatever and however limited their tasks may be. This orientation should include what volunteerism and compensation mean in community radio practice.
8. In community radio there are various forms of compensation or reward. These include growing in one's vision by practising it, exposure and development of one's talent, gaining and developing knowledge and skills, and enhanced status in the eyes of the community who value the volunteer's services.
9. Non-monetary compensations must be of greater value to Community Radio Workers than money. This applies whether or not they have an independent source of income.
10. Community Radio Workers may or may not draw money from the station. Depending on their individual personal circumstances, some may draw none, some may draw expenses such as transport and some may draw a regular stipend. "Regular" means on a recurring, scheduled basis; it may be based on a working calendar (daily, weekly, monthly, etc), on output (eg, per programme), etc.
11. When Community Radio Workers draw a regular stipend, this is not "pay" as such because the value of their work is beyond whatever they may receive. It is simply a practical recognition that some may need a form of support to be free or freer to perform their functions at the station.
12. Again depending on their individual personal circumstances and possibly also the requirements of their work at the community radio station, the stipend may vary among those who receive it.
13. Where the listening community of a community radio station only has limited sources of income, a stipend may be a way of ensuring that people who contribute regularly to the station are not limited to those who are better off financially.
14. It may be necessary to ask Community Radio Workers who are contributing to the station for the first time to do fixed-term internships without receiving any money, whether in the form of expenses or a stipend. This is to help ensure that they are motivated more by the spirit of community radio than by anticipated financial gain.
15. A stipend needs to be equated with a modest living allowance in keeping with the circumstances of the listening community. Even in the highly unlikely event that a community radio station could generate enough funds to peg the stipend at competitive market rates, it should not do so. (Rather, any "excess" funds should be ploughed back to enhancing the mission of the station.)

16. It is important for all Community Radio Workers to understand the practical terms under which each contributes h/er time, energy and talent and to agree that any differences are just.
17. For a community radio station to serve its community to the best extent possible, it requires a group of workers who can be relied on consistently to perform certain key functions and/or to meet a certain desired output. They may be referred to as the "Core Team."
18. The "Core Team" should be as multi-skilled as possible, able on its own, if necessary, to carry out the basic functions of the station. It may or may not include individuals on a regular stipend.
19. To enable the station to plan and have the greatest flexibility to carry out its mission, the terms of volunteerism of each Community Radio Worker should be written into an agreement. The agreement represents mutual obligations based on the common objective of serving the listening community. The duration of the agreement can be as short or as long as mutually agreed.
20. Such agreements need to be reviewed and renewed periodically, both in letter and in spirit.
21. Reviewing and renewing such agreements – and in general interacting with other Community Radio Workers on their performance, job satisfaction and welfare – is likely most effectively and efficiently done by a specific Core Team member or members. It is important that the member(s) so assigned have a full understanding of the relationship of volunteerism to community radio. It is also helpful if they are trained in team-building and management.
22. Whatever their task and whether or not this involves being part of the "Core Team", Community Radio Workers should never be completely confined to the station, eg performing administrative or broadcast staple tasks. Regular immersion in the community doing participatory work is necessary to keep and grow the other-centred spirit of community radio. This is particularly true of Community Radio Workers whose broadcasting tasks make them household names and lend them "celebrity status."
23. No matter how talented Community Radio Workers, their agreement with the community radio station needs to be mutually terminated when their work and behaviour show that they are no longer driven by the spirit of community service and volunteerism. Experience has shown that retaining such workers out of expediency will eat at the heart of community radio.
24. Community expectations and norms contribute to the effective management of the operations of a community radio station and in particular Community Radio Workers. In addition to face-to-face interactions with the listening community, the station's programmes can help shape those expectations and norms by regularly discussing what the philosophy and practice of community radio involve.