

Evaluation of the Community Radio Fund

Final Report

December 2021



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List of abbreviations

CMA	Community Media Association
CRF	Community Radio Fund
DCMS	The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
LGA	Local Government Association
VCSE	Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise

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Executive Summary

Introduction and background

The Community Radio Fund was established in 2005 to help to fund the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations. Beyond the light-touch monitoring of the fund that Ofcom conducts annually there has been no previous process or impact evaluation of the CRF since it was launched. In July 2021, DCMS commissioned independent social and economic research consultancy Wavehill to undertake a research project to analyse the impact of CRF awards and the outcomes for community radio stations that received them and to understand what worked well and less well about the fund and why.

Fund design and delivery

During the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 a total of 106 CRF grant awards were approved across 83 community stations. Some 18 community stations received more than one grant award during this period. Combined, the value of the grant awards was £1,677,608 with an average award of £15,865 per applicant.

Over two thirds (68%) of grant recipients agreed that the criteria and eligibility requirements were clearly explained and easy to understand and eight out of ten grant recipients report to be satisfied with the grant application process. The main areas where grant recipients reported dissatisfaction with the application and decision-making process related to decision-making timeframes, greater clarity on the assessment criteria and a lack of feedback on why an application was unsuccessful. Whilst the application form is relatively light touch, the process would benefit from migrating to an online application system which will facilitate more detailed analysis and interrogation of the application data.

Most grant requests were for business development and fundraiser positions, with applicants making a case that these roles would help them to build financial sustainability. Stations highlighted the ability of dedicated postholders to open new opportunities and funding streams, including through the creation of new products or service offer which could help to diversify their income sources.

Impact of the fund on the sector

The relaxation in 2015 of some of the financial restrictions that apply to the community radio sector has provided greater flexibilities for stations to secure income from advertising and sponsorship. However, many lacked experience and tools to realise these opportunities straight away. As such, the CRF has provided an important vehicle for the sector to bring in skills, experience, and capacity to support efforts to grow income streams through commercial channels. In the absence of the CRF, feedback from grant recipients suggests that many would have been able to make less or no progress in this regard.

CRF grants have supported a much wider range of activity than simply increasing income streams. Activities relating to community outreach, improving business and operating systems and supporting volunteers play a central role in ensuring the survivability of a station and the wider sector. Just over half of grant recipients reported that their grant enabled them to develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan.

Just over a third (35%) of stations report to have been able to employ more staff due to their grant award. Around six in ten (59%) of stations indicated that their grant funding has enabled them to recruit more volunteers. This provides a level of confidence that the funding can deliver longer-term benefits for the recipient stations. Full impact may not be evident for several years.

Comparison of station's annual income streams before and after their grant award presents a positive picture, with an average increase of 37% and a median increase of 65%. Just over half (54%) of stations reported that they increased their unrestricted financial reserves as a direct consequence of their grant, improving their resilience. Feedback from grant recipients also suggests that stations are developing more 'commercial' income streams albeit further support may be required to continue this trend.

The appointment of a Business Development Manager post has enabled some stations to reduce their expenditure costs, for example by renegotiating their premises costs or securing in-kind support or donations for things that they previously had to purchase. Two thirds (67%) of stations rated the fund as effective in helping with fundraising and as a result supporting them to become self-sustaining. The process of successfully delivering a CRF grant project gave some stations the necessary confidence and experience to seek out further grant funding sources. The majority (89%) of grant recipients report to be confident that their radio station will be able to run without being over-reliant on grant funding over the next five years.

The challenge many stations have faced is in maintaining the momentum of the activity supported through their grant award. Whilst stations have reported a positive uplift, their ability to continue to grow income streams through on-air advertising, grant awards and commissioned work was influenced by capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence of station staff or volunteers. Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain the positive impacts achieved through the CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.

Delivering social gain

Analysis of stations key commitments showcases a range of content areas incorporated into their scheduling, for example covering the promotion of social interaction, religious programmes involving worship and readings, programmes delivered in languages other than English, military welfare, a focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and more broadly a celebration of cultural diversity.

Grant recipients are actively promoting and supporting a wide range of local and national causes, helping their listenership to navigate to local sources of support. Examples include the promotion of community foodbanks, local fundraising causes, coffee mornings for socially isolated or vulnerable groups, and exercise classes. They are helping to extend the reach of statutory and non-statutory partners into an audience profile that is not generally served by commercial radio.

Around one in five (19%) grant recipients used their grant for volunteer organisation and support. The expansion of community outreach activities has also helped stations to develop new volunteer roles thus broadening the appeal of the sector to more than a core of radio enthusiasts. A strong and growing volunteer base can form a central part of a station's financial and operating plan.

The use of the CRF grant funding has not only served to support stations to become more self-sustaining, but in doing so it has protected a considerable number of volunteer roles that are providing wider economic and social benefits to the communities within which they are based. Grant funding has also enabled stations to develop new training offers to support local people, largely through the work of a Business Development Manager establishing links with local schools or colleges.

Recommendations

1. Ofcom should review the consent arrangements in the annual financial returns, application, and grant report forms to enable information to be shared with DCMS and any external contractor governed by a data sharing agreement.
2. Ofcom should undertake analysis to identify stations that have never applied for a grant through the Fund and cross reference this with the detail contained in their annual financial returns. Detailed analysis of the annual financial information reported by licence holders compared to those that have received CRF funding and those that have not can support efforts to determine the impact and additionality of the Fund.
3. Undertaking a more detailed analysis in each financial year of all grant applications would be valuable to enable the identification of trends within the profile of applications by area, duration of licence held and community of interest.
4. The application process should be migrated to an online platform to facilitate more detailed analysis and interrogation of the application data. Consideration should be given to including a small number of metrics into the application and grant report forms which can aid future assessment of impact of the fund.
5. Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain the positive impacts achieved through the CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.
6. One of the common growth areas identified by stations related to expanding their portfolio of work with schools and colleges, providing training opportunities to young people. This may highlight a potential to grow income streams from the provision of education and training activities which could be facilitated by liaison between DCMS and the Department for Education.

7. The annual financial returns that stations submit to Ofcom do not require them to report on their contribution to social objectives and as such an opportunity to capture the full contribution of the sector to wider societal or policy objectives has not been realised to date. This should be addressed by Ofcom working in partnership with the key sector bodies.
8. DCMS and the Local Government Association should work to raise the profile of the sector with public service commissioners to showcase how the sector delivers social gain and supports a wide range of local priorities.
9. Whilst Ofcom collates basic information on the number of volunteers and volunteer hours across the community radio sector, it may be helpful to capture further profile information on the volunteer base.

1 Introduction and background

Section summary

- The Community Radio Fund (CRF) was established in 2005 to help to fund the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations.
- Since 2016/17, the CRF has received 720 applications for funding, and provided full/partial awards to 268 (37%) and declined 452.
- Beyond the light-touch monitoring of the fund that Ofcom conducts annually there has been no previous process or impact evaluation of CRF since it was launched.

1.1 Overview of Community Radio

Community radio stations provide a new voice for hundreds of local communities across the UK, underpinned by the work and enthusiasm of volunteers. They reflect a diverse mix of cultures and interests and provide a rich mix of mostly locally produced content. Community radio stations typically cover a small geographical area with a coverage radius of up to five km and are run on a not-for-profit basis. They can cater for whole communities or for different areas of interest, such as a particular ethnic group, age group or interest group.

Outlined in the Communications Act 2003, community radio services are required to be *'provided primarily for the good of members of the public or of a particular community, rather than for commercial reasons'* and to *'confer significant benefits on the public or on the communities for which they are provided'*.¹

The specific characteristics of community radio stations were outlined in the 2004 Community Radio Order.² This included a requirement to be *'for the good of members of the public or of particular communities...in order to deliver social gain, rather than primarily for commercial reasons or for the financial or other material gain'*.

The community radio sector has continued to grow in recent years. From a handful of stations granted a licence in 2005,³ there were 298 stations broadcasting at the end of the 2019/20 financial year, compared with 283 in 2018/19.⁴ The sector is staffed by 20,000 volunteers and has around one million listeners a week. As of 2019, Ofcom reported that on average, stations operate with 87 volunteers who together give around 209 hours of their time a week, which is greater than the numbers employed in the BBC/commercial.⁵

¹ Communications Act 2003 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents>

² Community Radio Order 2004 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1944/contents/made>

³ Includes Skyline Gold 102.5, The Eye and Unity 101

⁴ Ofcom Annual Community Radio Fund Report, 2019/2020

⁵ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence/radio-broadcast-licensing/community-radio>

1.2 About the Community Radio Fund

The Community Radio Fund (CRF) was established in 2005 and is owned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), but operated by the UK's communications regulator Ofcom, to help to fund the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations. These core functions include:⁶

- Management
- Fundraising to support the station (e.g. grants, commercial funding)
- Administration
- Financial management and reporting
- Community outreach
- Volunteer organisation and support

To apply for the grant, stations must have 15 months remaining on their licensing agreement and the funding cannot be used to purchase a first-time licence or an extension of their current one. The application form requires stations to identify their target community as well as their objectives and broadcasting philosophy. Grants awarded under the Fund cannot be given for the following:

- Capital expenditure/equipment (for the office, studio, transmission etc.)
- Vehicle costs
- Volunteer expenses
- Cost of building repairs, construction, or maintenance
- Programming or marketing costs
- Utility bills
- Rent and/or mortgage payments
- Licence fees or copyright fees (such as PPL/PRS or software fees)
- Fees payable to Ofcom (including but not limited to application and licence fees)
- Retrospective grants i.e. to cover expenditure already incurred
- Costs associated with launching a radio station
- Costs relating to another licence type held by the licensee
- Funding for the repayment of loans
- Company directors' fees
- Costs reimbursed or to be reimbursed by funding from other public authorities or from the private sector
- Interest payments (including service charge payments for finance leases)
- Statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties

⁶ Ofcom (2021) Community Radio Fund: Guidance Notes. 1st December 2021

Applications are assessed by the Community Radio Fund Panel, appointed by the Policy and Management Board at Ofcom, whose functions are:⁷

- a) To consider applications for grants from the Community Radio Fund in order to decide whether to exercise its delegated powers
- b) To consider the circumstances under which grants from the Fund shall become repayable to Ofcom
- c) To encourage applicants in the effective use of targeting the Fund's resources
- d) To consider ways of expanding the Fund for future years.

Once a station has received a grant, they will not be eligible to receive another in the same financial year. Only once projects have reported their spending will any application be considered in a new financial year.

Ofcom publishes a statement from the Panel following each funding round which sets out the awards made and explains the Panel's funding priorities.⁸ The most recent report prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, covering the financial year 2019/20, outlined that the Panel considered fundraising and promoting long-term sustainability to be critical, core activities and therefore favoured proposals with these aims. Previous reports have also highlighted priorities around supporting collaborative working or joint applications from stations.

The Panel has a reporting procedure in place to check that grant awards are spent as agreed. A grant agreement is put in place between Ofcom and each licensee awarded a grant, and this sets out the terms of the award, including an expenditure period. At the end of the grant expenditure period successful applicants are required to complete a report (the 'grant report') detailing how they spent their Fund grant. In addition, interim grant reports are requested halfway through the relevant expenditure period. The interim reports are to help identify any potential issues arising with the grant spending. If a satisfactory report is not made, the Panel may require repayment of the grant and may consider not making a further grant to a licensee.

Since 2016/17, the CRF has received 720 applications for funding, and provided full/partial awards to 268 (37%) and declined 452. Over the two most recent funding rounds prior to Covid-19 (2018/19 and 2019/20), 72 applications were considered, asking for a total of £1,444,814 (£675,182 in the first round and £769,632 in the second round) with grant funding of more than £427,000 allocated across 26 radio stations.⁹ Once successful, the funds are requested to be spent within 14 months of receipt.

⁷ Ofcom (2021) Community Radio Fund Panel: Terms of reference: Approved by Ofcom's Policy and Management Board on 26 May 2021

⁸ Full details of these can be accessed at <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20200520140832/https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/radio-broadcasters/community-radio-fund>

⁹ Ofcom Annual Community Radio Fund Report, 2019/2020

1.3 Research aims and objectives

Beyond the light-touch monitoring of the fund that Ofcom conducts annually there has been no previous process or impact evaluation of the CRF since it was launched in 2005 and as such no investigation into the impact of the grant funding on stations' long-term prospects or an assessment of how well the fund's processes are working. In July 2021, DCMS commissioned independent social and economic research consultancy Wavehill to undertake a research project to:

1. Analyse the impact of CRF awards and the outcomes for community radio stations that received them, including financial sustainability and, where possible, social impact.
2. Conduct research with award recipients and other stakeholders to understand what worked well and less well about the fund, and why.

Specific research areas covered by the research include:

- Understanding how awards have changed a station's financial position and sustainability during and since the award
- Where the funding provided related to job roles, understanding the value that the post-holders have brought and whether the roles are still in existence, with reference to specific projects and the impacts of those projects in the community
- Where the funding provided related to projects, understanding what benefits those projects have brought to the stations in question, and to the communities that those stations serve
- Understanding whether grant recipients have been impacted in different ways, for instance those undertaking specific projects or funding specific roles through their grant - or whether wider factors such as the location, size or function of the community radio station affect the impact of CRF funding.

2 Research method

A mixed-method research design was used to deliver the process and impact assessment work. This adheres to the principles outlined in the Government's Green and Magenta books. The research team developed a light touch Qualitative Comparative Analysis method to deliver a theory-based evaluation supported by some quantifiable data. Given there was a wide variation in delivery approach by grant fund recipients, it was not possible to adopt a more robust research approach such as Contribution Analysis. The key elements of the research are outlined below.

2.1 Desk-based review

To guide the development of primary research tools and provide context for the delivery of the CRF programme, the research team completed a series of desk-based review tasks. This included analysis of all CRF grant awards between 2016/17 and 2019/20 and review of application, guidance, and monitoring forms. The research team also examined a range of relevant publications relating to the community radio sector. The desk-based review stage was supported by consultations with Ofcom, the Chair of Panel, DCMS and the Community Media Association.

2.2 Survey of grant recipients

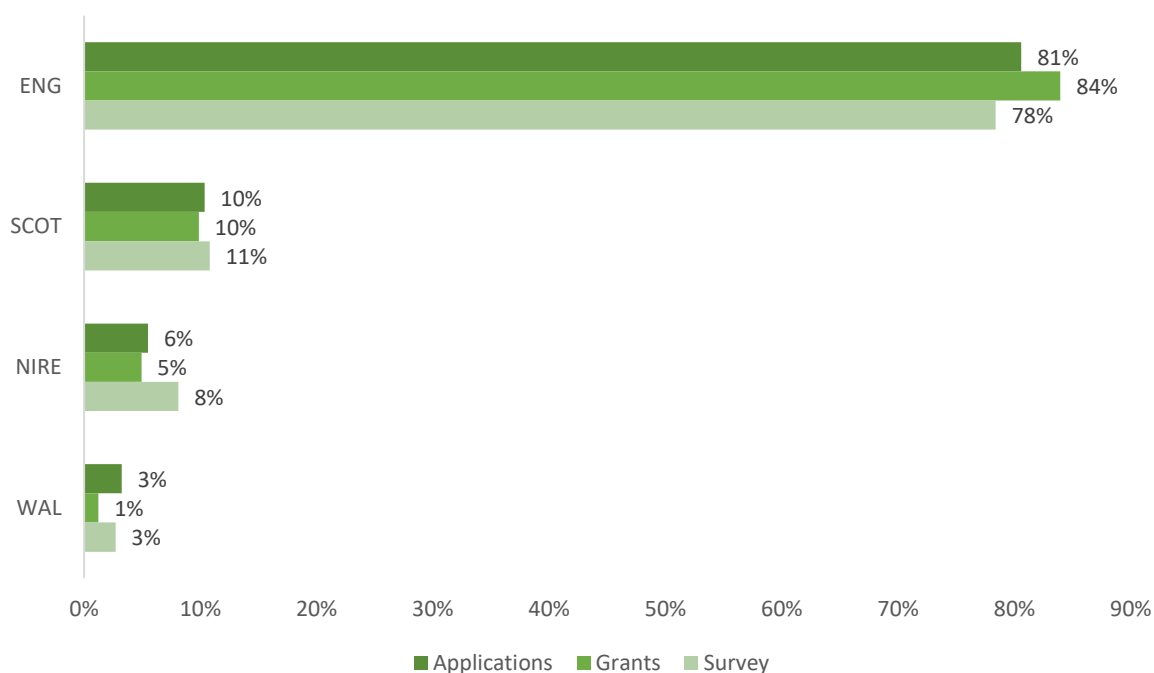
The research team co-designed a short online survey with Ofcom and DCMS ([Appendix 1](#)) which was disseminated to the 83 community stations that had received grant funding between 2016/17 and 2019/20. A link to the online survey was disseminated by Ofcom on the 9th of September and closed on the 12th of October 2021. The evaluation team used a 'push to web' protocol to contact survey non-respondents by telephone to secure the best possible response. A total of 37 full survey responses were secured, equating to a 45% response rate.

2.2.1 Profile of survey respondents

Overall, the majority of stations applying for grants were located in England, along with the amount receiving grants and completing the survey. As the proportion of stations in England is so much higher than Scotland, Northern Ireland, or Wales, this suggests scope to increase awareness of the fund in such areas (Figure 2.1 over page). Analysis of the regional profile of applicants, grant recipients and survey respondents demonstrate that that the survey responses are broadly comparable to the profile of grant recipients (Table 2.1 over page).

It also highlights that there are relatively lower levels of applications and grant awards from the East of England, London and the North East, with again scope to increase the awareness of the fund in these regions.

Figure 2.1: Nation of station (sector, cohort and survey)



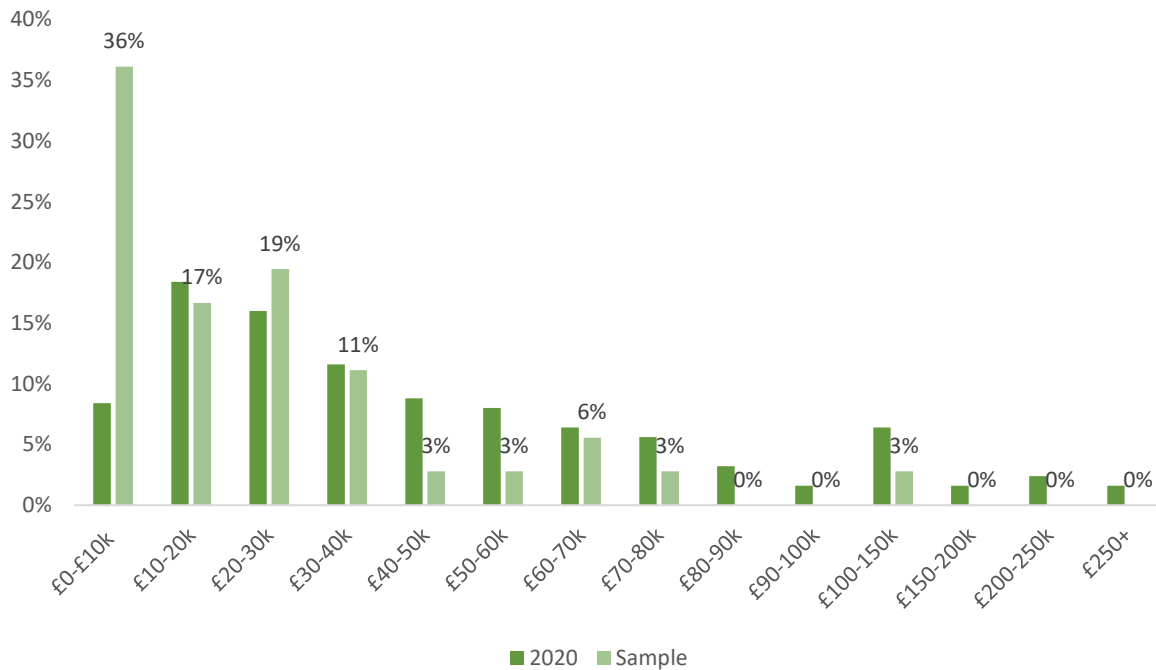
Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021 n=37, Ofcom Licencing list 2021 n=300, Ofcom Grants awarded n=83

Table 2.1: Regional analysis of applicants, grant recipients and survey respondents (England)

Region	Applications	Grant	Survey	Applications	Grant	Survey
South East	48	18	8	24%	36%	38%
South West	45	8	4	22%	16%	19%
Yorkshire & Humber	28	8	4	14%	16%	19%
North West	30	14	5	15%	28%	24%
East of England	28	7	3	14%	14%	14%
West Midlands	23	6	3	11%	12%	14%
East Midlands	24	2	0	12%	4%	0%
North East	11	3	1	5%	6%	5%
London	11	2	1	5%	4%	5%
East of England	1	0	0	0%	0%	0%
Total	201	50	21			

Against the wider population, the respondents to the survey were typically smaller in terms of financial scale, though this is to be expected given more financially secure stations are less likely to apply for the grant funding offered by the CRF. Over one third had an income of less than £10k compared to eight per cent in this income bracket across the sector (Figure 2.2 over page). While there were similar proportions of stations with income between £10k and £40k, there were fewer respondents with higher income.

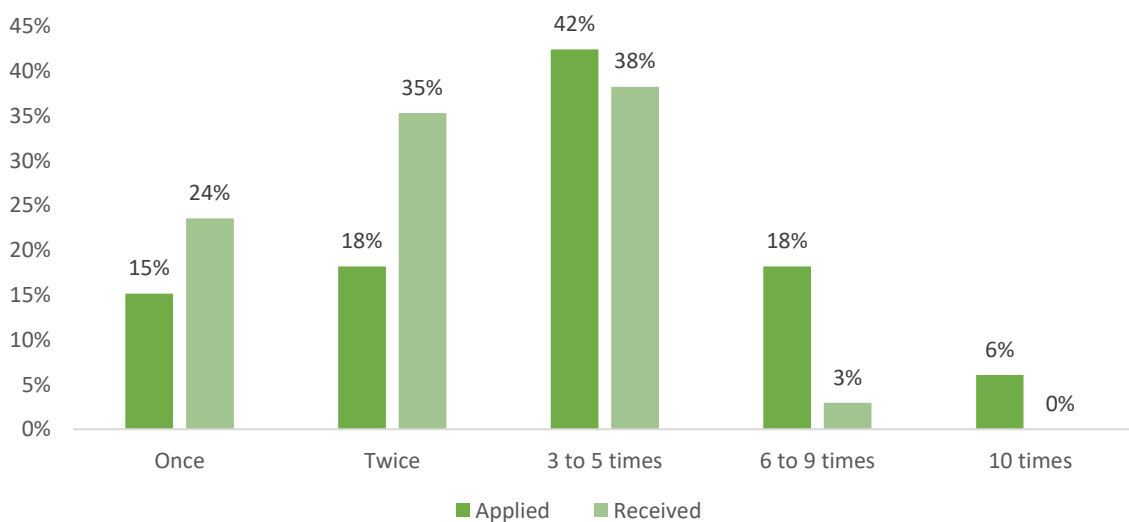
Figure 2.2: Income of stations



Source: Wavehill Survey, n=37 and Ofcom Communications and marketing report 2021, n=250

The largest proportion of respondents to the survey (62%) have applied for a grant three times or more, whilst 76% have applied more than once (Figure 2.3). Nearly three quarters (72%) have received multiple funding awards. On average, stations applied for a grant four times and on average received a grant three times. From those responding to the survey, the maximum number of applications from one station was 10, and the maximum number awarded was six.

Figure 2.3: Frequency of applications

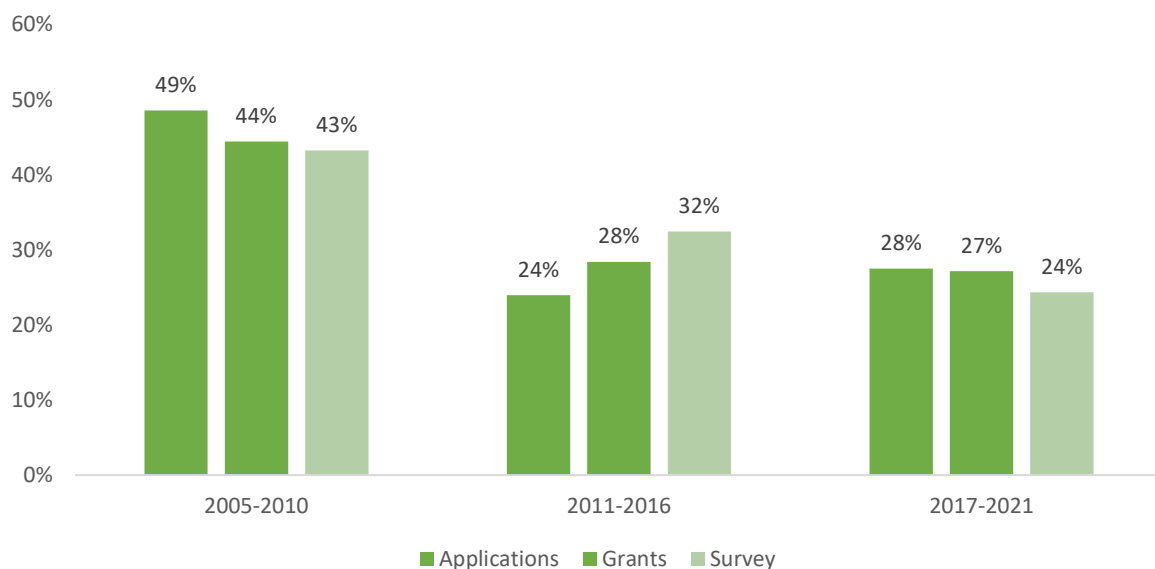


Source: Wavehill Survey, n=37

The majority (81%) of recipients reported to have a business plan, with 70% of recipients reporting having a fundraising strategy.

Comparing the 37 respondents to the fieldwork with the 83 grant applicants and the 300 community radio stations provides some insight into the representativeness of the results, however, the variables for such comparisons are limited. All stations were formed between 2005 and 2021. Overall, over one third (42%) were formed prior to 2010, with the largest proportion (17%) forming in 2007. Similarly, around one third of those that received grants as well as around one third of those responding to the survey were formed prior to 2010 (36% and 32% respectively). With that said, the largest proportion (12%) that received a grant were formed in 2017 and the largest proportion responding to the survey were formed in 2015. This suggests that the grant is being used by a mix of younger and older stations (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Year of formation (sector, cohort and survey)



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021 n=37, Ofcom Licencing list 2021 n=300, Ofcom Grants awarded n=83

While there appears to be some consistency between the respondents and the population on these variables, given the available data it has not been possible to provide a more robust means of demonstrating the validity of the results when applied to all applicants or the wider community radio station population. This is a limitation of the findings which is highlighted below.

2.3 Deep dive interviews

A series of in-depth qualitative interviews were completed with a sample of survey respondents that had consented to be contacted by the evaluation team. These interviews provided an opportunity to gather further evidence and insight on the use of the grant funding by recipient community stations, to discuss delivery challenges and successes, achievements and impacts, success factors, future support needs, the impact of Covid-19, and future opportunities for the community radio sector. A total of 23 community stations consented to take part in the deep dive interviews. The evaluation team aimed to engage several stakeholders per community station, including staff, volunteers, sponsors, supporters, and local partners. Combined the evaluation team completed 28 in-depth interviews across 16 community stations (listed in [Appendix 2](#)).

2.4 Assessing social gain

In addition to primary data collection through the online survey and deep dive interviews, the research team undertook a review of the grant recipient's websites and social media content. This was used to support an assessment of the 'social gain' delivered by the community radio stations by collating information on the listenership of each station, volunteer opportunities, the provision of education or training, the promotion of social inclusion and civic engagement and celebration of local identity and culture.

2.5 Analysis of grant applications and grant report forms

The research team completed an assessment of the grant application forms and completed grant reports for all grant recipients who consented for this to be shared. Consent was captured through the online survey. A total of 25 community stations provided consent. This aspect of the evaluation enabled the research team to cross-reference with the information gathered through the survey and deep dive interviews. It was also used to highlight potential enhancements to the management and administration of the grant funding.

2.6 Caveats

While the methodology and evidence presented provides insight and feedback on the Community Radio Fund from grant recipients, there are several limitations that it is important to outline. Firstly, the sample size is small in volume despite representing over 12% of the 300 population with 37 respondents. The ability of a few stations to affect the response proportions must therefore be acknowledged as each respondent can account for 2.7% of any output considered.

Secondly, this research has been conducted with stations who have successfully been awarded a grant through the CRF. While this is mitigated to some extent by many (62%) of the stations also having been unsuccessful at least in one of their applications, the evidence does not consider what the effect of not having received the grant would have been. It is therefore not possible to fully attribute all the effects reported by the stations to the grant, though self-determined impacts provide some indication.

Further challenges came through securing data from Ofcom due to GDPR and potentially the accuracy of the data that has been shared, linked to the inability to undertake a full Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The community radio stations themselves are mostly volunteer led and may not have the time or correct knowledge to provide accurate data. This has also affected the data returns in some instances, with either gaps in the survey responses or an inability to participate. The research was unable to access all the sector or station data held by Ofcom due to the consent to share not currently being in place. Consequently, it has not been possible to validate survey responses or to fill gaps in the information collected.

3 Fund design and delivery

Section summary

- During the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 a total of 106 CRF grant awards were approved across 83 community stations. Some 18 community stations received more than one grant award during this period.
- Combined value of the grant awards was £1,677,608 with an average award of £15,865 per applicant.
- Most grant requests were for business development and fundraiser positions, with applicants making a case that these roles would help them to build financial sustainability.
- Over two thirds (68%) of grant recipients agreed that the criteria and eligibility requirements were clearly explained and easy to understand and eight out of 10 grant recipients reported to be satisfied with the grant application process.
- Whilst the application form is relatively light touch, the process would benefit from migrating to an online application system which will facilitate more detailed analysis and interrogation of the application data.
- The main areas where grant recipients reported dissatisfaction with the application and decision-making process related to decision-making timeframes, greater clarity on the assessment criteria and a lack of feedback on why an application was unsuccessful.

This section of the report covers the review of the design and delivery processes used to administer CRF funding.

3.1 Overview of funding awards

During the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 a total of 106 CRF grant awards were approved across 83 community stations. Some 18 community stations received more than one grant award during this period. Combined value of the grant awards was £1,677,608 with an average award of £15,865 per applicant.

The End of Year reports produced by Ofcom over this period highlight that the majority of grant requests were for business development and fundraiser positions, with applicants making a case that these roles would help them to build financial sustainability.¹⁰ None of the grant awards over the period covered collaborative bids from community stations despite this being flagged as an opportunity in Ofcom's End of Year report in 2014/15.¹¹

¹⁰ Ofcom (2020) - 'Community Radio Fund: End of year report 2019/20'

¹¹ Ofcom (2015) - 'Community Radio Fund: End of year report 2014/15'

3.2 Promotion of the fund

The Panel meets twice in each financial year to consider submitted applicants. Feedback from community radio stations and sector bodies reveals satisfaction with the promotion of the Fund. Ofcom provide regular direct mailing to all community radio stations that hold a licence when a next round of funding reopens, as well as promoting via social media channels.¹² Whilst many community radio stations have applied multiple times, **there is merit in Ofcom undertaking analysis to identify stations that have never applied for a grant through the Fund.** This will help to ascertain whether these stations are unaware of or unclear on the purpose and objectives of the Fund or whether there is another reason for them not having submitted an application (e.g. lack of capacity or confidence in preparing a grant application form).

3.3 Motivations behind applying for funding

The application form requires applicants to outline their reason for applying for funding and what the grant will be used for. Grant requests are briefly summarised in the subsequent end of year report; however, no further analysis is presented, and it is unclear whether Ofcom undertakes any more detailed analysis in-house.

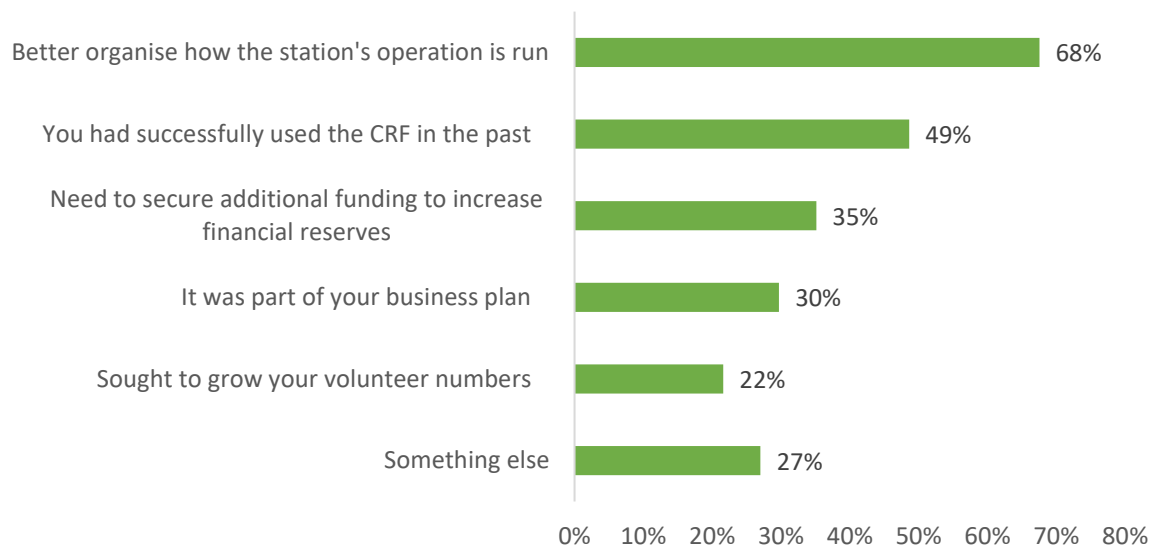
Undertaking a more detailed analysis in each financial year of all grant applications would be valuable as it would enable the identification of trends within the profile of applications by area, duration of licence held and community of interest. This could be used to encourage and facilitate collaboration or potentially joint awards in particular where applicants have similar motivations for seeking grant funding.

This analysis may also help to track changes in the reasons for applying for funding which could provide valuable intelligence around the health of the sector as well as identifying any sector-wide support needs which may be taken forward by relevant sector organisations such as CMA or the UK Community Radio Network. It would also be helpful to compare the reasons for applying between the cohort of successful applicants and unsuccessful applicants to determine if there is an ongoing unmet need for support that is over and above the ability of the CRF annual budget to meet.

The survey of grant recipients undertaken by the research team found that key motivations for applying to the Fund were to support improvements in the operation of the station (68% of responses) or because they had successfully used CRF in the past to support their objectives (49%). For around one third (30%) of stations, their intention to seek funding from CRF was outlined in their business plan (Figure 3.1 over page).

¹² For example: <https://mobile.twitter.com/ofcom/status/1288475294060417025>

Figure 3.1: Motivations for applying for CRF grant funding



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021

Most stations applying for grant funding were seeking to use the funds to appoint a new member of staff and/or establish a new role. For most stations this was a Business Development Officer. The general expected outcomes of this recruitment included development of income streams from on-air advertisement and sponsorship and seeking professional support to establish a clear business strategy. As such nearly all stations were motivated to apply to enable them to improve their resilience and sustainability by securing their income streams on a longer-term basis.

'We wanted to fund a Business Development officer for a year. To rebrand the station, promoting the station with local advertisers and to sell media space and increase the income for the station.'

'As an all-volunteer organisation we became aware that there were aspects of the day-to-day running of the station that needed a longer-term approach to both organisation and growth.'

'Gave us the ability to support other local community organisations voluntary groups and not for profit groups.'

An additional motivation referenced by a small number of stations was to develop their training offer. This commonly involved the training of the station's volunteers either to support the operation of the station or to enable them to engage and train external groups, for example, school/college students involved in radio production (with the latter having the potential to generate earned income for the station).

3.4 Fund design

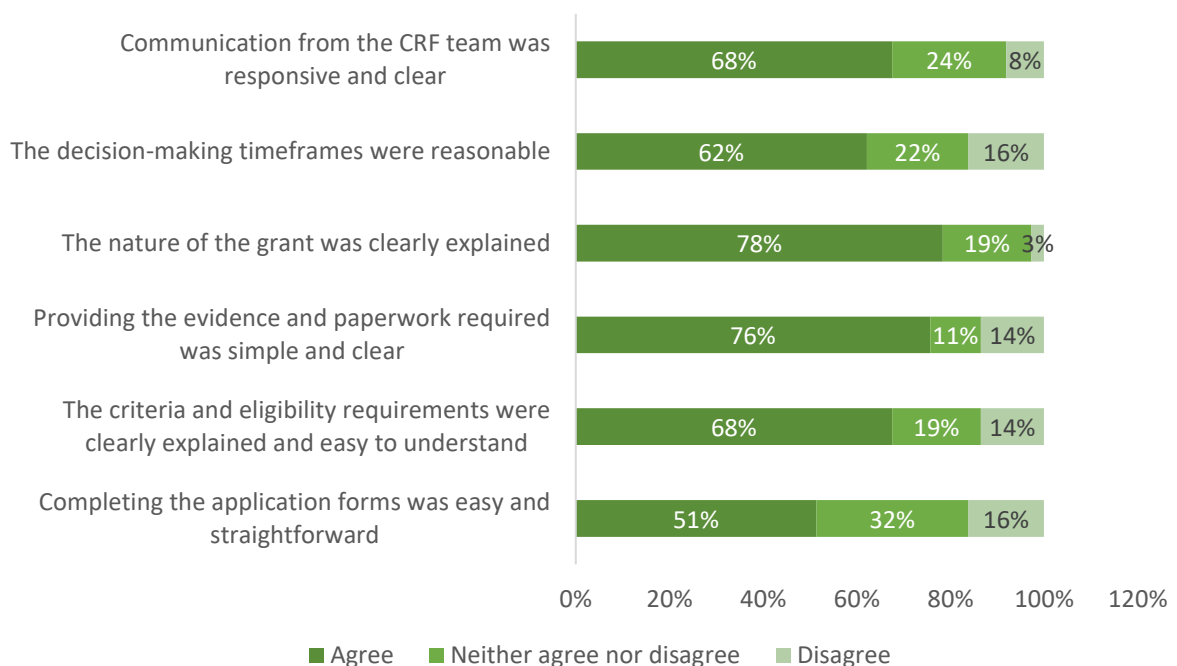
The purpose of the fund is clearly outlined by Ofcom and given that it has been actively providing grants since 2005 is well known to the community radio sector (including community radio stations and sector bodies). The guidance notes hosted on Ofcom’s webpage clearly articulate what the fund can and cannot support and over two thirds (68%) of grant recipients agreed that the criteria and eligibility requirements were clearly explained and easy to understand, with around one in eight applicants disagreeing (Figure 3.2 below).

What is not known is the extent to which unsuccessful applicants or stations that have not previously applied considered the criteria and eligibility requirements to be clear and easy to understand. There is merit in Ofcom canvassing views from all community radio stations, which could be coordinated with the next direct mail to stations notifying them of the reopening of the next round of funding.

Whilst recipients reported to be generally satisfied with the grant criteria and eligibility requirements, the main areas where stations felt changes could be made related to the ability to use grant funding for capital expenditure (in particular where this supported objectives to generate new or grow existing income streams) or to secure funding on a multi-year basis (overcoming some challenges reported in recruiting and retaining postholders within the 14 month period following grant award).

Although the criteria governing the use of the Fund has evolved since its launch in 2005, it is worthwhile revisiting these to determine whether any further adjustments may be required to support the wider objectives of enabling stations and the sector.

Figure 3.2: Grant recipient views on the application process



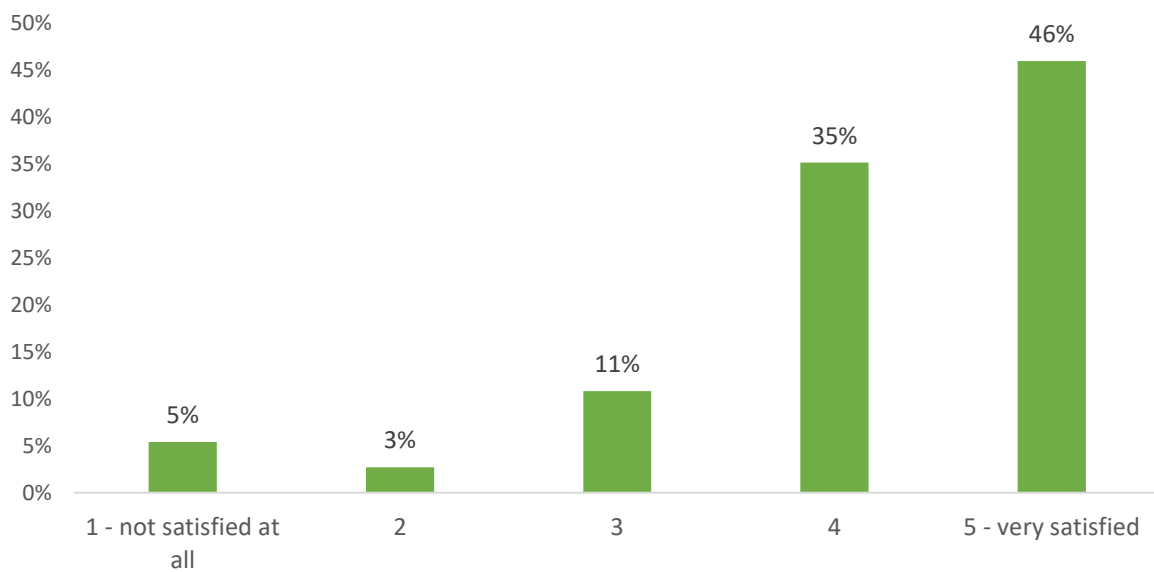
Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

3.5 Application process

The application form is currently hosted on Ofcom’s website with applicants requested to submit responses by email.¹³ **Whilst the application form is relatively light touch, the process would benefit from migrating to an online application system.** Between 2016/17 and 2019/20 Ofcom received 720 applications for funding. To manually extract key data from each individual application form can be a labour-intensive process. Switching the process online will considerably increase the capability of Ofcom to undertake more detailed analysis and interrogation of the application data.

Grant recipients report to be content with the level and clarity of communication from the CRF team, the decision-making timeframes, the simplicity of the application form and the level of supplementary evidence required (Figure 3.2). Overall, eight out of 10 grant recipients report to be satisfied with the grant application process (Figure 3.3 below). This is a positive finding given that many of the grant recipients have submitted previous unsuccessful applications for funding.

Figure 3.3: Satisfaction with the grant application process



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

In the view of the research team, the level of detail requested in the application form is appropriate and proportionate to the level of funding available and in recognition of the voluntary-led nature of many stations.

¹³ Applicants that cannot submit their application form and/or the supporting documentation by email are advised to contact the Community Radio Fund team at least a week in advance of wishing to submit their application to discuss this and at least a week in advance of any deadline.

The main recommendation from the research team relating to the current application form is to consider including a small number of metrics which could aid an assessment of impact through additions to the existing grant report form, for example:

- Target/actual income from on-air advertising
- Target/actual income from commercial sponsorship
- Target/actual income from earned income
- Target/actual growth in volunteer numbers
- Target/actual growth in members
- Target/actual growth in listenership
- Target/actual number of individuals trained

At present, this information may be contained in written submissions by the grant applicant/recipient. Converting this to quantitative metrics, allied to the shift of the application and monitoring process online, will support subsequent impact assessment work by Ofcom and DCMS. Should this be taken forward, it is suggested that Ofcom provides suitable guidance to ensure that these metrics are understood and standardised as far as possible.

Ofcom should also review the consent arrangements in the annual financial returns, application and grant report forms to enable information to be shared with DCMS and any external contractor, for instance a contractor evaluating the fund in the future, governed by a data sharing agreement.

3.6 Decision making panel and feedback

All community radio stations applying to Ofcom for a community radio licence are required to submit a business plan and financial information. Licence holders are also required to report on their finances to Ofcom on an annual basis.¹⁴ **It is unclear the extent to which the Panel uses this information as part of their assessment process**, for example to determine whether the income and expenditure details included in an applicant's CRF application is consistent with the details and projections included in their licence application.¹⁵ This would be a valuable exercise.

It would also be useful to undertake a more detailed analysis of the annual financial information reported by licence holders comparing those that have received CRF funding and those that have not. This may support efforts to determine the impact and additionality of the Fund.

¹⁴ Ofcom (2017) Notes of guidance for community radio licence applicants and licensees.

¹⁵ It is noted that community radio licences are granted for an initial period of up to five years as some business plans may be outdated at the point of application.

The main areas where grant recipients reported dissatisfaction with the application and decision-making process related to:

- The decision-making timeframes (twice a year) with a desire from some stations for a quicker turnaround and potentially quarterly funding rounds.
- A request for greater clarity on the assessment criteria and how would improve the prospects of an application being funded.
- The lack of feedback on reasons why an application was unsuccessful, in particular where this could provide information that would support the station to become more sustainable.
- A lack of consistency with the layout and format of other reporting requirements to Ofcom.

'Guidance on what would be classed as a good application would be useful. We have found even with what we deem a solid concept, plan and figures in hand, even with match funding applied from elsewhere we are still struggling to get a result from this fund.'

'The timeframes should be shorter with better feedback when you don't get it.'

'Layout of financial information tables is not consistent with OFCOM reporting tables.'

'Decision making time caused us some issues. Why are there only two rounds per year? Why not four?'

'It may be more helpful if the application process is online with the facility to save as the form is being completed and prompts that explain each question required.'

'The process is not very transparent. When you are turned down there is not really any feedback as to why you are rejected. Is it because you've had a previous grant so it's 'not your turn'? Your application was poor? Which criteria were met?'

Given the volume of applications received by Ofcom each year, providing detailed feedback to all unsuccessful applicants would require available capacity which may be beyond that of the CRF team. However, realising efficiencies in the process by moving applications online may free up capacity to undertake some level of support to unsuccessful applicants. For example, subject to relevant consent, identifying opportunities to 'buddy' stations together to share learning or support skills and knowledge transfer. **Sharing insight with relevant sector bodies could inform any sector-wide training or development provision.**

A few stations raised that, even though the number of community radio stations has increased over the past few years, the overall grant funding amount has not increased accordingly. Some grant recipients stated they feel the fund doesn't support large enough grants to make significant or sustained changes to their stations.

'The funding is limited. There are 300 stations. Not everyone applies, but there isn't enough money to go round.'

A small number of stations also expressed a desire for the funding to be less restrictive, enabling them to cover operational costs and allowing each station to determine how best to use the funds to achieve their business objectives. This was regarded as particularly relevant given the challenges facing the sector because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential impact on their future income streams.

Whilst grants were provided as emergency cash funding in 2020/21 to support stations facing severe financial difficulty due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Fund has now returned to supporting the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations, as set out in the guidance notes. **Moving forward, consideration may be given to continuing elements of the emergency Covid-19 funding either alongside or integrated into the standard awards, to reflect the ongoing and longer-term impacts of the pandemic.**

'I would like money that was more long term and looked to allow community radio stations to spend the money on the best way to ensure their sustainability even if that is equipment or core costs.'

3.7 Use of the funds

In line with motivations for the grant, the most common use of the funding was recruitment. This enabled stations to bring in external expertise and professional support to focus on a range of business development and fundraising activities. Having someone in this position also often meant that staff and/or volunteers had more time to focus on engaging with the community and developing relationships with other local stakeholders and partners, which helped to raise the station's profile and grow their listenership. **Stations highlighted the ability of dedicated postholders to open new opportunities and funding streams, including through the creation of new products or service offers which could help to diversify their income sources.**

'It was a big benefit for time management - it allowed me to spend more time at the radio station and it has helped things run a lot more smoothly. Without the paid role, it would have been very tricky to keep going, although we had bits and pieces of advertising coming in, we couldn't have focused on it in the same way.'

For some stations the funding quite simply ensured their survival by supporting their core costs, in particular where income had been unexpectedly lost from other sources.

'It was an invaluable financial asset – it kept the station going.'

Content analysis of all grant reports and interim grant reports submitted by grant recipients would help to highlight experiences in the use of the funds, identify any shared training needs and provide opportunities for Ofcom to share resources and case studies with the wider sector to support the work of all stations to become sustainable.

4 Impact of the fund on the sector

Section summary

- CRF grants have supported a much wider range of activity than simply increasing income streams. Activities relating to community outreach, improving business and operating systems and supporting volunteers play a central role in ensuring the survivability of a station and the wider sector. Full impact of individual grants may not be evident for several years.
- Just over half of grant recipients reported that their grant enabled them to develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan. This provides a level of confidence that the funding can deliver longer-term benefits for the recipient stations.
- Comparison of stations' annual income streams before and after their grant award presents a positive picture, with an average increase of 37% and a median increase of 65%. Just over half (54%) of stations reported that they increased their unrestricted financial reserves as a direct consequence of their grant, improving their resilience.
- Feedback from grant recipients suggests that stations are developing more 'commercial' income streams albeit further support may be required to continue this trend.
- The appointment of a Business Development Manager post has enabled some stations to reduce their expenditure costs, for example by renegotiating their premises costs or securing in-kind support or donations for things that they previously had to purchase.
- Just over a third (35%) of stations report to have been able to employ more staff due to their grant award. Around six in 10 (59%) of stations indicated that their grant funding has enabled them to recruit more volunteers.
- The challenge many stations have faced is in maintaining the momentum of the activity supported through their grant award once the award period has ended. Whilst stations have reported a positive uplift, their ability to continue to grow income streams through on-air advertising, grant awards and commissioned work was influenced by capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence of station staff or volunteers.
- Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain the positive impacts achieved through CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.
- Two thirds (67%) of stations rated the fund as effective in helping with fundraising and as a result supporting them to become self-sustaining. The process of successfully delivering a CRF grant project gave some stations the necessary confidence and experience to seek out other grant funding sources.
- The majority (89%) of grant recipients are confident that their radio station will be able to run without being over-reliant on grant funding over the next five years.

This section of the report explores the impact of the fund on the stations in receipt of grant funding and assesses its potential wider impact on the sector. One of the important points to note relating to the criteria for the fund, and use of the funding as outlined in the previous report section, is that it has supported a much wider range of activity than simply increasing income streams.

However, **many of the activities relating to community outreach, improving business and operating systems and supporting the volunteer base, also play a central role in ensuring the sustainability of a station and the wider sector.** This is evident through the case study interviews undertaken by the research team. For some activities, full impact may not be realised for several years (and certainly beyond the 14-month period in which the grant must be spent following award). This is important to note when assessing any impact focused solely on financial information. For many grant recipients, the funding has provided some immediate financial benefits (both income generation and a reduction in expenditure costs) but perhaps more importantly has provided a foundation for stations to secure income streams on a more sustainable basis in the future.

4.1 Income generation and diversification

Feedback from grant recipients has highlighted the range of positive impacts derived from the use of their funding. Most commonly referenced was the ability to support them in developing new income streams (Table 4.1 below). This is important as the diversification of income streams can support wider efforts to improve organisational resilience and survivability.

Table 4.1: What the funding has enabled stations to do

Activity	Referenced by grant recipients
Develop new income streams	84%
Develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan	54%
Increase the number of volunteers	43%
Increase number of listeners	41%
Develop relationships with corporate sponsors	41%
Develop relationships with Trusts and Foundations	41%
Develop relationships with public sector commissioners	30%
Develop new audio content Upskill volunteers	19%

Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

Just over half (54%) of grant recipients reported that their use of the funding has enabled them to develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan. This provides a level of confidence that the grant funding can deliver longer-term benefits for the recipients beyond the period of funding, in particular when allied to stations indicating that they have also been able to develop relationships with corporate sponsors, Trusts and Foundations and public sector commissioners.

Name of service: BRFM 95.6 FM	Licensee: B.R.F.M. Bridge Radio Limited
Licence granted: 24/10/2006	On Air date: 30/10/2006
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 6,830
<p>Key commitments: BRFM is for people living and working in and around Minster, Isle of Sheppey. Local news and information are a mainstay of daily programming. It has particular regard to the needs of two key underserved groups, the unemployed and teenage parents. The station provides educational, employment and community support, and provides a stage from which the community can air views.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music, including a mixture of music from the 1950s to the present day. Specialist music programmes also feature • Speech, including local and community news, information and discussion programmes and output produced by local community organisations and/or schools • The service provides original output for an average of 12 hours per day (across the week). <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station is made up of 30% talk, 70% music. The ‘talk’ aspect of the radio promotes local organisations and events, provides a local news service, and bulletins throughout the day and dedicates shows to particular groups, for example a local pride group produces a show every week. In terms of music, they target all ages and have specialist shows at night.</p> <p><i>“We cater for everyone in our community.”</i></p>	
<p>Reason for seeking grant support: The grant was requested to employ a professional to review the stations’ business strategy and make recommendations to improve its financial processes. In addition, they could advise on how best to increase income from sales and marketing.</p> <p><i>“The fund paid for a member of staff to look at our business strategy and how we could make efficiencies and improve our financial processes.”</i></p>	

Impact of the CRF grant:

The employed professional was successful in increasing sales revenue from advertising and trained the staff on marketing to ensure sales were maintained. The employed professional had time to review the whole organisation and created financial processes that were much simpler and streamlined. This included developing an invoice system to ensure fewer delays in receiving advertising bills. The station developed a better understanding of their financial position, helping them to better forecast their income streams and dedicate more time to engaging with the community both in person and via social media.

“The grant means we have better financial processes that are easier to manage and track and are simpler to use and understand.”

Website: <https://brfm.net/>

Email: karen.day@brfm.net

Analysis of the stations total annual income pre-application reveals a level of variation with around one in five stations having an income of less than £10,000 whereas one in four have an income over £35,000 (Figure 4.1 below).

Figure 4.1: Total annual income pre application



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

This is likely to be linked to the differing operating costs of each station with the important consideration in terms of sustainability being the income to expenditure ratio. It is evident that some stations have higher operating costs than others (i.e. due to wage costs, premises costs or equipment leasing) and as such the level of income that each station needs to generate to remain viable also differs.

Comparison of station’s annual income streams before and after their grant award presents a positive picture, with an average increase of 37% (equating to £12,007) and a median increase of 65% (£15,553) (Table 4.2 over page). The data also highlights that the average income of applicants at £24,080 is less than half the current sector average of £53,096,¹⁶ which suggests that the fund is supporting smaller stations.

¹⁶ Based on data from 250 stations. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2021/interactive-data>

Table 4.2: Impact on annual income

Total Annual Income				
	Before	After	Difference	% Increase
Median	£ 24,080	£ 39,633	£ 15,553	65%
Average	£ 32,152	£ 44,159	£ 12,007	37%

Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

Further analysis reveals that the use of the funds has helped to move several stations into a higher income band, with the number of stations having a total annual income of over £35,000 doubling (Table 4.3 below). It is worth noting that the sample covers differing timeframes across the grant recipients, with some reporting income impacts two years following their grant award whilst others five years following their award. Whilst this is a limitation of the research method, overall, the responses are encouraging. Whilst calculating the exact level of attribution for reported income gains to the CRF is problematic without full disclosure of account details from fund recipients or a suitable counterfactual, feedback from stations provides confidence that the contribution has been strong.

Table 4.3: Impact on annual income (bands)

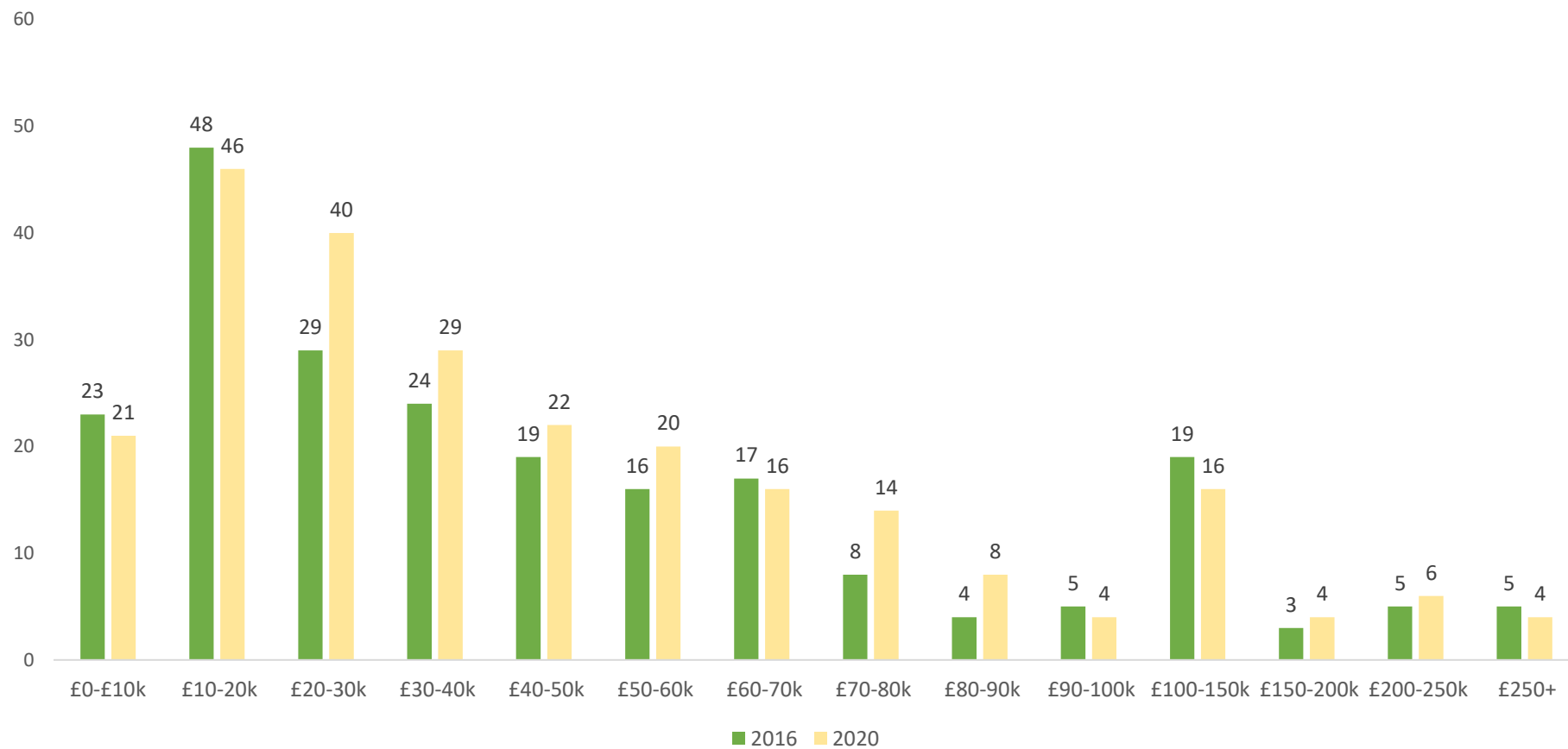
Total Annual Income		
	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Less than £10,000	18%	7%
£10,001 to £20,000	21%	14%
£20,001 to £25,000	21%	11%
£25,001 to £30,000	4%	7%
£30,001 to £35,000	11%	7%
Over £35,000	25%	54%

Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

For sector context it is possible to compare the income distribution of the community radio sector between 2016 and 2020 as reported in Ofcom's Communications Market Report 2021. This highlights a similar trend in terms of a small decrease in the number of stations falling within the less than £20,000 income per annum (Figure 4.2 over page). However, contrary to the grant recipient cohort surveyed for this research, the sector wide data shows a considerable rise in the number of stations falling within the £20,000-£30,000 income band.

Given the positive income gains reported by survey respondents, the growth in stations falling within the £20,000-£40,000 income band is likely to have been directly supported by the 83 community stations supported with a CRF grant over this period. Given that two thirds (64%) of grant recipients reported to have a pre application total annual income of £30,000 or less (Figure 4.1), this suggests that the fund is supporting smaller stations.

Figure 4.2: Income distribution comparison years¹⁷

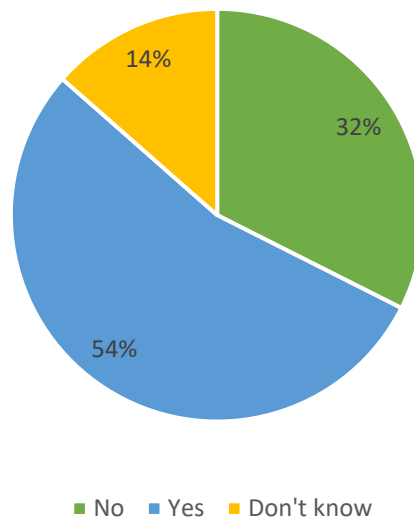


n= 2016 (225) & 2020 (250)

¹⁷ Ofcom (2021)- ‘Communications Market Report 2021’.

Cross referencing reported income gains with the financial returns that licence holders are required to report to Ofcom on an annual basis can help to determine the extent to which stations have been able to maximise these income gains by managing their expenditure costs to generate an operating surplus. Ultimately this can support stations in increasing their unrestricted financial reserves, further improving their sustainability. Just over half (54%) of stations reported that they were able to increase their unrestricted financial reserves as a direct consequence of their grant funding (Figure 4.3 below).

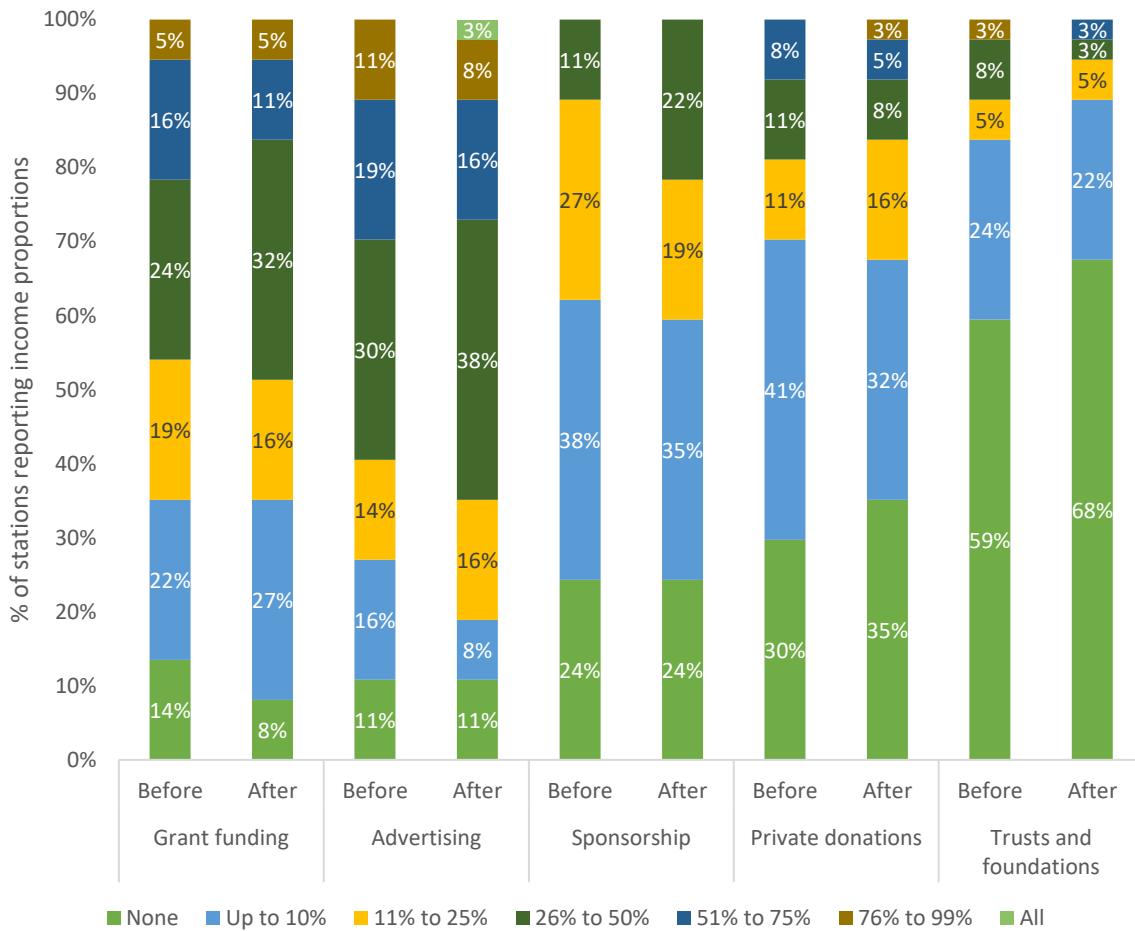
Figure 4.3: Grant recipients increasing their unrestricted financial reserves



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

With regards to the fund supporting income diversification and reducing reliance on CRF as a source of core funding, feedback from grant recipients suggests a slightly reduced reliance on private donations and income from Trusts and Foundations than at their pre application stage (Figure 4.4 over page). There has also been a shift towards securing a larger proportion of income from grant funding sources and advertising following the completion of their grant. This suggests that stations are moving onto more 'commercial' income streams.

Figure 4.4: Changes in income sources before and after CRF grant

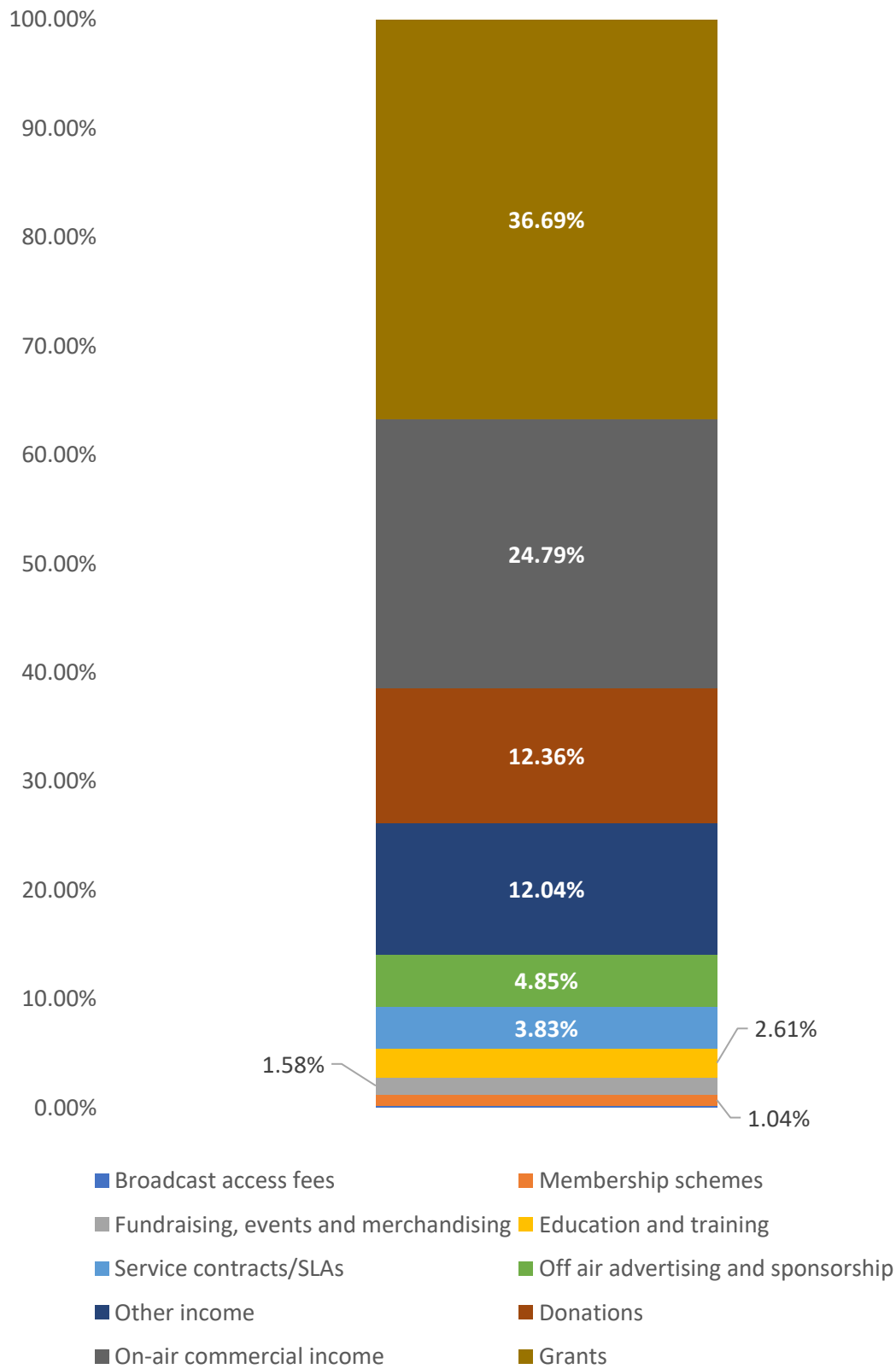


Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

Comparable data from Ofcom’s Communications Market Report 2021 reveals that grant funding makes up the largest proportion of income in the sector, equating to an average of just under 37% of the income of community radio stations (Figure 4.5 over page). On-air commercial income accounts for the second largest income source at just under 25%. Service contracts and SLAs account for just under four per cent of income, and education and training just under three per cent. Whilst the income categories are not consistent between the two survey sources, the data appears broadly consistent with the grant recipients seeing a greater proportion of their income being secured from grant funding and advertising.

Survey responses highlight considerable diversity in the sources of funding that community stations are applying to, including local authorities, European funding and a range of Trusts and Foundations. **Sharing this information across the sector may assist individual stations with navigating the funding landscape**, in particular for funding designated for a specific activity (restricted funds), for example in connection with education and training or community work.

Figure 4.5: Community Radio Sector: Income by source (2020)¹⁸



¹⁸ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2021/interactive-data>

4.2 Supporting community stations to be self-sustaining

A core objective for the CRF is to support community stations to be self-sustaining. In simple terms this has been mainly focused on stations using the funding to enable them to generate new income streams. However, some stations have also been able to use the funds to secure professional support to assist them in reducing their expenditure costs.

Most of the stations stated that the grant funding did meet their expectations. Generally, this was due to an increased revenue, however other reasons included, but are not limited to, improved financial monitoring processes, long-term advertising contracts, identification of new funding sources and maintained operations.

Data from Ofcom's Communications Market Report 2021 reveals that staff costs account for the largest proportion of station's expenditure at just over 46%, followed by technical costs and premises costs which both account for around 13% of total expenditure (Figure 4.6 over page). The appointment of a Business Development Manager post has enabled some stations to reduce their expenditure costs, for example by renegotiating their premises costs or securing in-kind support or donations for things that they previously had to purchase. This has provided longer-term benefits and helped stations to strengthen their unrestricted financial reserves or reinvest operating surplus into new community-based services or projects.

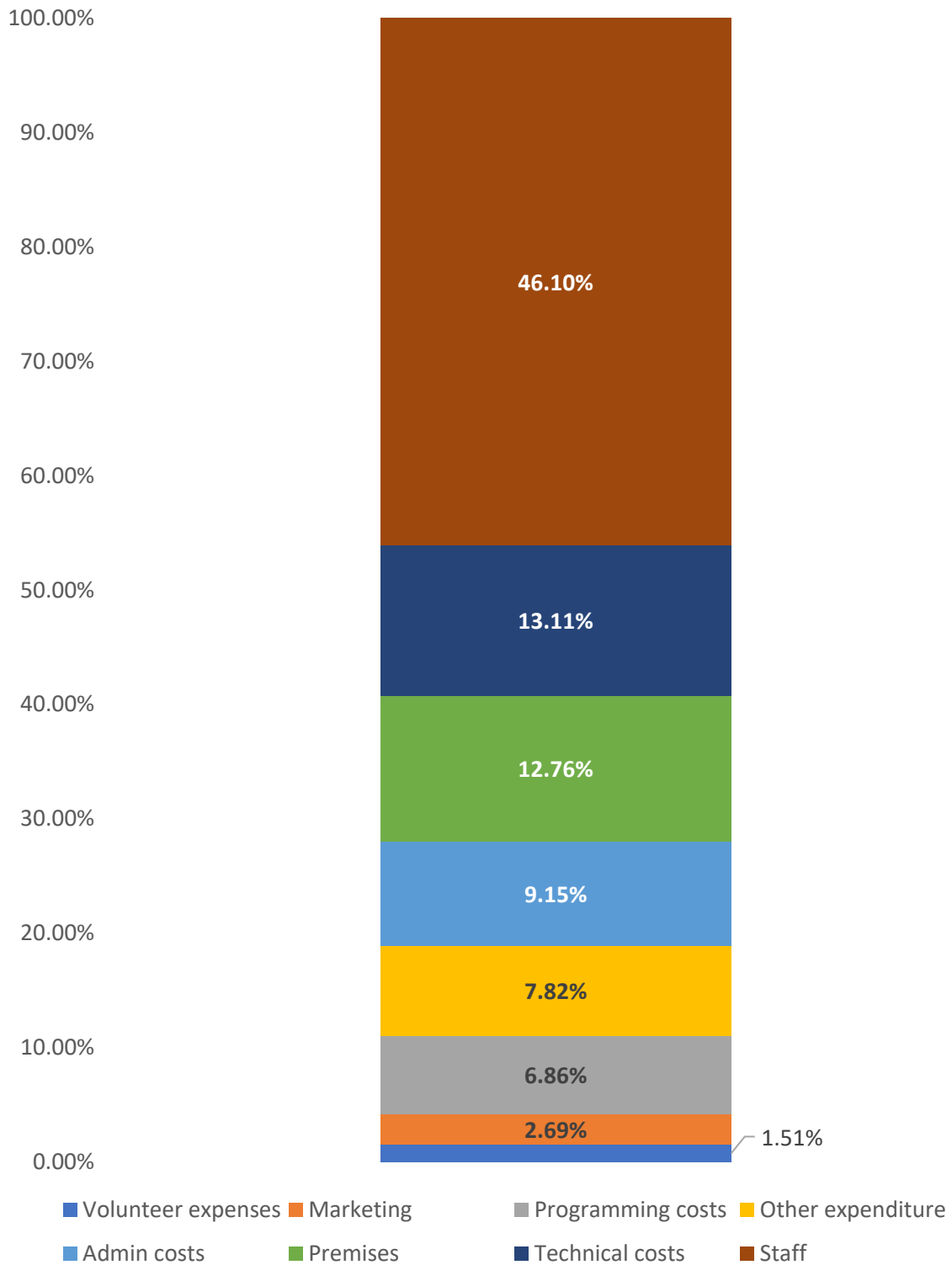
'Definitely increased our advertising sales and improved our financial monitoring and processes. Our financial processes are much simpler and streamlined and easier to understand.'

Fundamentally for most stations their CRF grant award has helped to increase their capacity and bring in skills and expertise to assist them in the operation of their service. Just over a third (35%) of stations report to have been able to employ more staff due to their grant award. Around six in 10 (59%) stations indicated that their grant funding has enabled them to recruit more volunteers. It is evident that some stations have created new posts (fixed-term and permanent) as a direct consequence of their grant.

For the stations that did not think their grant funding fully met their expectations one of the main reasons behind this was due to the pandemic. This not only delivered a direct impact on planned community activities, for example education and training work, but also negatively impacted on advertising revenues. As such, whilst previously funded posts may have helped to generate the processes and materials used to engage and secure businesses seeking to book on-air advertising with the station, income streams were limited as the wider business sector struggled with the impact of Covid-19. This in turn reduced the ability of stations to sustain posts introduced as part of their CRF award.

'We applied on the basis of a carefully thought-out plan. It has had some long-term success, as some advertisers came back later to renew, but it hasn't been enough to pay for a full-time salesperson.'

Figure 4.6: Community Radio Sector: Expenditure (2020)¹⁹



¹⁹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2021/interactive-data>

Name of service: Salford City Radio	Licensee: Salford Community Radio Ltd
Licence granted: 28/09/2007	On Air date: 30/09/2007
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 17,130
<p>Key commitments: Salford City Radio (SCR) targets those living in Salford and delivers local news, local information and local music using local talent. It broadcasts programmes that reflect the Salford area and facilitates the involvement of minority groups. It delivers radio skills training for local people.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are mainstream popular music, both contemporary and songs drawn from preceding decades. SCR also broadcasts music drawn from more specialist genres including dance, Latin and punk. Music from local musicians also features • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are community-focussed output comprising information about community groups and services, news and views from local community events, local sports and interviews covering a wide range of topics relevant to the target community • Over the course of each week, programming principally, but not exclusively, in English is broadcast • The service provides original output for a minimum of seven hours per day • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area. The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	

Overview of station:

The station covers the whole of Salford - a mixed community with different ethnicities and lots of quite large families, high poverty and high unemployment. The station has one paid member of staff who oversees the 85-100 volunteers.

During the day the station broadcasts a lot of community content (e.g. environment, what is on in the local area, music interviews, awareness of issues like hate crime and organ donation, a platform for organisations who work with dementia etc.), with its evening shows focusing on specialist music. The station is always training new people and has a show specifically set up to train women live on air. It generates most of its income through grant funding and sponsorship, as well as advertising, general fundraising and membership fees.

*"It is not just helping the community who listen, but also our presenters."
"The community come to us all the time- we are a platform for them."*

Reason for seeking grant support:

In 2016-2017 the station had run out of funding and was in danger of having to shut down. The station was awarded a grant for a paid business development role, to make connections with the community and look for advertising and sponsorship

Impact of the CRF grant:

The funding allowed the station to employ a Business Development Officer, who has remained in post (the post now being self-funding). They are now quite successful with grant applications and are sponsored by a housing association. The Business Development Officer is able to spend time generating advertising revenue (including writing scripts, making adverts and scheduling them into the programme). It is considered that the station would have been unlikely to have remained open without the CRF grant. The station manager emphasises that, as well as the music, a lot of people come to the station for support - the need to be part of something and connect with others. The volunteers state that they get a lot of support from the station and see it as far more than just a radio station: some struggle with mental and physical health and consider it a lifeline to themselves and their families.

A survey at the start of Covid-19 found that 80% of volunteers had underlying health conditions and some were dealing with very traumatic personal situations. The station gives volunteers a sense of purpose and connectedness, and in some cases provides the main structure to their week. Several volunteers stated that since working for the station they have experienced a marked increase in self-confidence. The station itself can provide the community of Salford with local information, advice and support. The station plans to go onto DAB, which will give it more reach, and hopes to achieve more sponsorship. The station is moving to a new premises and aims to have more paid staff at the station. The grant was the catalyst for all of this, as it is thought the station would not have survived without it.

"I think it is unlikely we would have remained open without it. That was the impetus."

Website: <http://www.salfordcityradio.org/>

Email: info@salfordcityradio.org

The challenge many stations have faced is in maintaining the momentum of the activity supported through their grant award. Whilst stations have reported a positive uplift, their ability to continue to grow income streams through on-air advertising, grant awards and commissioned work was influenced by capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence of station staff or volunteers.

'Due to the pandemic, the commercial side of revenues was hit hard, I think that grants will hopefully fill this gap until such times as local businesses can recover and grow to be able to support us like before.'

This explains why around a third (29%) of stations reported that their grant related to a previously funded post or project.²⁰ Achieving a degree of confidence in the security of future income streams is an important factor in encouraging community stations to create permanent paid roles focused on business development and sales activities, where this aims to fund core operating costs.

'Being part of a wider charity, delivering work to support people in need in our local area, grant funding is part of our core revenue strategy. However, this is principally to deliver community projects and not to fund our operating costs.'

One of the challenges reported by some stations, which may present a future opportunity, was around their ability to present a strong 'commercial' offer to prospective advertisers. Where stations had limited prior experience, skills, or knowledge around the creation of a professional package and booking system, this affected their confidence to connect with local businesses to discuss their advertising requirements. Several stations referenced the fact that raising the profile of the community radio sector would support efforts to secure income through this channel, tackling potentially negative perceptions that may dissuade some businesses from considering achieving their advertising objectives by working in partnership with the community radio sector.

'Because advertisers are reluctant to spend money with what they perceive is radio run by amateurs.'

What is evident across the feedback provided by grant recipients and included in the case studies embedded in this report, is the positive progress that many have made in working towards becoming self-sustaining. What would further support this journey is the ability for stations to share practice, practical tools, resources, and learning. This should be explored further between Ofcom and the relevant sector bodies.

²⁰ Based on analysis of 25 grant application forms covering the period 2016/17 and 2019/20.

Related to this is the potential to support staff and volunteers to build their skills, knowledge, and confidence around a range of areas that can support them to become self-sustaining. **Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain and positive impacts achieved through CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.**

'The ability of community radio stations to generate funding through primarily commercial means is difficult, particularly for stations based in competitive urban environments where multiple other stations operate in the same locality.'

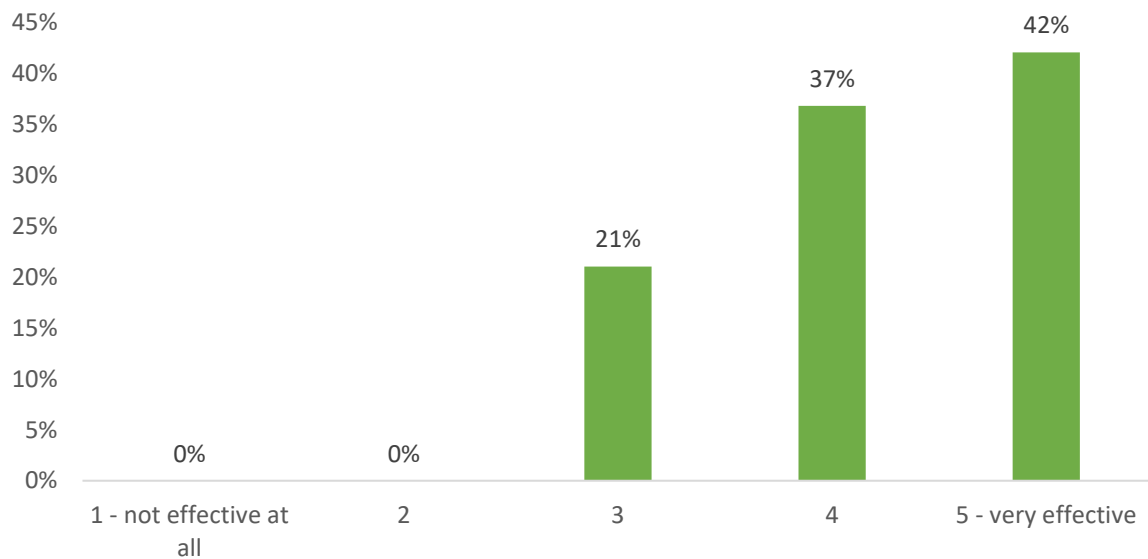
'Community radio is public service broadcasting, providing a service of hyper-local news and information, of a type that commercial radio and BBC Local stations do not provide due to the large areas they cover. Stations should be given funding by local councils under their obligations under the powers of wellbeing.'

'Unfortunately, not all stations are blessed with the professional style volunteers and therefore struggle to create relationships with corporates and public sector... I believe this has been overlooked over the years.'

Around one third (30%) of grant recipients reported that their grant funding had enabled them to develop links with public sector commissioners. This has the potential to open future opportunities, in particular drawing on the positive contribution that many stations provided to support a multi-agency response to Covid-19. One of the challenges reported by grant recipients was knowing how to contact public service commissioners to discuss partnership working or commissioning opportunities. **This may present an opportunity for DCMS and other bodies, for example the Local Government Association, to raise the profile of the sector with public service commissioners to showcase how the sector can and does support a wide range of local priorities.**

Of those that indicated they used the grant for fundraising purposes, just over three quarters (79%) of stations rated the fund as effective in helping with fundraising and as a result supporting them to become self-sustaining (Figure 4.7 over page). Given the challenges facing the sector due to the pandemic, this is a positive outcome and provides reasonable confidence that the use of the grant funding will deliver a longer-term impact for individual stations and the wider sector.

Figure 4.7: Effectiveness of the grant in helping with fundraising



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF applicants 2021, n=19

Name of service: Belfast FM	Licensee: Belfast FM Limited
Licence granted: 29/06/2015	On Air date: 30/06/2015
Year of CRF grant award: 2017-2018	CRF grant (£): 18,500
<p>Key commitments: Belfast FM is aimed at those aged 55 and over in the City of Belfast, where the studio is located. It combats social isolation by providing companionship and connections and serves as a platform for participation in the community.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music, including nostalgia, gold pop and easy listening from the 1950s to the present day. Specialist genres also feature • Speech, including community information, interviews, advice, and discussions • Provides original, locally produced output for a minimum of 10 hours per day • Provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion ○ The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service ○ The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. • Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service and the service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community. 	

Overview of station:

The station broadcasts a mix of music (focusing on 60s and 70s, and some local music) and discussion programmes that run twice a day and focus on local and national issues, as well as providing slots for local organisations to promote themselves and their events.

“The station is very important as it reflects local identity and local tastes and sensibilities.”

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to fund a Business Development Officer for a year, who could rebrand and reposition the station, and dedicate time to developing links with local businesses in order to increase income through local advertisement and media sales.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The Business Development Officer increased revenue through advertising by 15%, and won long-term advertising contracts, providing the station greater security. Whilst the station has now hit their advertising licensing cap and thus have decided not to retain the Business Development Officer on past their 12-month contract, the role enabled the station to develop a better understanding of how to present potential advertisers with key information (e.g. how their target audience is attractive to businesses) in a way which can generate more sales.

“The rebranding and repositioning of the station were key objectives and were achieved.”

Website: www.belfast89.com/

Email: joe@belfast98.com

Name of service: Paisley FM	Licensee: Paisley FM (2017) Limited
Licence granted: 28/02/2018	On Air date: 01/03/2019
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 16,000
<p>Key commitments:</p> <p>Paisley FM is for all the people of Paisley and surrounding areas in Renfrewshire. The station provides a voice and a community resource through entertainment, local news, discussion and the expression of opinion.</p> <p>The service has a local focus with people from all communities and all ages involved in its operation. The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are a broad mix of mainstream current songs with classic hits and easy listening including Country music. Scottish musicians and specialist genres also feature • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are community information, interviews, arts and culture, advice and discussion • The service provides original output for a minimum of 84 hours per week • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 91 hours per week. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p>	

The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:

- The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion
- The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service
- The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.

Overview of station:

Based in Paisley (population of 77,000) and only 8 miles from Glasgow City Centre, the station covers the whole of Renfrewshire (from urban to rural and from areas of deprivation to affluent areas), which has access to all commercial radio stations with about 12 community stations in greater Glasgow. The station plays popular music, with features and speech for each segment of the day. It is run by volunteers, who reflect the mixed community (e.g. retired, students, unemployed).

The station's aim is to provide a service for the people of Renfrewshire and satisfy the need for local public information. In addition to providing a platform to local people (e.g. musicians) it undertakes funded community projects, for example working with care homes and people who live alone, helping with the local foodbank and providing services and information to raise the profile of local causes.

The station has good links with the local council and features public information campaigns. The station is currently based at Paisley Grammar School where it delivers a certified SQA course to pupils on programming, interviewing, and gathering information.

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was to fund a 12-month post to employ a person to undertake sales and revenue generation. The station appointed someone and started to make some inroads with networking/selling advertising, but advertising dwindled because of the pandemic which necessitated a shift to grant applications.

Impact of the CRF grant:

It enabled the station to successfully apply for around £29,000 in grants and to reach out into the community (as a requirement of the grants). Each application had to have a social element, so the station began to increase its social action and helping people. Although the grants coming in were ring-fenced and the post itself could not be sustained after the 12-month period, the post enabled the station to cultivate the mental health area of the grant sector and gave the station the knowledge and flexibility to apply for grants to generate income.

Through the grants, the post has raised the profile of the station, both with the public and with Renfrewshire Council, who are now in regular communication with the station. As a result, the station is now looking to move into the town centre, to place itself at the heart of the community where people can walk in off the street.

"It has given us flexibility of going for grants and getting income in and making contacts. Like a snowball."

Website: <https://paisleyfm.co.uk/>

Email: bob@paisleyfm.co.uk

4.3 Influence of community radio licence requirements

When community radio was first introduced, stations were subject to strict financial requirements. The purpose of these restrictions was firstly, as a mechanism to limit the commercialisation of new community stations and help secure the delivery of social gain to its listeners and local community and secondly to provide an appropriate level of protection to existing small commercial radio stations.

In response to a sector consultation exercise conducted in 2014, which pointed to overwhelming feedback from the community radio sector for increased flexibility for community radio stations to secure income from 'commercial sources' including sponsorship from local businesses, a package of changes was introduced to the Community Radio Order 2004, namely:²¹

- For all community radio stations to be able to raise annual income to a maximum level of £15,000 from advertising and/or sponsorship before application of any other current rule (i.e. 50% of annual income from advertising and/or sponsorship applies)
- For small community radio stations operating in the same locality as a small commercial station to be allowed to take income from advertising and/or sponsorship to a maximum level of £15,000
- For small community radio stations operating in a same locality as a small commercial station to be able to take income from advertising and/or sponsorship at a maximum of £15,000 and, as determined by Ofcom, an additional level of annual income of up to 50% from advertising and/or sponsorship.

This relaxation of some of the financial restrictions that apply to the community radio sector aimed to support efforts for stations to develop sustainable business models. These amendments came into force on the 6th of April 2015.²² **Whilst these greater flexibilities provided community radio stations with greater opportunities to secure income from advertising and sponsorship, many lacked experience and tools to realise these opportunities straight away.**

As such, the CRF has provided an important vehicle for the sector to bring in skills, experience, and capacity to support efforts to grow income streams through commercial channels. In the absence of the CRF, feedback from grant recipients suggests that many would have been able to make less or no progress in this regard.

²¹ DCMS (2015)- 'Community Radio Consultation Report: Government Response January 2015'.

²² The Community Radio (Amendment) Order 2015.

The fixed revenue allowance of £15,000 per financial year from paid on air-advertising and sponsorship represents 28% of the current sector average income (£53,096) but 47%²³ of the average income levels reported by stations at pre-application stage. This suggests that at the point of application there is plenty of ‘headroom’ in provisions laid out in The Community Radio (Amendment) Order 2015.

Whilst stations with larger incomes may be more likely to find the fixed revenue allowance too restrictive, good financial governance dictates that any station should avoid securing a high proportion of income from a single source. This is particularly true given the external influences that can impact on advertising and sponsorship income streams. **Feedback from grant recipients uncovered very few references to the fixed revenue allowance**, although this may be due to the relatively smaller size (in income terms) of the CRF grant recipients compared to the wider sector.

‘Due to the way the licence is run, and the general costs of our station, our sales income can be fairly high. To meet the regulations of how income is generated funding from funders such as the CRF, can help balance the reports in terms of where income has come from. I feel we could possibly run without grant funding however I do feel at this point we would be in breach of regulations in how the community licence is run and held.’

Given the headroom within the ability of grant recipients to utilise a greater proportion of their fixed revenue allowance, this may reinforce the need for stations to receive further support and guidance on diversifying their income streams to provide greater balance.

4.4 Future growth and development aspirations

Grant recipients provided a wide variety of responses regarding their key learning points from the delivery of their grant. For stations with less experience of securing grant funding, the process of managing their CRF grant and complying with the monitoring requirements was helpful in highlighting improvements needed in their financial systems. As such, **the process of successfully delivering a CRF grant project gave some stations the necessary confidence and experience to seek out other grant funding sources.**

Feedback from grant recipients also highlighted a wide range of practical learning points, associated with the creation of a new job role and the importance of assigning clear role parameters and targets, where the role was focused on securing income. Another learning point was around how to create an attractive advertising or sponsorship proposition, including pricing points, selling the ‘story’ of the station, and setting up a contract between the station and business advertisers or sponsors.

Several stations reported that their experience of delivering their CRF grant project has provided them with new ideas on how to grow their operation and income streams with a view to raising their profile and expanding the scope of their social gain.

²³ Wavehill survey of CRF applicants 2021, n=37.

This highlights the value of encouraging applications from stations that have not applied previously. The panel may consider prioritising awards to first time applicants and/or those that have not secured a grant within the last three years.

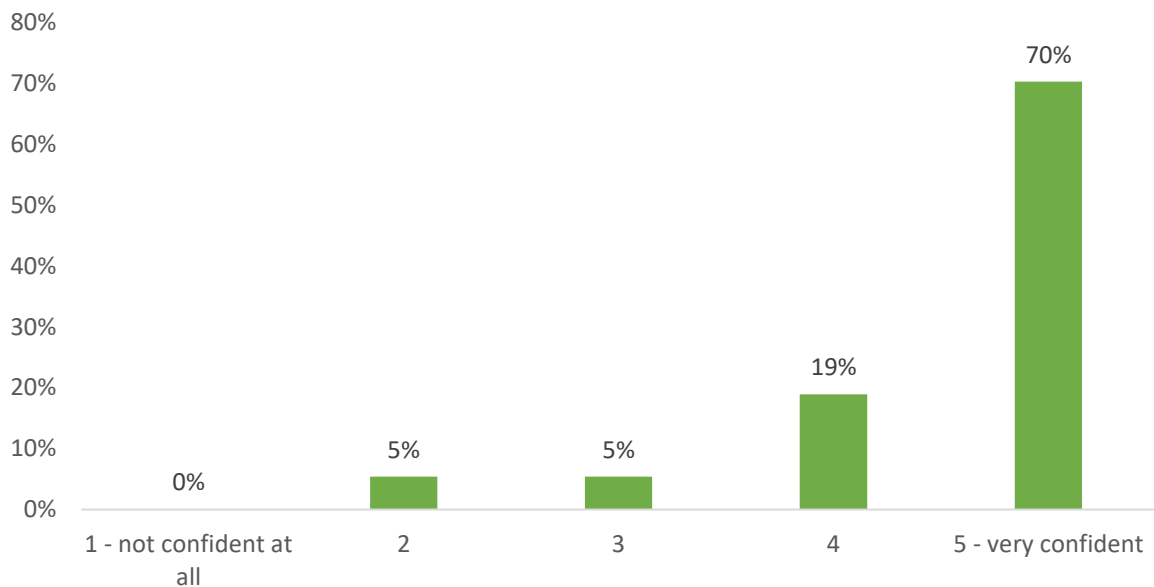
'[We achieved a] better understanding of the media buyer network and what information they need to make a decision to advertise... being able to show them how our target audience is attractive to local businesses.'

Most stations agreed the grant had contributed to improving their financial position and future outlook. The most common reasons for this were an increase in their advertising revenue, better grant application knowledge and the identification of further funding streams and the creation of new links and support networks.

'I am more confident about the sustainability of the station as my grant applications are much better and know what funds to apply for and where to look for new funding sources'.

Notwithstanding the current uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the majority (89%) of grant recipients reported to be confident that their radio station will be able to run without being over-reliant on grant funding over the next five years (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: Levels of confidence amongst grant recipients



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF grant recipients 2021, n=37

'Assuming the adverse impacts of the pandemic recede this year, we have identified additional funding streams outside the funding restrictions imposed by the conditions of our licence which we are in the process of developing as a result of the employee that the grant has allowed us to employ.'

The main challenges highlighted by grant recipients related to an increasingly competitive funding landscape with many organisations competing for funds and attracting volunteers with business skills and interests which were not always prevalent in their existing volunteer base.

'It has become harder to get income from all sources. There are so many community organisations all trying to accrue funding, many from the same opportunities.'

For many of the stations they have either been granted or have applied for a small-scale DAB licence. They are additionally hoping to expand their reach, provide multimedia delivery and a good amount are either hoping to move or have already moved to a new studio.

'Going into small-scale DAB which will reach a larger number of people.'

'The ambition is to have small scale DAB with multiple channels (e.g. young persons, arts). We have plans to move to a larger studio – multimedia where people can interact.'

One of the common growth areas identified by stations related to expanding their portfolio of work with schools and colleges, providing training opportunities to young people.

'We have plans to get more young people involved by having links with colleges and schools. Helping them set up their own online radio stations.'

This may highlight a potential to grow income streams from the provision of education and training activities, which at a sector-wide level currently equates to 2.61% of average income (£1,384). As outlined in the next section of this report, this is an area where all stations have some degree of activity and where the transfer of knowledge and learning could help to establish stronger links between the statutory education, youth work and community radio sector.

Name of service: BGFM	Licensee: BGFM Limited
Licence granted: 18/10/2017	On Air date: 18/10/2017
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 16,000
<p>Key commitments: BGfm is for residents of Brynmawr and surrounding areas of Blaenau Gwent. It works to improve social inclusion, embracing heritage, culture, and diversity, and promotes the Welsh language. The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music, including popular music from the 1960s to the present day with some country music. Specialist genres also feature • Speech., including national, regional, and local news and sport (including one daily bulletin in Welsh) community news and information, community issue programming and interviews • Over the course of each week programming in English and Welsh is broadcast • The service provides original, local output for a minimum of eight hours per day. 	

The service provides a range of community benefits (social gain objectives mandated by statute) for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:

- The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion
- The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service
- The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it
- Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.

Overview of station:

The station serves the communities of Blaenau Gwent whilst also engaging online listeners from across the world. The stations' key purpose is to provide community information that would otherwise be unavailable. The station divides its time equally between music and conversation, which incorporates interviews with community members, artists and key organisations and discussions around important local issues such as autism and mental health. As well as this, the station provides work placement opportunities for young people looking to get into broadcasting.

"The station is vital to the community and the people involved in keeping the station going."

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to cover the wages of the Chairman, Director and Sustainability Manager (single employee) to increase revenue from advertising and donations. It also provided time for radio members to gain wider community engagement, identify new funding sources and undertake training in grant bid writing, which subsequently resulted in further successful grant applications.

"The grant gave me time in terms of being able to go out and engage with more people and approach organisations for funding."

Impact of the CRF grant:

The station found themselves in a better financial situation as advertising revenue increased and new funding sources were identified. This allowed them to connect to people at home during Covid and dedicate more programmes to mental health and combating social isolation. They created links with local schools and colleges and created placements for young people. Training in grant applications has also put the station in a more confident position in terms of sustainability.

"The big success area was donations and grants. I was able to identify new sources of funding."

Station website: <https://www.bgfm.wales/>

Station email:

5 Delivering social gain

Section summary

- Grant recipients are actively promoting and supporting a wide range of local and national causes, helping their listenership to navigate to local sources of support. Examples include the promotion of community foodbanks, local fundraising causes, coffee mornings for socially isolated or vulnerable groups, and exercise classes.
- They are helping to extend the reach of statutory and non-statutory partners into an audience profile that is not generally served by commercial radio.
- Around one in five (19%) grant recipients used their grant for volunteer organisation and support. The expansion of community outreach activities has also helped stations to develop new volunteer roles thus broadening the appeal of the sector to more than a core of radio enthusiasts. A strong and growing volunteer base can form a central part of a station's financial and operating plan.
- The use of the CRF grant funding has not only served to support stations to become more self-sustaining, but in doing so it has protected a considerable number of volunteer roles that are providing wider economic and social benefits to the communities within which they are based.
- Grant funding has also enabled stations to develop new training offers to support local people, largely through the work of a Business Development Manager establishing links with local schools or colleges.

The Communications Act 2003 and then the Community Radio Order 2004 established the final legal framework for full-time, long-term community radio licences in the UK. The sector has two crucial features, namely it is not run for financial profit, and it is made by a community, for the benefit of that community. If a station is being run for profit, or it is being imposed upon a community from outside, then it is not a community radio station. Community radio should also serve two principal functions:

- Access: an outlet for cultural, political, and artistic voices and opinions which are excluded elsewhere
- Development: Social, cultural and educational gain for the community as a whole and its individual members.

If a radio station is not offering access to voices which are under-represented elsewhere, and if a station is not of practical benefit to its community, it is not a community radio station. Community radio stations are uniquely placed to make a difference to society, delivering skills, boosting community pride, and improving access to services to those who need them most. Central to this is the ability of community stations to reach isolated, underrepresented and often marginalised groups. Recent research prepared for the Listener Group of the DCMS Digital Radio & Audio Review²⁴ found that community radio has a weekly reach of 682,000 listeners. It has a specific reach into audiences from Black and Asian populations, equating to 21% of the listenership compared with all radio that has an equivalent reach of eight per cent.

²⁴ RAJAR/Ipsos/RSMB (2021)- 'Audience Estimates for UK Community Radio Stations'. April 2021.

The requirement to deliver 'social gain' is embedded in legislation and this means the achievement, in respect of individuals or groups of individuals in the community that the service is intended to serve, or in respect of other members of the public, of the following objectives:²⁵

1. The provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved by such services
2. The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion
3. The provision of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service
4. The better understanding of the particular community and strengthening of links within.

Social gain may also include the achievement of other 'social objectives':

- The delivery of services provided by local authorities and other public services
- The promotion of economic development and of social enterprises
- The promotion of employment
- The provision of opportunities for the gaining of work experience
- The promotion of social inclusion
- The promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity
- The promotion of civic participation and volunteering.

The community radio sector can generate social gain regarding promotion of areas such as social inclusion, diversity, local enterprises, or volunteering opportunities.²⁶ This is evident in the key commitments listed by stations and by reviewing the content of station websites.

The annual financial returns that stations submit to Ofcom do not require them to report on their contribution to these social objectives and as such an opportunity to capture the full contribution of the sector to wider societal or policy objectives has not been realised to date. A suite of KPIs could be included in both the grant report form and annual financial returns to help capture social gain evidence on a consistent basis across the sector.

This section of the report presents evidence of social gain drawn from responses to the online survey, deep dive interviews and a review of the grant recipient's websites and social media content. Collectively they present compelling evidence of the strong social gain delivered by the sector and the contribution that the CRF grant awards have made in supporting this area.²⁷

²⁵ (Adapted from) The Community Radio Order 2004 (HMSO)

²⁶ Source: We are Community Builders, Part of The Fabric": A Review of Community Radio, Social Research, 2014

²⁷ This report does not calculate additionality attributed to the CRF due to methodological and data limitations.

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland recently published a report showcasing the role of community radio in delivery social benefit, which outlines a range of indicators which could help to evidence the contribution of the sector (Table 5.1 over page).²⁸ This provides a useful framework to support the sector to think about how it evidences its social impact. Ofcom, working in partnership with relevant sector bodies, may consider providing guidance and resources for community stations to strengthen the evidence base around social benefit.

²⁸ Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2020)– ‘Community Radio: Delivering Social Benefit’.

Table 5.1: Delivering social benefit through community radio^{29 30}

Social benefits	Indicators	CRF contribution
1. Individuals, especially minorities and those marginalized, are growing in confidence and creativity and/or reinforcing a sense of belonging, directly from engaging with the Station	Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placements from community organisation working with marginalised/disadvantaged people • station volunteers making programmes and in administration and support • training of marginalised/disadvantaged individuals; and taking in interns from external entities • isolated or marginalised individuals listening to radio programmes addressing their interests 	✓
2. Individuals are enhancing their employment prospects, through gaining skills and confidence reinforcing community identity	Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media training that enhances vocational prospects. • volunteer opportunities that enhance employment prospects through personal development and skills acquisition • staff experience and training that enhance their vocational prospects 	✓
3. Community members are informed and aware of what is happening around their community	Achieved through the use by community members of information broadcast by the Station, in the form of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular bulletins of everyday information such as traffic, weather events etc. • specific social bulletins such as death notices, social events, etc. • transactional information services such as Job Search or Marketplace delivered free or at low-cost 	✓
4. Community members are responding more effectively to issues—local to global—because they have access to diverse viewpoints and to more and better information	Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • producing/broadcasting content and format that addresses local to global, with diverse views presented in a balanced and constructive format, in studio and outside broadcasting • providing facilities and resources for volunteers to do the same, covering issues of local interest and concern • referencing local advocacy groups when reporting on news items • actively engaging in the community through projects, advocacy and interactions on issues or local interest and concern 	✓
5. Collective actors are facilitated, and reinforced in their capacity to achieve their goals	Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing airtime to local CBOs to discuss and present their work, issues and requests to the public • facilitating CBOs to produce dedicated regular slots or entire programmes, including training and facilities • actively collaborating, beyond broadcasting, with collective actors for advocacy and joint work on issues relating to social benefit 	✓
6. The community sense of identity and cohesiveness is enhanced through interaction and collective action.	Achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bringing diverse community groups in interactive programmes to discuss local issues, including to deal with conflicts and tensions • helping to mobilise community members around issues of concern locally, for collective 	✓

²⁹ Adapted from- Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2020)– ‘Community Radio: Delivering Social Benefit’.

³⁰ CBO refers to Community Based Organisation.

5.1 Facilitating community navigation

The community radio sector has around one million listeners a week and most stations are active across a range of social media platforms. The stations that provided a response to the survey have a combined following on Twitter of 337,822 and on Facebook of 766,052.³¹ Content analysis of these channels reveals that the stations actively promote and support a wide range of local and national causes, helping their listenership to navigate to local sources of support. Examples include the promotion of community foodbanks, local fundraising causes, coffee mornings for socially isolated or vulnerable groups, and exercise classes (Figure 5.1 over page).

The most common response that stations provided regarding how the grant has helped them to strengthen their support to the local community is increased links and connections. This involves links with key organisations and businesses that can act as a support network and can also provide localised content for the radio. Additionally, this involves links with general community members, and links with local schools and colleges.

'We've developed very close relationships with key organisations - the county council, police, youth organisations etc.'

They are helping to extend the reach of statutory and non-statutory partners into an audience profile that is not generally served by commercial radio. Whilst this report focuses on CRF grant funding in the period prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, content analysis of stations' social media platforms highlights the provision of information relating to local vaccination centres. Stations cover topical public safety issues, for example recent concern regarding drink spiking. This is important given that radio is a highly trusted medium that people turn to for news and vital information, as recognised in the recent government and industry Digital Radio and Audio Review.³²

'Our main goal is promoting community activities and organisations. We try to get as many local groups and organisations on air as possible.'

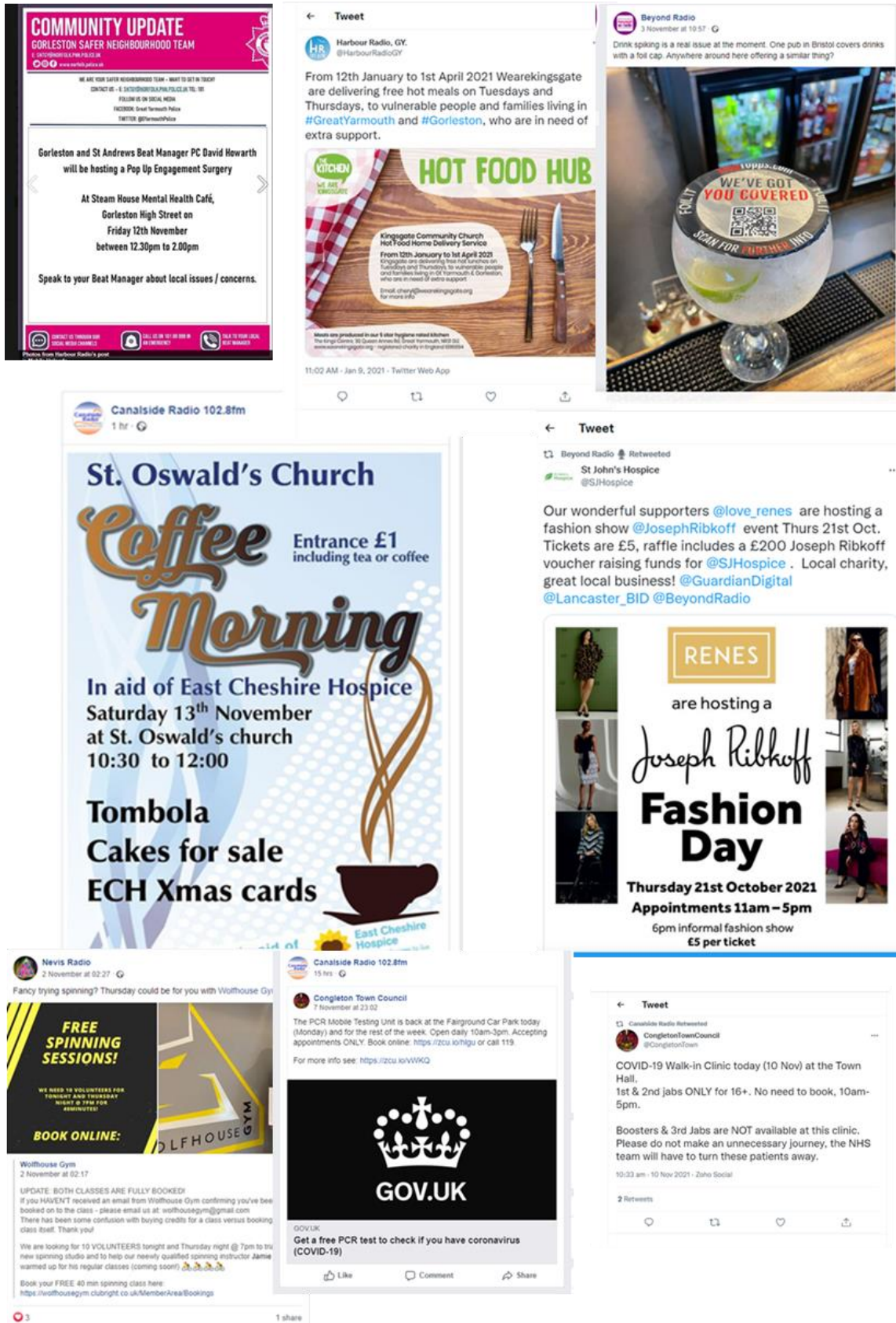
As a trusted source for its growing listenership,³³ CRF grant funding has helped many stations to undertake outreach activity to expand their community links and develop partnerships with a range of Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations. The profile and coverage they have provided has also helped other community-based services to reach people in need of support or recruit volunteers.

³¹ Source: Wavehill survey of CRF grant recipients 2021, n=37

³² DCMS (2021)-'Digital radio and audio review'. 21st October 2021

³³ Ipsos MRBI's Omnipoll found that radio is the most trusted source of information, even amongst younger adults and as such makes important connections with listeners across the country.

Figure 5.1: Helping local communities by raising the profile of support services



Name of service: Uckfield FM	Licensee: Uckfield Community Radio Limited
Licence granted: 01/07/2010	On Air date: 01/07/2010
Year of CRF grant award: 2016-2017	CRF grant (£): 12,650
<p>Key commitments: Uckfield FM is for the people of Uckfield and the surrounding area of the Sussex Weald, providing a voice for the local community. It offers a local service and broadcasts features promoting life in the target community.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main type of music broadcast over the course of each week is popular chart music from the last 50 years, with some specialist music programming • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week is local news and information, 'What's On', interviews, magazine programmes, local interest features, discussions, and local sports programming • The service provides original output for a minimum of 10 hours per day • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p> <p>Overview of station: The station serves a very specific and small geographical community – Uckfield and the surrounding villages – and has an estimated average weekly listenership of about 13,000-20,000. It broadcasts 24 hours a day, with 9-12 hours of live output. In addition to music, there is local content, including local news and information and local features of interest. The station prides itself on content that is tailored to be local, including traffic news, getting local messages out and raising the profile of things that are happening in the community (e.g. working with the local foodbank, volunteer centre, council, police, fire brigade).</p> <p>The station also provides the opportunity for trainee volunteers to learn to be presenters. The station has one employee and is otherwise staffed by around 63 volunteers. It is funded mainly through commercial revenue from advertising and fundraising.</p> <p><i>"We don't have a particular group, it is for anybody and everybody – it is for the community in our geographic area"</i> (Fundraising Manager/Associate Director).</p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station has applied to the CRF on several occasions. The first grant, in 2011, was to fund a Business Development role to sell advertising as a revenue stream, which would then continue to fund the role with some of the income generated. This achieved its goals, which were to keep the station funded and on air, and to retain the role. This person is still in post and generating income by selling on-air advertising. A second grant in 2016 was for a role to look at fundraising (grant applications and fundraising events), with a view to making the role permanent funded through the additional income generated. The position lasted around 2 years with the money raised enabling the station to work out where to seek grants and to set up fundraising events (e.g. community awards) which are still going. The income generated covered the role but did not bring in much additional revenue, so the role was abandoned. In 2020 the station had several Covid relief/recovery grants to cover general operating expenses (payment of rent and utilities) and to fill some of projected loss for 2020.

*“Grant funding is an important form of revenue – we couldn’t keep going without it”
(Fundraising Manager/Associate Director)*

Impact of the CRF grant:

The creation of a permanent, paid Business Development Role has allowed the organisation to develop long-term relationships with advertisers and corporate sponsors. The temporary Fundraising Manager role instigated fundraising activities which are still ongoing, and which continue to contribute to the station’s income. This has improved the long-term sustainability of the station and increased its capacity to recruit volunteers. The ability to support the local community has therefore been strengthened. The Covid funding enabled the station to continue functioning at a time when they were unable to carry out their usual fundraising events. Community wellbeing was a particular focus for the station during Covid, with a focus on providing companionship as well as localised advice and information. The station considers itself to have an important role in filling the gaps left by local commercial stations which have all merged and no longer cover what is happening in the local area. There are plans to increase coverage further into the district in early 2022, which arguably couldn’t have happened if the station hadn’t been built up and strengthened using the grant support.

*“In the next 6 months we’ve had an increase to our broadcast area, which widens the pool of listeners that might be available, which makes it more attractive to advertise”
(Fundraising Manager/Associate Director).*

Website: www.uckfieldfm.co.uk/

Email: ian.smith@uckfieldfm.co.uk

5.2 Local identity and place shaping

Social gain in the context of community radio can include the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion which in turn may lead to a better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.³⁴ Review and analysis of the programme schedules for the 83 grant recipients between 2016/17 and 2019/20 provides numerous examples of specific issues covered within their locally produced content or a voice and platform provided to specialist, marginal or under-represented groups.

Analysis of stations key commitments showcases a range of content areas incorporated into their scheduling, for example covering the promotion of social interaction, religious programmes involving worship and readings, programmes delivered in languages other than English, military welfare, a focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and more broadly a celebration of cultural diversity. The most common goal or objective referenced by grant recipients was to support their community through the provision of accessible, tailored and culturally relevant news and information.

'It is around local information and stories, local news and issues that are of interest.'

'Our main mission is to serve the People of Dudley Borough and we do this by providing them with information about what is going on in the area.'

This focus enabled stations to contribute to creating a strong sense of community and place identity so as to support broader objectives around community cohesion, social inclusion, satisfaction with place and community wellbeing. With regards to the latter, several stations have focused specifically on promoting positive mental health and including this as a core theme in their programme content.

'Wellbeing has been of particular interest to a lot of our listeners during Covid, especially those who were isolating.'

Within the cohort of grant recipients covered by this report there are a range of examples of how they are working to strengthen links within their community and showcase cultural diversity (Table 5.2 over page). Collectively this diversity of programming and locally owned content is helpful in creating a sense of pride and sense of belonging. It is also encouraging the listenership to take an active and positive role in their local community thus providing wider and longer-term benefits.

'What we do is the reason community radio was started in the first place. A lot come because of the music, but we all have a story. Even if they didn't originally come for support, they get a lot of support from the station.'

'We pride ourselves on content that is tailored to be local... as well as music, the content is local – local news and information, local features of interest.'

³⁴ Source: We are Community Builders, Part of The Fabric": A Review of Community Radio, Social Research, 2014.

Table 5.2: Promoting local identify and social justice

Station name	Service coverage	Content
1BN	Brighton and Hove	Dedicated content celebrating International Women’s Day
Asian Star 101.6 FM	Slough, Berkshire	Daily religious programming
Awaaz FM	Southampton	Cultural shows, religious programming and community hour included in the schedule
Harbour Radio	Great Yarmouth	Providing a platform for local start-up businesses
Penistone FM	Penistone	Community hour focusing on local issues supported by guest speakers
Pride FM	Parts of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead	Raising awareness of LGBT+ issues, inclusion and diversity through broadcast
Radio Sangam	Huddersfield	Showcasing and promoting Asian artists and culture
SFM 106.9	Sittingbourne and the surrounding area	Specialist programmes covering issues such as the environment, health, crime prevention, religious and social affairs

The positive impact of the community radio sector is showcased annually in the Community Radio Awards with grant recipients regularly featuring across a range of award categories including Community Development Project of the Year, Station of the Year, Community Show of the Year, Entertainment Show of the Year or Live Event or Outside Broadcast of the Year.³⁵

³⁵ <https://communityradioawards.org.uk/>

Name of service: Celtic Music Radio	Licensee: Celtic Music Radio Limited
Licence granted: 01/07/2014	On Air date: 01/07/2014
Year of CRF grant award: 2017-2018	CRF grant (£): 18,000
<p>Key commitments: Celtic Music Radio is for those with an interest in contemporary and traditional ‘Celtic’ music and Scottish culture. It offers a strong cultural voice, promoting the performance, learning and appreciation of a broad spectrum of Celtic music.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The music mainly broadcast over the course of each week is traditional and contemporary music from Celtic artists, from around the world. Other World music also features • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are general news and information, interviews and discussions, music-based educational features • Over the course of each week, programming in English is broadcast with some Gaelic and Scots programming • The service provides original output for a minimum of 11 hours per day • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p> <p>Overview of station: The station is focused around Celtic music which they believe is neglected by commercial radio. They broadcast a mix of music and information about Celtic music, record live sets of Celtic music bands and present live, annually from the Celtic connections festival. They also have specialist night time music shows where they play alternative genres such as country, blues jazz etc.</p> <p><i>“Community Radio is important as it provides local people the ability to be heard and discuss their community and culture.”</i></p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to employ a Business Development Officer to increase advertising and sponsorship income and develop a more sustainable income for the station. Additionally, the station wished to increase links with the Celtic music community and form connections with music groups and live music venues.

Impact of the CRF grant:

Whilst the station didn't achieve their initial plan of generating advertising and sponsorship sales due to the pandemic, they did increase links with the Celtic music community, music groups and live music venues. They learned the importance of forming face to face links, as this resulted in greater coverage for the station, opportunities to present future live concerts, and a potential revenue stream where groups can utilise the facilities in the station to record or promote their events. As well as this, the station organised a fundraiser event for the station in Christmas 2021.

“The importance of making face to face links with bands and music venues as it has resulted in much more coverage for the station and we are either having a presence at concerts or being sent recordings to play on air.”

Website:

<https://www.celticmusicradio.net/>

Email: info@celticmusicradio.net

5.3 Volunteer roles and engagement

The sector already contributes strongly to enabling local people to volunteer across a range of roles within the station. Ofcom's Communications Market Report 2021³⁶ estimates that the sector supports 19,750 volunteers each year, with an average of 79 volunteers per station. The sector provides training to 5,500 volunteers per year. Collectively these volunteers donate 38,750 hours of support per year (an average of 155 per station). Based on Real Living Wage rates for April 2022, this equates to an equivalent in-kind cost of £383,625 per annum, which represents a cost equivalent to 28% of the sector's total income and 33% of its total expenditure.

Community radio stations are permitted to count some volunteer time as part of their turnover because offsetting volunteer input against other sources of income allows for greater revenues to be obtained from on-air commercial sources. As such a strong and growing volunteer base can form a central part of a station's financial and operating plan.³⁷

A review of community radio undertaken by the Scottish Government in 2012 highlighted the range of volunteer benefits including: increased confidence and self-worth; companionship; a greater sense of belonging; satisfaction from helping others; technical and social skills; knowledge and experience; enjoyment and improved mental and physical health, and career development.³⁸

³⁶ Ofcom (2021)- 'Communications Market Report 2021'.

³⁷ Ofcom (2017)- 'Notes of guidance for community radio licence applicants and licensees'.

³⁸ Scottish Government (2012)- 'We are Community Builders, Part of the Fabric'. A Review of Community Radio.

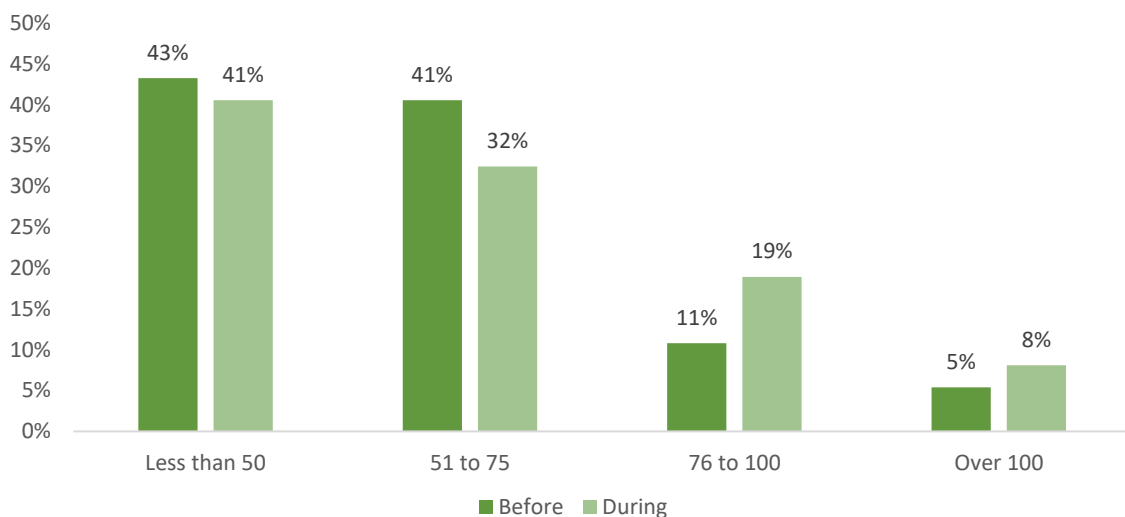
A range of reports outline the positive health and wellbeing impacts derived from volunteering, with a positive association between volunteering and subjective wellbeing, including improved life satisfaction, increased happiness, and reduced symptoms of depression.³⁹

Around one in five (19%) CRF grant recipients used their grant for volunteer organisation and support highlighting the contribution that the programme is making to supporting a wide volunteer base. The expansion of community outreach activities has also helped stations to develop new volunteer roles thus broadening the appeal of the sector to more than a core of radio enthusiasts.

Feedback from grant recipients reveals that they have been able to expand their volunteer base because of their funding award, with average numbers of volunteers increasing from 58 prior to their grant application to 72 during the year the grant was received (Figure 5.2 below). Over half (59%) of respondents indicated that the grant award has enabled them to recruit more volunteers.

Volunteer hours also increased as a result of receiving grant funding, whereby average hours given to stations prior to receipt of a grant was 8,680, compared to an average of 9,702 during the year the grant was awarded. Grant recipients have secured strong recognition of their work within the voluntary sector, Beyond Radio for example has been awarded The Queens Award for Voluntary Service.

Figure 5.2: Number of volunteers prior to and during grant funding



Source: Wavehill survey of CRF recipients 2021, n=37

³⁹ What Works Wellbeing (2020)- 'The Impacts of Volunteering on the Subjective Wellbeing of Volunteers: A Rapid Evidence Assessment.

The use of the CRF grant funding has not only served to support stations to become more self-sustaining, but in doing so it has protected a considerable number of volunteer roles that are providing wider economic and social benefits to the communities within which they are based.

‘During Covid we didn’t lose one volunteer – they actually wanted to interact more ... They said it gave them a huge sense of purpose and it helped with their mental strain.’

Whilst Ofcom collates basic information on the number of volunteers and volunteer hours across the community radio sector, it may be helpful to capture further profile information on the volunteer base (e.g. protected characteristics). This would help to demonstrate the extent to which the community radio sector is engaging and supporting a volunteer profile that is under-represented in other sectors. It would also help to ascertain levels of retention and training across the sector, which are central to providing stability to support the continued operation of community radios.

Name of service: Canalside Radio 102.8 FM	Licensee: Canalside Community Radio Limited
Licence granted: 03/12/2008	On Air date: 04/12/2008
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 17,160
<p>Key commitments: Canalside Community Radio is for the north-eastern area of the Borough of Macclesfield. It focuses on under-served and ‘hard to reach’ population groups with specific programming. It is a focal point for local information and promotes cultural diversity and the well-being of the local community.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of music genres • Speech, including discussion and debate programming, news, travel information, what’s on information, local and regional sport • The service provides original output for a minimum of 12 hours per day. <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	

Overview of station:

The station covers Northeast Cheshire. The station broadcasts 80% music and 20% speech (chat/discussion shows, interviews with local groups etc.). Its audience is mostly older people, and it provides social inclusion activities, community news and information, and advertises community events. The station also helps young people who are in danger of becoming NEET or offending by providing them with training in radio production. It has received grants from the local police commissioner to provide this training. The station has no paid members of staff and 20 volunteers. The station's main source of income is advertising, which has decreased due to the pandemic.

"I had been involved in commercial radio and believed that the radio available wasn't addressing local issues or needs and that we could fill that void."

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station has previously had grant funding to pay for a professional trainer to train volunteers and young people in radio production, and to replace equipment were successful in training 10 volunteers and 20 young people in one year. The most recent successful application was to secure a paid fundraiser for a year. The station set the fundraiser a target of £50,000, while they did not achieve this target, they still raised new revenue of £20,000.

"Fundraiser did raise £20,000 in terms of accessing new grants and advertising sources which was very good considering it was in the middle of Covid-19."

Impact of the CRF grant:

Because the grant helped pay for equipment for an extra studio to do the training, it enabled the station to train volunteers. This meant more volunteers were trained and able to produce the show. It meant the station could provide the local college with a proper course that they could send young people on, and so get them into radio production. When the funding ended, the station lost its professional trainer and hasn't been able to provide as many radio training placements for young people. The fundraising role was not sustainable once the funding ended, as the station volunteers didn't have the time to apply for grants or contact local businesses to discuss advertising. The pandemic has resulted in many local businesses cutting their marketing budgets and not renewing their advertising.

Website: <https://canalsideradio.net/>

Email: office@canalsideradio.net

5.4 Training

The provision of education or training, work experience and promotion of employment is a core aspect of the social gain delivered by the community radio sector. **Data around the number of people supported through training does not feature in Ofcom's Communications Market Report 2021 and is also not currently captured in CRF Grant Report Forms.** Collating this information can help to showcase the considerable number of people supported by the community radio sector. It can also help individual stations to connect with local education, training, and employability programmes, potentially providing a new source of income.

Feedback from grant recipients has outlined how their funding enabled them to develop a new training offer to support local people, largely through the work of a Business Development Manager that enabled a dedicated focus on establishing links with local schools or colleges seeking to collaborate with community radio stations. Examples of the work of grant recipients in providing training and work experience opportunities are presented in Table 5.3 and the following case studies.

Table 5.3: Providing training and work experience opportunities

Station name	Service coverage	Content
Paisley FM 107.5	Paisley and surrounding areas in Renfrewshire	Paisley FM 107.5 launched The Paisley FM Radio Academy in June 2019 to provide Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) courses in Radio Broadcasting for pupils in schools across Renfrewshire
Platform B	Brighton and Hove	Platform B launched the first youth-led breakfast radio show with grant funding from Youth Music's Incubator Fund ⁴⁰ which is designed to help open up access to sustainable careers in music for people aged 18-25, particularly those who are underrepresented
Radio Plus	Coventry	Radio Plus partnership with Levytate, in order to help people aged 16-30 to develop their skill within the media industry. Through a Content Producer Apprenticeship
Source FM	Falmouth and Penryn	Source FM co-delivers a certificate in Radio Production with Adult Education Falmouth and a Foundation Degree in Radio Production with Falmouth University

⁴⁰ <https://youthmusic.org.uk/incubator-fund-round-one>

Name of service: Cando FM	Licensee: Furness Broadcast Media CIC
Licence granted: 23/11/2015	On Air date: 23/11/2015
Year of CRF grant award: 2016-2017, 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 17,221, £16,600
<p>Key commitments: Cando FM is for 16–40-year-olds in Barrow-in-Furness. It provides a music-led, local service with a social voice and tailored for people in the area. It offers opportunities for community participation, learning, training, and volunteering.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. A varied mix of music genres is broadcast over the course of each week • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are news including local stories, community information, local event information, and discussions • The service provides original output for a minimum of 60 hours per week • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p> <p>Overview of station: The station was established as a university station but became independent in 2018. It covers the Barrow Peninsular, a mix of urban and rural communities with a population of around 100,000: including the towns of Barrow and Ulverston and lots of small, rural villages. Barrow struggles with poverty issues and is one of the most deprived areas in the country, whereas Ulverston is relatively affluent. The volunteers reflect the varied demographic, some are universal credit claimants whilst others are retired people with an interest in the arts. The station has a Manager and an Assistant Manager who are employed part-time, in addition to around 50 volunteers. The station sees itself as the heart of the community and has a strong focus on reaching out and trying to get people involved, including hard to reach groups (e.g. ethnic minority communities and refugee communities). There is an emphasis on local news and promoting community groups, some of whom have regular shows (e.g. the local hospice, a dementia charity).</p>	

The station offers a formal training package, where people are trained in the basics, mentored, and then help to create a show, and a skills programme where the station goes into youth centres to train them in creating their own content.

“Our broad objective is to provide a community voice – to inform whilst entertaining. To give an opportunity to musicians, playwrights etc. Celebrating local achievement and showcasing anybody striving to make a name for themselves.”

Reason for seeking grant support:

The first grant was for a Sustainability Manager to bring in advertising and create advertisements and do grant applications. The station was unsuccessful in filling the post (£16,500 plus commission from advertising wasn't seen as an attractive job offer), so instead contracted the work to multiple self-employed people. Over lockdown the station had two smaller Covid recovery grants for a few thousand pounds to replace lost revenue from advertising.

Impact of the CRF grant:

Without that funding, the station manager said it probably would not have surpassed its first 12 months of becoming independent. The post brought in an additional £8,000 in advertising revenue and has helped the station get going and make further funding applications to pay the wages of two part-time management staff. Staff consider the success of the station in the community to be incredible and say everyone listens to it. The additional revenue funding has contributed to the impact of the station by allowing staff the time to focus on building up the station's prominence. They have developed very close relationships with key organisations (e.g. County Council, police, youth organisations) and based on these positive working relationships, now have a representative on the Business Improvement District Board. The station has just been offered a town centre location for free, as part of the local council's restructuring of the town centre.

The grant funding has allowed staff more time to focus on community work, and the station has recently begun to do projects to help community groups make their own media. The station has also been able to provide a Kickstart placement and is going to offer the person 6 months' work beyond the placement and a permanent role. The station now makes enough money to pay its way, but lost most of its advertising revenue during the pandemic and has yet to build the income back up. The sustainability of the post funded through CRF has not yet been achieved (posts are currently funded by a local wind farm and the money runs out in February 2022). The two staff members contribute around 60 extra hours a week in volunteer time and a significant amount of their time is diverted away from supporting volunteers and running the station, as they are constantly looking for funding bids to try and maintain a living wage for themselves.

“We had to adapt to survive because of Covid- so we are becoming a community business with the radio station as part of what we do – diversifying.”

“That network with local charities and community workers happened over Covid- we provided that airtime for them and have now developed a support network.”

Website: <https://candofm.co.uk/>

Email: contact@candofm.co.uk

Name of service: Ninesprings FM	Licensee: Radio Ninesprings
Licence granted: 14/09/2018	On Air date: 14/09/2018
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 19,700
<p>Key commitments: Ninesprings FM in Yeovil provides a service for all, and especially those who are under-represented in the media. The station reflects the 'communities of interest' in the area, encourages local talent and gives a voice to local people. It offers training and opportunities for people to get involved.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are music from the 1950s to the present. Specialist music and local artists also feature • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are national and local news, travel, sports reporting, reviews, community information, discussions and interviews • The service provides original output for a minimum of 42 hours per week • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 91 hours per week. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p> <p>Overview of station: The station was set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2013, and in 2018 was awarded a broadcast license for community radio. Ofcom extended this license and provided two extra transmitters meaning the station now covers South Somerset. They run 11 hours of local programming, beginning at 7am-10am with a breakfast show in which they discuss travel and traffic news, and local information. They provide a bulletin of local news and have a link with BBC Radio Somerset who also send bulletins over every hour. The station plays music and inserts a pre-recorded local item in between every three songs. They target those within the community aged 35+, believing these people are likely to have lived in South Somerset their whole lives and are rooted in the area.</p>	

As well as this, the station is linked with a local college, and provide training to all studying a BTEC in creative media production, where the students use the studio at the college to produce podcasts, shows etc. that Radio Ninesprings broadcast. The station also offers training to their own employees that allows them to engage in a range of tasks and gain valuable experience.

“All the training and experience I received was invaluable ...I got to do a bit of everything – in one day I could be making adverts, meeting with clients, going to an outside broadcast ... it was massively beneficial as I got to learn a wide variety of skills. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for Ninesprings, as there wouldn’t have been the opportunity to get that experience anywhere else”. Student volunteer who went on to work at Gaydio

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to employ a Development Manager who could analyse how the station is run, suggest methods to raise the station’s profile, facilitate new partnerships and provide training.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The station appointed the Development Manager role who made a series of changes to improve its operating structure, for example regular management meetings and establishing systems to book advertising. They were also central to efforts to develop new relationships with local organisations which has helped to raise its profile. As a result, the station was able to broadcast even more regularly throughout the pandemic. Although the station was successful in achieving their aims, as they wish to remain a volunteer-based organisation they have decided not to make the Development Manager role permanent.

Further impacts included a strengthening of links with local schools and colleges, where the station has provided training opportunities to three young people who have subsequently obtained jobs. Additionally, they have strengthened support to the local community by building relationships through a range of local projects.

“We have been able to strengthen support to the local community by building relationships, we delivered a project with high sheriff of Somerset which involved young people from local schools making short adverts with the police to tackle crime... it was very successful and improved our relationship with the police in our local area”.

Website:

www.radioninesprings.com/

Email: www.radioninesprings.com/about-us/contact-us/

6 Summary and recommendations

6.1 Summary

The Community Radio Fund was established in 2005 to help to fund the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations. Beyond the light-touch monitoring of the fund that Ofcom conducts annually there has been no previous process or impact evaluation of the CRF since it was launched.

In July 2021, DCMS commissioned independent social and economic research consultancy Wavehill to undertake a research project to analyse the impact of CRF awards and the outcomes for community radio stations that received them and to understand what worked well and less well about the fund and why.

6.1.1 Fund design and delivery

During the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 a total of 106 CRF grant awards were approved across 83 community stations. Some 18 community stations received more than one grant award during this period. Combined, the value of the grant awards was £1,677,608 with an average award of £15,865 per applicant.

Over two thirds (68%) of grant recipients agreed that the criteria and eligibility requirements were clearly explained and easy to understand and eight out of ten grant recipients report to be satisfied with the grant application process. The main areas where grant recipients reported dissatisfaction with the application and decision-making process related to decision-making timeframes, greater clarity on the assessment criteria and a lack of feedback on why an application was unsuccessful.

Most grant requests were for business development and fundraiser positions, with applicants making a case that these roles would help them to build financial sustainability. Stations highlighted the ability of dedicated postholders to open new opportunities and funding streams, including through the creation of new products or service offer which could help to diversify their income sources.

6.1.2 Outcomes and impact

The relaxation in 2015 of some of the financial restrictions that apply to the community radio sector has provided greater flexibilities for stations to secure income from advertising and sponsorship. However, many lacked experience and tools to realise these opportunities straight away. As such, the CRF has provided an important vehicle for the sector to bring in skills, experience, and capacity to support efforts to grow income streams through commercial channels. In the absence of the CRF, feedback from grant recipients suggests that many would have been able to make less or no progress in this regard.

CRF grants have supported a much wider range of activity than simply increasing income streams. Activities relating to community outreach, improving business and operating systems and supporting volunteers play a central role in ensuring the survivability of a station and the wider sector. Just over half of grant recipients reported that their grant enabled them to develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan. This provides a level of confidence that the funding can deliver longer-term benefits for the recipient stations. Full impact may not be evident for several years.

Comparison of station's annual income streams before and after their grant award presents a positive picture, with an average increase of 37% and a median increase of 65%. Just over half (54%) of stations reported that they increased their unrestricted financial reserves as a direct consequence of their grant, improving their resilience. Feedback from grant recipients also suggests that stations are developing more 'commercial' income streams albeit further support may be required to continue this trend.

The appointment of a Business Development Manager post has enabled some stations to reduce their expenditure costs, for example by renegotiating their premises costs or securing in-kind support or donations for things that they previously had to purchase. Two thirds (67%) of stations rated the fund as effective in helping with fundraising and as a result supporting them to become self-sustaining. The process of successfully delivering a CRF grant project gave some stations the necessary confidence and experience to seek out further grant funding sources. The majority (89%) of grant recipients report to be confident that their radio station will be able to run without being over-reliant on grant funding over the next five years.

The challenge many stations have faced is in maintaining the momentum of the activity supported through their grant award. Whilst stations have reported a positive uplift, their ability to continue to grow income streams through on-air advertising, grant awards and commissioned work was influenced by capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence of station staff or volunteers. Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain positive impacts achieved through the CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.

6.1.3 Social gain

Analysis of stations key commitments showcases a range of content areas incorporated into their scheduling, for example covering the promotion of social interaction, religious programmes involving worship and readings, programmes delivered in languages other than English, military welfare, a focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and more broadly a celebration of cultural diversity. Around one in five (19%) of CRF grant recipients used their grant for volunteer organisation and support highlighting the contribution that the programme is making to supporting a wide volunteer base. Around six in ten (59%) stations indicated that their grant funding has enabled them to recruit more volunteers.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Ofcom should review the consent arrangements in the annual financial returns, application, and grant report forms to enable information to be shared with DCMS and any external contractor governed by a data sharing agreement.
2. Ofcom should undertake analysis to identify stations that have never applied for a grant through the Fund and cross reference this with the detail contained in their annual financial returns. Detailed analysis of the annual financial information reported by licence holders compared to those that have received CRF funding and those that have not can support efforts to determine the impact and additionality of the Fund.
3. Undertaking a more detailed analysis in each financial year of all grant applications would be valuable to enable the identification of trends within the profile of applications by area, duration of licence held and community of interest.
4. The application process should be migrated to an online platform to facilitate more detailed analysis and interrogation of the application data. Consideration should be given to including a small number of metrics into the application and grant report forms which can aid future assessment of impact of the fund.
5. Targeted capacity building work around areas including the preparation of grant funding applications, developing an attractive offer for prospective advertisers, securing support through public service commissioners or more broadly in business management could help to sustain the positive impacts achieved through the CRF and ultimately increase the sustainability of the community radio sector.
6. One of the common growth areas identified by stations related to expanding their portfolio of work with schools and colleges, providing training opportunities to young people. This may highlight a potential to grow income streams from the provision of education and training activities which could be facilitated by liaison between DCMS and the Department for Education.
7. The annual financial returns that stations submit to Ofcom do not require them to report on their contribution to social objectives and as such an opportunity to capture the full contribution of the sector to wider societal or policy objectives has not been realised to date. This should be addressed by Ofcom working in partnership with the key sector bodies.
8. DCMS and the Local Government Association should work to raise the profile of the sector with public service commissioners to showcase how the sector delivers social gain and supports a wide range of local priorities.
9. Whilst Ofcom collates basic information on the number of volunteers and volunteer hours across the community radio sector, it may be helpful to capture further profile information on the volunteer base.

Appendix 1 Survey tool



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

Community Radio Fund: Grant Recipient Survey

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has commissioned independent research consultancy Wavehill to undertake an independent evaluation of the Community Radio Fund (CRF). This evaluation aims to investigate how effectively the fund is being delivered and administered and the impact it is having, both on the sustainability of community radio stations and within the communities which those stations serve. The evaluation findings will be used to inform thinking about how the CRF could be improved.

As part of this evaluation, Wavehill will be gathering information from community radio stations that have received a grant through the CRF between 2016 and 2020. DCMS is the data controller for the research. As a community radio station that has secured grant funding through the CRF during this time, we would appreciate you providing your views on the application process, whether you also applied for other funding support, how you used the grant and what impact the grant has had. This survey is separate to your Community Radio Fund Grant Report Form.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete, depending on your answers.

For more information on the survey and how the data will be used, please see our privacy notice.

Q1 Are you happy to continue with the survey? *Please note you can stop completing the questionnaire at any time if you decide you do not want to continue.*

- Yes
- No

Q2 Please can we confirm the following details are correct?

Licensee:

Licence Number:

Station Name:

Location:

Amount of grant funding received between 2016 and 2020:

Dates of grants received:

- These details are correct
- One or more of these details are incorrect

Q3 Please provide us with the correct details below:

Q4 How does your organisation support the local community?

Q5 How many times have you applied for the CRF?

Please answer as a number, include applications from before 2016

Q6 How many funding awards have you received from the CRF?

Please answer as a number, include funding awards from before 2016

Engaging with the CRF

The following questions are about your experiences engaging with the CRF.

Q7 Did any of the following factors motivate you to apply to the CRF?

Tick all that apply

- It was part of your business plan
- You had successfully used the fund in the past
- Sought to grow your volunteer numbers
- Better organise how the station's operation is run
- None of the above
- Other, please specify

Q8 Before you engaged with the CRF, did your station have any of the following?

Tick all that apply

- A business plan
- A fundraising strategy
- None of the above

Q9 Thinking about your initial engagement with the CRF, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not applicable
Completing the application forms was easy and straightforward				
The criteria and eligibility requirements were clearly explained and easy to understand				
Providing the evidence and paperwork required was simple and clear				
The nature of the grant was clearly explained				
The decision-making timeframes were reasonable				
Communication from the CRF team was responsive and clear				

Q10 What was the grant you received used for?

Tick all that apply

- Core management costs
- Fundraising to support the station (e.g. grants, commercial funding)
- Administration
- Financial management & reporting
- Community outreach
- Volunteer organisation and support
- Something else

Q11 What else did you use the grant funding for?

Q12 Overall how satisfied were you with the process of applying for your grant?

- 1 - not satisfied at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - very satisfied

Q13 Do you have any suggestions for amendments or improvements to the administration of the Fund?

Q14 Impact questions

The following questions are about the impact of the CRF on the running of your station:

Q15 What has the award of a grant from the Fund (which you used for.....) allowed you to do?

Tick all that apply

- Increase number of listeners
- Develop a new fundraising strategy or business plan
- Develop new income streams
- Develop relationships with corporate sponsors
- Develop relationships with public sector commissioners
- Develop relationships with Trusts and Foundations
- Develop new audio content
- Upskill volunteers
- Increase the number of volunteers
- Other

Q16 What else has the grant allowed you to do?

Q17 How effective was the CRF grant in helping your station to raise additional funding?

- 1 - not effective at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - very effective

Q18 How confident are you that your radio station will continue to operate over the next 5 years?

- 1 - not confident at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - very confident

Q19 How confident are you that your radio station will be able to run without being over-reliant on grant funding over the next 5 years?

- 1 - not confident at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - very confident

Q20 Why do you say this?

Q21 What are the biggest challenges you expect your station to face over the next 5 years?

Financial profile

To understand how the CRF grants have helped radio stations like yours we need to understand some details on the financial situation of the station. This will enable the evaluation to determine the position of stations applying for funding and their subsequent viability. This information will be kept confidential and only used for analytical purposes.

Q22 Prior to applying for grant funding from CRF, approximately what was your total annual income?

Q23 Approximately what proportion of your income came from the following sources?

- _____ Grant funding
- _____ Advertising
- _____ Sponsorship
- _____ Private donations
- _____ Trusts and foundations

Q24 In this period did you apply for any grant funding from any other sources (year of first application to year of first application +3)?

- Yes
- No
- Can't remember

Q25 Please tell us the names of the funders that your largest applications were to.

- Fund 1 _____
- Fund 2 _____
- Fund 3 _____

Q26 In the financial year after you applied to the CRF [SEED YEAR +1], approximately what was your total income?

Q27 Approximately what proportion of your income comes from the following sources?

- _____ Grant funding
- _____ Advertising
- _____ Sponsorship
- _____ Private donations
- _____ Trusts and foundations

Q28 Were you able to increase your unrestricted financial reserves (disposable cash) as a result of the CRF grant?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Staff and volunteers

The following questions are about your staffing.

Q29 Prior to applying for grant funding from CRF, how many people did you employ (on a paid basis)?

- Full time _____
- Part time _____

Q30 In the financial year following the grant award [SEED YEAR +1] how many people did you employ (on a paid basis)?

- Full time _____
- Part time _____

Q31 Has your CRF grant award enabled you to employ more staff since [YEAR OF GRANT]?

- Yes
- No

Q32 How many?

- Full time _____
- Part time _____

Q33 Were these staff members...?

- Hired directly through the CRF (you used the CRF to hire these people)
- Hired indirectly as a result of the CRF (you were able to subsequently hire these people as a result of the CRF)
- A mix of direct and indirect

Q34 Prior to applying for grant funding from CRF, how many people volunteered at your station?

Q35 How many people volunteered at the station in the year [SEED YEAR +1]?

Q36 Has your CRF grant award enabled you to recruit more volunteers?

- Yes
- No

Q37 How many?

Q38 Prior to applying for grant funding from CRF, approximately how many volunteering hours were given to the station per year?

Q39 Approximately how many volunteering hours were given to the station in [SEED year +1]

Q40 The research team at Wavehill are keen to speak with a number of community radio stations that have secured a grant from the Community Radio Fund in order to develop illustrative case studies. Would you be willing to speak with a member of the research team about your experiences of applying for and using the grant you received from the Fund?

- Yes
- No

Q41 If yes, please provide your contact details below:

- Name _____
- Email _____
- Telephone _____

Appendix 2 List of contributing stations

ALL FM
Asian Star 101.6 FM
Bangor FM
BCB 106.6 FM
Belfast FM
Beverley FM
BGFM
Black Country Radio
BRFM 95.6 FM
Burgess Hill Radio
Canalside Radio 102.8 FM
Cando FM
Celtic Music Radio
Crescent Radio
Crystal FM
Future Radio
Gateway 97.8
Hitmix Radio
Hot Radio 102.8
Hull Kingston Radio
Kennet Radio
Koast Radio
Maritime Radio
Nevis Radio
Ninesprings FM
Paisley FM
Park Radio
Penistone FM
Phonic FM
Platform B
Radio Verulam
Salford City Radio
SFM 106.9
Sunshine
Switch Radio 107.5
Uckfield FM
Wycombe Sound

Note: **bold** denotes case study grant recipient

Appendix 3 Case studies

Name of service: Black Country Radio	Licensee: Waterfront Media C.I.C
Licence granted: 21/12/2007	On Air date: 01/01/2008
Year of CRF grant award: 2017-2018	CRF grant (£): 13,000
<p>Key commitments: Black Country Radio provides the local area with information pertinent to their local area. It gets involved in the local community as much as possible, broadcasting local voices and opinions.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music, including mainstream popular music from the 1960s to today. During evenings and weekends specialist music programmes are featured, comprising shows dedicated to specific genres of music. Local musicians are also featured • Speech, including local issues, news (national and local), sport, topical interviews, local political coverage and faith-based programming • The service provides original output for a minimum of eight hours per day. <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station covers the Dudley borough and consists of both day and nighttime shows. The daytime shows offer a range of services, such as providing community information, discussing local and national politics (2-3 shows a week), promoting local organisations and events, and discussing important issues such as mental health. As well as this, they provide volunteering opportunities for members of the community that struggle with mental health. During the pandemic the station set up a helpline which signposted people to support services, and consequently were awarded the Queen’s Award for Volunteering.</p> <p><i>“Our station provides opportunities for local people to play their favourite music be it classical, jazz or heavy metal and also allows us to let people know what is going on in the area and give local groups the platform to say what they are doing.”</i></p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to cover three elements:

1. To develop a training course for college students in radio production by funding volunteers to undertake a 'train the trainer' course and create the resources and syllabus for the course
2. To develop training packages and team building days for businesses by using the station as a basis for activities
3. Expand the number of volunteers involved in the station by engaging with people who are hard to reach, including those with mental health struggles, disabilities and learning difficulties.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The grant funded an individual to deliver the 'train the trainer' courses. This has provided a new income stream as volunteers have successfully been delivering the training to the first batch of students. Due to the pandemic, the number of students who could take part was reduced, however the station is optimistic they can expand the service to other organisations once restrictions are lifted.

Regarding the training and team building, the station decided to postpone the launch and advertisement of the service until after covid, when they will be able to host a higher capacity of individuals. However, the grant has allowed for everything in terms of materials and marketing to be put in place for when they are in a better position to launch.

In terms of the outreach work, the grant funded an individual to engage groups and organisations throughout the area and deliver training sessions to potential volunteers. This enabled the station to exceed their original target of engaging 20 new volunteers, with a total of 50 volunteers being involved and trained. This particularly helped those in the community with learning difficulties, disabilities and anxiety as the grant paid for the equipment that allowed them to set up their own online radio show. Due to this success, the station is looking to explore other grants that focus on social impact.

"We were able to engage and help more than double our initial target and help these people have the opportunity to feel part of a team and to have real accomplishments."

"These activities allowed these groups to be part of a team and produce radio shows that were relevant to people like them."

Website:

www.blackcountryradio.co.uk/podcasts/

Email: info@blackcountryradio.co.uk

Name of service: Kennet Radio	Licensee: Kennet Community Radio
Licence granted: 01/03/2018	On Air date: 23/02/2018
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 20,563
<p>Key commitments: Kennet Radio is for the people of Newbury and Thatcham. It offers an entertaining, friendly, accessible, informative, and educational local radio service made by and for local people. It caters predominantly to people aged over 40, along with some specialist output for younger and older listeners.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are mainstream hits from the 1960s to 1990s. Specialist and local music also feature • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are news, weather and travel, community information, current affairs, sport, and interviews • The service provides original output for a minimum of 63 hours per week • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 91 hours per week <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station covers Newbury and Thatcham and acts as a service for the local area and community. The station plays 60-90s music, predominantly for over 40s, as well as providing information on local issues, weather, and travel. They additionally conduct interviews with local people and support local groups, charities, and organisations by sharing their information and assisting them in recruiting volunteers. A community update spot is also provided every hour.</p> <p><i>“Community radio is important as it is the only available local radio left after the consolidation of all the local station by commercial radio stations.”</i></p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The grant was requested to employ a Business Development Officer who could increase revenue from advertisement and sponsorship.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The Business Development Officer made professional pitches to business and advertising agencies and as a result found 60 new advertisers, many of which are renewing their ad campaigns. This increased the stations revenue by £20,000. They also advised on ways to create new revenue streams such as offering radio production training or outside event services. The station gained a better understanding of how to increase awareness of the station within the community, how to develop links with new organisations and prospective advertisers, and the need to target businesses with specific information when selling advertising.

“Importance of creating links and working with new organisations in terms of showing our value to the community and prospective advertisers.”

Website: <https://kennetradio.com/>

Email: julian@kennetradio.com

Name of service: Maritime Radio	Licensee: Greenwich Media C.I.C
Licence granted: 01/04/2019	On Air date: 01/04/2019
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 19,800
<p>Key commitments: Maritime Radio is for the local community in Greenwich. It provides news and information, hyper local to the borough, brought to listeners by members of their communities, with the chance for them also to participate.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are a mix of popular music from the 1970s through to the present day • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are local news, traffic and travel updates, events listing and sports • Programming is in English. Nepali also features in a programme • The service provides original output for a minimum of 84 hours per week • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 105 hours per week. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station covers the borough of Greenwich – just under 300,000 people. It broadcasts live from 7am-10pm (around 60-70% music to 30-40% speech). Being live all the time means the station can be very agile in terms of responding to the local community, supplying up-to-date local content and being available for people to get in touch. There is an emphasis on ‘keeping it local’ and the station responds to listener feedback. News, weather, traffic and travel are important elements, and there is a local events guide every hour. Pre-recorded content is made in-house, so the original local content extends to about 18 hours a day. One part-time employee is in charge of all content and the running of the organisation. There are around 62 volunteers, including a management team.</p> <p><i>“Being live all the time means we can be very agile in terms of responding to the local community. They really value the news, weather, traffic and travel.”</i></p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The funding was to pay for a part-time position for a year, to develop relationships with different clients and bring new business in.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The grant enabled the managing director to work at the station part-time, promoting advertising and sponsorship, which is how the role continues to be paid. Without the paid role, the managing director states it would have been very difficult to keep the station going. Although the station had bits and pieces of advertising coming in, they couldn't have focused on it in the same way and would therefore not have had a reliable form of income and would not have been able to fund a paid member of staff. Having the managing director in post means the station can respond to advertising requests quickly. Through the advertising, the station is slowly building up its reserves.

The paid role has also allowed more time to be spent on the running of the radio station, enabling the managing director to meet other people at community radio stations who have been through a similar process. The role has also given the station more capacity to take on volunteers and train them and has provided more time to reach out to the community. This was very important during Covid, when people wanted localised content which the station was able to deliver. More people started listening during Covid (as they were working from home) and wanted to join as volunteers.

"We are slowly building up reserves ... And having me in post means we can respond to things like advertising requests quickly - it has made things run a lot more smoothly."

Website:

<https://www.maritimeradio.co.uk/>

Email: duncan@maritimeradio.co.uk

Name of service: Park Radio	Licensee: Park Radio Ltd
Licence granted: 24/11/2017	On Air date: 26/11/2017
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 15,776
<p>Key commitments: Park Radio is for people in the market towns of Diss, Harleston and Eye, and the surrounding villages, with a primary focus on those aged over 35. It offers an information and entertainment service, reflecting local events and activities, with programmes presented and produced by volunteers and others who know the area.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are classic hits from the last five decades, and suitable, recent popular tracks. Specialist music, local artists and bands also feature • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are national news, local news, weather, sport, local information and events, interviews and discussions • The service provides original output for a minimum of 46 hours per week • The service provides all locally produced output, except for national news bulletins. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: Park Radio station consists of 80% music and 20% speech and is live 6am-10pm Monday to Friday, and 7am-12am Saturday and Sunday. During the pandemic they presented live at home for around 20 months but have now moved back into their studio. Daytime is very community focused, with local news and guests. The music is the best of yesterday and today and is targeted at those aged 45+. Evenings are more specialist with for example, sounds of the 60s, or disco music.</p> <p><i>“Park Radio deals with local radio and local issues- we use them to get our message out.”</i></p>	

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station applied for two grants, both of which were requested to increase revenue from advertising and sponsorship. The first was granted in 2018 and was used to form links with new businesses. A second grant was awarded in 2021 and was used to appoint a Business Development Officer who could assist with contacting new businesses and developing the business side of the station.

Impact of the CRF grant:

As all members of the station were volunteers, they did not have the time or resources to assist in generating revenue. This had to be carried out by an employed individual. The Business Development Officer ultimately allowed the station to survive throughout covid. They now have a consistent trading revenue of 40-50k.

“Having an individual who was able and had an incentive, it boosted our income and saved the station.”

Website: www.parkradio.co.uk/

Email: chris.moyse@googlemail.com

Name of service: Phonic FM	Licensee: Exeter Community Radio Limited
Licence granted: 01/03/2008	On Air date: 15/02/2008
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 13,500
<p>Key commitments: Phonic FM is a service for the community of Exeter, broadcasting a range of arts and community-based programming. It promotes the cultural vibrancy of the city and strengthens community links within it, as well as offering educational and training opportunities for a broad range of participants.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are a range of styles including jazz, world music, electronic music, urban, rock, folk and classical • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are arts programming, preview/review shows, discussion programmes, interviews, news features, what's on and community information • The service provides original output for a minimum of six hours per day (weekdays) and 13 hours per day (weekend days) • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station is focused on people interested in the arts within the greater Exeter area and is based within an arts centre. It is staffed by 77 volunteers, including some 55 presenters. It is a no-adverts, no playlist station, and supports the arts which is reflected in its programmes. Every show is a different genre of music (e.g. for the Southern Indian community) and because of that, the listenership varies from programme to programme. The station's main source of income is from membership and holding music gigs. If you become a member, it entitles you to broadcast, and as part of that membership fee you get training (one of the ladies has a show and she would use the show to train people).</p> <p><i>"The members have real passion for radio, but they also have a day job and bring skills from that - they are doing this is their spare time and they enjoy it and that is why they keep</i></p>	

coming back. The guy who does the computers was involved in putting systems in for us to work from home during the pandemic. The teacher enjoys the training. They get a benefit back.”

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station has had two grants, both to employ a part-time business development officer. The aim was to connect with a wider range of people, as the directors did not have capacity to develop the station.

“The goal was to make contact with a wider range of people than we’d be able to without a grant, through the employment of a Development Officer. This was thrashed out by board members together with an open meeting. We did achieve that.”

Impact of the CRF grant:

Having the Business Development Officer in post resulted in a membership increase and the delivery of three business networking events. The networking events led to an accountant offering ongoing support in-kind which has helped to reduce operating costs. The post facilitated the development of a mutual awareness of what the station does and what people outside the station valued it for. A research partnership was set up with Exeter University Business School. The post also led to an improvement in the organisational structure, and some development sessions were organised for the directors (with an external facilitator which were valuable in helping new directors understand what running a company and community radio station involves).

Having an employee in post gave the Chair the support needed to push on with the station’s successful DAB application and associated plans to develop a second studio (intended as a replica of studio 1, where training can be provided). It also enabled the Chair to represent the station in a partnership to set up the Exeter DAB multiplex. Once the station is on DAB the financial opportunities of sponsorship will be expanded.

Website: <https://phonic.fm/>

Email: drdavidtreharne@btconnect.com

Name of service: Platform B	Licensee: Platform B
Licence granted: 27/09/2018	On Air date: 27/09/2018
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 39,186

Key commitments:

Platform B is a music-led radio station planned, developed, produced and presented by young people, with an eclectic mix of music and youth programming. It has a focus on the styles of music being made in bedroom studios, taught at music colleges and performed in youth clubs, small stages and nightclubs across the city. The station taps into the politically active spirit of the city and acts as a forum for debate.

The service broadcasts:

- Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are: Urban, Hip Hop, Rock, Indie, Electronic and Dance.
- Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: news, interviews, discussions and community information.
- The service provides original output for a minimum of 56 hours per week.
- The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day.

The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.

The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:

- the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,
- the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and
- the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it.

Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.

Overview of station:

Platform B is Brighton & Hove's (East Sussex) first youth-led radio station broadcasting online since 2016 and on FM and DAB from 2018 - reaching 30,000 listeners in the city every month. Directed by next generation DJs, producers and presenters, this not-for-profit radio station is re-imagining and diversifying the medium with an eclectic mix of music and youth programming from a studio based at the Green Door Store, an acclaimed music venue underneath Brighton railway station. It has a focus on the styles of music being made in bedroom studios, taught at music colleges and performed in youth clubs, small stages and nightclubs across the city. As well as featuring the latest from up and coming artists and championing new talent, Platform B has a dynamic team of over a hundred volunteers.

"Platform B is the only radio station in Brighton & Hove to be presented by 16 - 25 yr olds and is a leading platform in the city for youth culture - connecting with young people through a passion for music and telling stories of their own lives. The project actively engages ethnic minorities in the city and also socially disadvantaged young adults facing barriers to employment or further education. It has become a support network, giving a

voice to those under-represented and marginalised from mainstream media, encouraging and empowering them to articulate and express their views.”

Show times vary day by day, with the earliest starting at 11am and broadcasting until 12am. Daytime shows usually play lighter music while night-time shows consist of programmes where more explicit language is used. The volunteers at the station tend to do weekly, fortnightly, or monthly slots and are in complete control of what they feature. The project has an open and accessible volunteer recruitment process, also running regular events and public pop-up radio broadcasts in the city. This in turn strengthens community cohesion, creating opportunities for young people to meet the team and find out how to get involved.

In January 2021, Platform B launched a spin-off second radio service with no age restrictions called Slack City with a separate Ofcom licence. This station provides a platform for those that have graduated from Platform B, as well as mentorship opportunities.

Reason for seeking grant support:

In the 2018/2019 CRF round, Platform requested funding to build an Alpha version of the UK RadioExchange. This is a not-for-profit B2B platform for digital distribution, review and licensing of radio programmes, features and programme elements - inspired by the American Public Radio Exchange (PRX). The Alpha release was developed in conjunction with the Community Media Association as a founding partner. It enables independent producers and community radio stations to publish and share produced and pre-recorded content as well 'capturing' and editing live radio within the application - to make it available to stream on demand or as a podcast. It also lets radio stations and programme makers host their work on a scalable content distribution network and make it available on aggregation services including mobile apps and smart speakers - subject to licensing and rights permissions.

“Once fully launched, the UK RadioExchange will be a showcase and syndication shopfront for community radio, independent producers and podcasters, delivering high-quality audio storytelling from underrepresented perspectives to new audiences - while generating incremental revenue. Broadening Platform B’s remit beyond linear radio is important - the UK RadioExchange project is a part of that.”

In the 2021/2022 CRF round, Platform B requested funding to appoint a Development and Fundraising Manager. This was awarded in June 2021 to fund the role for six months. Funding was also used to help recover business and sponsorship opportunities after COVID-19.

“In order to achieve Platform B’s ambitious strategic plan and to build project resilience through the continuing pandemic, the funding will help the project develop a Fundraising Manager role with the objective that it becomes self-financing in the medium to longer term.”

Impact of the CRF grant:

UK RadioExchange opened up conversations with key industry stakeholders including BBC Audio & Digital, the DCMS supported Audio Content Fund and Audio UK, the trade association for professional audio producers. UK RadioExchange has the potential to open up new operating spaces - growth in discovery of and listening to IP delivered community radio will lead to an increase in measurable audiences and revenue flows across the value chain through programme sharing and 'instream' advertising income - for Platform B and the wider community radio sector.

"In addition to opening up new audiences and income streams, the technology underpinning UK RadioExchange will advance Platform B's reputation for innovation at the same time as it contributes to overall project resilience."

The 2021 grant assisted with the station's survival as it enabled them to take on a Development and Fundraising Manager. They have received strong support from local businesses and organisations and have engaged in projects that will allow them to extend their services.

"Platform B has met the challenge of the last two years with increasing profile in the city. Levels of participation by young creatives were extended through digital innovation and remote real time collaboration. A successful funding award has enabled the project to build on this momentum by securing an experienced fundraiser to leverage the project's increasing profile, with brand partnerships and project funding applications and ensuring sustainability for the project."

Website: www.platformb.org.uk/

Email: nats@platformb.org.uk

Name of service: Switch Radio 107.5	Licensee: Switch Radio
Licence granted: 29/04/2010	On Air date: 30/04/2010
Year of CRF grant award: 2018-2019	CRF grant (£): 15,953
<p>Key commitments: 107.5 Switch Radio is for the population of north-east Birmingham. It aims to develop a positive sense of community and increase active involvement in community life. The station's programmes concentrate on the needs of the local communities and provide topical and relevant programming.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are pop music, dance, RnB, urban, rock and indie • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are national, local and community news, local service information, what's on information, discussions, sport, and arts and event reviews • The service provides original output for a minimum of six hours per day • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 13 hours per day. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p>	
<p>Overview of station: The station serves the community of North Birmingham, which is an area of relative deprivation, with issues such as low attainment, high crime, poor health, and low economic capacity. The key listenership is around ages 25-44, and although the station aims to cater for the whole community, it also undertakes focused projects working with particular groups (e.g. youth projects looking at youth crime and knife crime). The station has been run by volunteers since it was taken over from the previous managers (a housing association) in 2013.</p> <p>The station is staffed by 85 volunteers, including the Station Manager (who also has a day job). A Management Committee oversees the day-to-day running of the station. The station plays mainstream music during the day and in the evenings offers specialist programmes. It has a lot of specialist discussion slots at the weekend.</p>	

The station is one of triallists for small-scale DAB and is currently financing the equipment to put up 4 transmitter sites by the end of next year. Revenue from that will be enough to secure the station.

“The station is a vehicle for us to get voices heard, get news out and get local stuff out.”

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station’s first grant was in 2015, to fund a Funding and Development Manager post for a year. They were looking to raise money and to make the station more attractive to outside organisations. That was achieved.

In 2016 the station got another grant for a Funding and Development Manager. They were able to improve the look of the station, but the role was not as successful as the first post. Then in 2018 the station secured a CRF grant to support a sales role to help increase advertising revenue. This was very successful and has left to a sustained uplift in income. The station has just been successful in another grant application, which will fund the development of an audience monitoring platform, which can be rolled out to other community radio stations.

Impact of the CRF grant:

The grant allowed the station to recruit staff members which they otherwise would not have had the confidence to do by using their own reserves. They employed Funding and Development posts which provided the resources needed to carry out projects in the local area such as a training programme for young people about developing transferable skills. Ultimately the station learned about the importance of staffing when delivering certain projects.

“We would not try to deliver a project without paid staff now - if we know it will require a lot of work, we will ask for money for people.”

“We now have a lot of historical grant activity, which stands us in good stead for applying for future grants.”

As well as this, they increased their advertising revenue which assisted them in covering core costs and ensuring the stations survival.

Website: www.switchradio.co.uk/

Email: dean@switchradio.co.uk

Name of service: Radio Verulam	Licensee: Verulam Community Radio Ltd
Licence granted: 06/07/2007	On Air date: 07/07/2007
Year of CRF grant award: 2019-2020	CRF grant (£): 8,500
<p>Key commitments: Radio Verulam is a service for the residents of St. Albans and the surrounding area. It enables local people to become radio broadcasters, and helps local community, charitable, social, and voluntary organisations to promote themselves and attract new volunteers. Output is designed to appeal to listeners of all ages and backgrounds living in the St. Albans area.</p> <p>The service broadcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week are popular music from the 1960s onwards. Specialist music genres and music from local musicians also feature. • Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are national news, local and community news and information, local sports, events diary, interviews, discussions and informative features. • Over the course of each week, programming is broadcast in English, with some segments aimed at under-represented communities such as foreign language speakers, ethnic minorities and older people. • The service provides original output for a minimum of 40 hours per week. • The service provides locally produced output for a minimum of 91 hours per week. <p>The studio is located within the licensed coverage area.</p> <p>The service provides a range of community benefits for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion, • The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and • The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it. <p>Members of the target community contribute to the operation and management of the service. The service has mechanisms in place to ensure it is accountable to its target community.</p> <p>Overview of station: The station covers St Albans and district – about 200,000 people – and focuses on promoting voluntary and charitable activities, (seeing itself as the equivalent of a local newspaper). It is staffed by 60-70 volunteers, including a board of 8 directors and about 40 presenters. Pre-Covid, most of its daytime programmes were live (currently still in emergency schedule and running the station from people’s homes, so have still been running 24-7 but none of broadcasting is live).</p>	

The station broadcasts music, chat and interviews during the day, with specialist music and sports programmes (e.g. football), the parent show) in the evenings. Revenue comes from advertising, grant funding, a small amount of commercial sponsorship, donations and membership.

“We focus on voluntary and charitable activities- that is what we promote. It is like a local newspaper.” (Director)

Reason for seeking grant support:

The station has had a number of CRF grants, all for much the same thing, to help the station become more sustainable by paying a salesperson a retainer to sell advertising. The hope was to raise enough money to employ someone to sell advertising on a regular basis. The person covered what they were paid and raised a bit more, but the amount extra wasn't as much as had been hoped.

“We have relied quite heavily on advertising, but selling advertising is a difficult thing, and we have not been able to find a volunteer to do it successfully. So we've had grants to pay a sales person a retainer of a few thousand pounds to do the selling – we were hoping to raise enough money to employ someone to sell advertising on a regular basis.” (Director)

Impact of the CRF grant:

The station was able to pay a volunteer a retainer to do the job, as they previously could not find anyone who would do it for free. The roles had some long-term success, as some advertisers come back later to renew, and the total amount generated from advertising has grown quite substantially. But this has never been enough to pay for a full-time salesperson. The grants have helped the station keep going and have consequently enabled it to maintain and grow its social impact (currently 75,00 people following on Twitter, 8,000 on Facebook and 15,000 on their website).

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