

Launching a New Service

This paper outlines issues, actions and work that will need to be undertaken to launch a new public radio service. The launch of the new service has to be carefully staged and readiness is a key element. Extending planning and actions over too long a period will expose stations to risks. They include:

- Loss of opportunity due to lack of readiness
- Loss of momentum with key parties: Boards/trustees/licensees
- Loss of momentum with key stakeholders: potential listeners, donors, underwriters, content developers, etc.
- Preemption by other public radio stations in or coming into your market
- Construction permit expiration

While the outline is only a “template” and adjustments are inevitable, it is constructed in a way that stages activity toward readiness. Momentum is a critical factor in forming a new public radio service. Momentum plus alignment of actions provides maximum opportunity and helps ensure success.

Information Gathering:

- Issues identification:
 - What do you need to know?
 - What don't you know?
- Market review:
 - What stations are in the target market?
 - What can you find out about them (formats, coverage area, ratings etc)
 - Other market factors – other media, demographics, etc.
- Format Considerations:
 - Underserved audiences
 - Financial viability
 - Programming costs
 - Local or national-syndicated- content?
 - Staffing
- Costs:
 - Construction
 - Engineering
 - Legal
 - Programming
 - Staffing
 - Volunteers
- Going to school:
 - What can you learn from peers?
 - What can you learn from industry professionals/consultants?
 - What can you learn from case studies, etc?

- Financial framing:
 - What's available – reserves, founders, licensee, local banking relationships, founding donors, capital campaign estimates, market potential for underwriting and membership revenue.
 - Framing the opportunity
- Political considerations:
 - Frame issues that might arise with other public radio stations
 - Consider local and state political issues
 - Develop key messages and advocates lists to assist in managing political issues

Actions to Undertake:

- Budgeting
 - Create budget
 - Define revenue potential from all sources
 - Refine expenses
- Governance/licensee and staff communications plan:
 - Who needs to know what when?
 - Key messages development
- Confidential exploratory conversations with governance, stakeholders and potential partners
 - What needs to be done to ensure future and broader support?
 - Prepare brief summary of what you plan to do with your station
 - What are the timing issues vis-à-vis board or trustee meetings that need to be mapped?
 - Get on key calendars for Board/licensee review and authorizations
 - Recruit political leaders who will take an advocacy lead
 - Recruit partner organizations (e.g., local colleges, businesses, other nonprofits etc) with mutual interests who might provide financial or in-kind support
- Capital Campaign
 - Feasibility study
 - What are the capital needs?
 - What's the staging for raising the dollars?
 - Target identification
- Review legal issues
- Review and develop any organizational development adjustments
 - Staff changes/additions
 - Physical plant needs
- Prepare action resolutions for governance/licensee actions
- Recruit and/or identify additional or new staff
- Seek approvals from board, trustees, administration
- Develop a board and trustee action plan
 - Obtain prior approval resolution from governance
 - Develop quick response team with authority to act
- Begin drafting Q&A from issues raised to support the plan
 - Draft communications design – who needs to know what when?
 - Who speaks for the organization?
 - Key message points?
 - Plan to deal with those who need special treatment

- Develop and seek authorization for a decision team
 - Clear designation of authority and responsibility, typically one or two coordinators with a team providing support in various areas.
 - Authorized to make decisions for the board or administration
 - Available on short notice
 - Signing authority

Getting Ready to Launch:

- Capital Campaign quiet phase begins
- Continue approvals and stakeholder communications
- Finalize decision team members and authorizations
- Finalize all public case documents, messages, press releases
- Prepare communications Q&A for board., licensee, key stakeholders
- Finalize financing arrangements
- Review and close any open legal issues
- Deal with any organizational development issues related to the new service – staffing changes, physical space needs, etc.
- Review all planning
- Keep governance and key staff informed
- Review all steps and plans, adjust as necessary
- Finalize any staff adjustments/hiring and infrastructure planning
- Be ready at all times for action.
- Keep all planning current and all parties informed

You are now ready to launch a new service!