NFCB

Community Radio Podcasting Guide

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Introduction

So often, we start a creative project from a place of "I'm really interested in this thing, I'm going to make it." Rather than, "What can I make or do that would make my community a better place and meet a need?"

If you read nothing further, the latter needs to shine through stronger for community radio to podcast successfully.

This guide is intended to help a community radio station with an interest in podcasting to realize such aspirations. It emerged out of sessions NFCB hosted for the Community Counts Initiative cohort, and are shared with all stations in an effort to educate everyone.

The guide examines many of the practical considerations a community radio station must decide on to successfully podcast, including leading a community-based network of podcasts. Technical specifications are not the focus. This guide is composed with the expectation that the reader understands podcasting basics, such as what a podcast is, file types and technical infrastructure for podcast delivery. All of these items are available in many venues, if your station does not have this knowledge in house. In addition, this guide does not provide statistics about podcast listening, demographic shifts and evolving listener preferences as a means to make the case for podcast adoption by stations. If you're interested in podcasting, chances are you are already aware of the growing audience and media changes affecting radio.

Updated community radio podcasting resources and guidance will be available at nfcb.org.

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Ernesto Aguilar, NFCB
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Determining if podcasting is right for you

If you have gotten this far, chances are your station is weighing podcasting as a content priority. This section is aimed at helping you resolve the question for your community radio station.

Is what your community radio station wants to do best served by podcasting? This is a key question, because podcasting is a big investment of time and money for a station. It is undoubtedly a hot commodity. However, before deciding to adopt podcasting as a part of your station, here are a few questions to consider.

Understanding your goal

Before your station decides to take a role in hosting podcasters or producing podcasts, you should determine what you want to achieve with your podcasting projects.

Here are a few sample reasons stations may want to get into podcasting:

- We produce a lot of local radio programs and want to repurpose the audio into podcasts.

- We have volunteers who want to produce radio shows, but not enough terrestrial airtime.

- We need to appeal to younger audiences and podcasts are popular with this demographic.

- We want to attract more donors and underwriters and podcasts are making lots of money.

- We have news reporting or programming on a story that we want to remix into podcasts.

- There are topics that do not fit our radio schedule, but could be good as podcasts.

All reasons should come back to mission and audience service. How can podcasting meet a community need? Whatever your reasons, your station's board, staff and stakeholders should agree about how podcasting fulfills your station mission and objectives for serving listeners.

Now, narrow your goals down to a few points. The SMART model may help you. SMART stands for:

- *Specific*: What precisely do you want to do, i.e. we want to generate $2,000 of revenue for the radio station.

- *Measurable*: How you track the milestones toward your goals, i.e. $2,500, $5,000, etc.

- *Attainable*: Set a goal with an appreciation of optics. You want to feel like a goal is one you can realistically achieve, so everyone on the team can feel a sense of accomplishment and enthusiasm when it's time to set the next goal.

- *Relevant*: Ensure that the goal is not vague or ancillary to your station's biggest needs in relation to podcasting.

- *Timely*: Set timelines on your goals, such as one year, six months, etc.

If you need help setting goals, NPR Training provides a fantastic tool called Project Blueprint, available as a Google Doc and a PDF. It is used as a tool to create storytelling content and news programming. However, its principles may be easily applied to your station's creation of a podcast or an initiative related to podcasting.

As you consider your goals, a few cautionary points:

If you hope to utilize podcasting as a way to increase listenership, it will help your efforts to understand how the new audience will differ from the one you have now. If diversifying your audience is a goal, explain what that means to you – for instance, do you mean people of color, younger listeners or people of nontraditional political beliefs? Inclusion particularly is a much more complicated and nuanced conversation, requiring

more layers than just podcasting. Podcasting may actually be the last place to start this discussion, in the sense that infrastructure and strategy should be in place for a station to be more inclusive.

Why? Diversity could require your station to think about your staff. Do your producers and reporters reflect the audience you want to reach? Your organization may want to also have a wider discussion about what institutional steps you are prepared to take to diversify and make your station more inclusive. In some cases, it takes looking at how you speak with and to people within your programming. Consider the KPPC Brown Paper research; the station recognized that in order to attract a more diverse audience, it needed to focus on retraining staff and volunteers to couch their speech and breaks in a fashion that was more accessible to the audience the station wanted to attract.

Repackaging radio or original podcasts

Your station may have terrestrial radio programming that could be edited for podcast, or perhaps you want to do some production of original podcasts not previously on radio. There are pluses and minuses with both approaches. You can also do both, if you can afford to do so.

A few comparisons of the approaches:

Digital-First	Radio-First
Smaller audience but no geographic limits	Wider appeal within geographic region
Opportunity to chart a completely new audience	Built-in audience from radio; potential new audience
Can fit more toward audience tastes	Time limits due to broadcast footprint
Resources involved in training, creation, etc.	Resources involved in editing for podcast
Finding the right 'sound' takes effort	Quality control from live radio
Does this take away from FM altogether?	Does this undercut your FM show?

Repackaging community radio programs for podcasts will require editing of day, event and time references and underwriting spots. Your station may also give attention to the length of the podcast, as shorter podcasts tend to have more engaged listenership. Do not use low-quality archive files, as poor sound quality has been shown in studies to erode the audience's trust in the content. Simply reposting a radio show to an RSS feed is as good as not podcasting – there are many arguments against it – so make time to edit for podcast and do quality control to ensure the program 'works' for podcast listening every episode.

Original local podcasts produced by your station staff require a level of financial investment your station should investigate carefully before initiating. Original podcasts require editorial (scripting, guest relations, etc.), production/technical (editing, uploading, metadata notes, design, et al.) and broadcast (hosting, appearance, et al.) staff roles. These may be filled by the same people. In particular, you will want to look at existing staff workloads and determine what hires may need to be made to accomplish what you hope to do podcasting. Your station is discouraged from simply adding more work to your existing full-time staff members. Whatever your model, you will be adding more staff time to your budget.

The advantage of original podcasting is your station's ability to formulate new ideas and to brand itself differently to new audiences. Attention should be paid to address concerns podcasts could detract from your terrestrial properties, which may come up from stakeholders.

Whatever way your station goes, your station must answer key questions about mission and what you hope to accomplish. What audiences are you reaching with this podcast? What is your intention? And why?

Community podcasting programs

A section of this guide is devoted to initiatives in which your station trains community members to create podcasts, which may be hosted on station-paid podcast hosting services. Consult that section for a longer exploration of this matter.

Determine the right frequency

Podcasting is its own platform with norms as well as flexibilities. It need not be looked at like radio, with a more rigid schedule, but that doesn't mean there is no schedule. Once you're live, you must be consistent.

Take a look at your content being considered for podcast. There may be a variety of good ideas. An important question is whether the ideas have enough to be podcasts. If so, your station may spend time before you begin production to determine the frequency you believe is appropriate. For example, perhaps a particular story is best served by a six-episode short-run podcast series, or a podcast project will sound strongest as a monthly or less frequent podcast.

For podcasts that originated from radio programming, you should assess the turnaround time for editing and whether the content can remain relevant by the time of publication. For example, a daily news program may require a quick turnaround from broadcast to podcast. Does your station have the time and resources to do this? If not, consider alternative scheduling that meets station needs and audience expectations. For example, your station might decide to release a series of podcast episodes.

Your station does not necessarily need to commit to solely a concrete podcast schedule. However, it is important to analyze what you believe is your podcast's probable frequency. Why? Understanding your podcast frequency will help you set your production schedules. If this is a short-run podcast, knowing your podcast's lifespan will help you explain your plans to audiences. Communication and regularity matter to listeners.

Clarify legal coverage

Broadcast is considered fleeting – once it is aired, it is forgotten. This is a standard that may explain the political broadcast rules, which specify candidates must appeal an appearance of a rival candidate within a few days or lose claim. However, podcasting is much longer lasting. People can go back and listen again and again. Intellectual property, the right to privacy and the right to publicity are just a few standards that can be challenged in podcast formats. For instance, the heirs of John B. McLemore, profiled in the popular podcast S-Town, sued its producers and This American Life for allegedly violating McLemore's rights.

Many stations carry E&O (errors and omissions) insurance, and you should check your coverage to ensure podcasting is included. In addition, if your station wants to bring in community podcast producers, your training should cover legal issues such as defamation, the right to privacy and relevant standards.

Is podcasting the correct format?

Podcasting is the hot topic now, but what if you have ideas that work better in another format? For example, if you have a weekly political roundup podcast proposal, could it find a bigger, more engaged audience on Facebook, Twitter or other social media live stream or your website?

A few advantages of optioning ideas to different platforms include the potential they represent for station growth on other channels, such as Instagram Live; and the possibility of building new audiences; and freedom to experiment with programming that may be different than your typical mix. In addition, a live stream will not be as expensive as original podcast production or training programs.

Launching your podcast will require social media, web and in-person engagement to cultivate an audience. Your station is advised to consider these strategies.

Find and generate financial support

How do you plan to recoup what you pay into podcasting? Such a question could be answered in a variety of ways, but set realistic goals for generating revenue. A section of this guide examines monetization of podcasting by your community radio station.

Consider your audience education strategy

There is still a lot of room for educating audiences about podcasting and how they can listen to your podcasts. Your station should give thought to how it will show new audiences how to access your podcasts through mobile and desktop. Written tutorials on your website, short videos on social media on how and where to get station podcasts, and postcards to explain how to get your podcasts for local events are all options for your station.

Winning people over

One of the big challenges is generating excitement at some stations. Stakeholders may not get it, volunteers may think their audience is bigger on FM, or just persuading people is hard. All of us likely has this challenge in small or big ways: how do you demonstrate the need when so many are oriented to a single medium?

As with sales, it's not what you say, but how you say it. Here are ways to explain to stakeholders the importance of podcasting for community radio.

Avoiding change doesn't mean change won't happen. There's a book called *The Content Trap* that focuses on organizations' fixation on content over audience needs, relationships and networks. The experiences of newspapers amid the rise of digital may be instructive for your station. One digital editor reflects in the book how the online team in the 1990s felt bullied by print staff, like they were just the copy-and-paste wing of the newspaper.

As digital was pivoted to focus on new content and its own audience relationships and networks, it took off. Then as print faded in interest, seeing its value proposition decline in the process, papers that have been unable to respond have seen layoffs and closures. Others, like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, realized this was not the time to stand against digital but rather reenvision what they do. This didn't mean there were not failures. The Times' current successful online subscription, which now has almost 5 million subscribers, started as TimesSelect and struggled to find funds in 2006.

Does this mean print is dead? Not at all. Audience habits, however, did change and print publications saw diminished interest in their services. Looking down on digital media or pretending a legacy media's dominance now will be forever may be short-sighted.

We can be both. Another crucial point to make with stakeholders is you do not need to choose podcasting over radio. Our core service is always radio in the sense that we are

expected to keep content on the dial, but adding additional services to our core service makes us more responsive to audience interests, diversity and new revenue streams. Moreover, a community radio station is known for its name and what people may associate with that name. Banking on those associations, essentially your station's brand, gives your station an opportunity to try new things.

Increasingly, media organizations associated with television, film or radio are seeing themselves as more than where they began, but as multi-platform media providers. Even PBS and NPR, staples of public television and radio respectively, have made successful forays into digital offerings such as apps, podcasts and website content. These organizations have consciously chosen not to limit themselves and have been incredibly successful financially. PBS and NPR, among many, have grown their audiences by deciding to expand their brands (both are known for quality content) to other places beyond television and radio.

How is it budgeted, promoted and so forth remain decisions for station leadership, but having a radio license does not limit you to just doing radio. In fact, having radio as a base may give your organization some courage to branch out beyond it.

Audience potential. Community radio attracts fascinating people from many walks of life. Among these individuals are those many of us have met at stations who do not own a television, do not use social media and do not understand what the fuss over podcasting is about. While it is important to affirm everyone's media choices, it is also okay to remind everyone that our choices may not represent the audiences we hope to connect with as a station.

Podcasts are, statistically, attracting a younger, more technically savvy listener than may listen to community radio. However, podcasts also appeal to audiences in a broad range of demographics. They may not know the station exists at all. Station-created podcasts are a good way to join their current podcast stream and make them aware that community radio is out here and needs their involvement.

Podcasts offer freedom to experiment. Radio stations typically put their strongest programming on the air – programming that generates audience contributions during on-air fundraising, gains attention and awards for quality, or has a distinctiveness for which the station is recognized. Many stations are thus reluctant to change their schedules to add new programs.

Where does podcasting fit in a station's overall strategy? One facet of a station's strategy could be to use podcasting as a way to give space to new programming ideas. It may be untenable for a community radio station to risk its fundraising and donor relationships by rearranging its grid to try something untested. Investing time and resources into podcasts may help the station to be open to new programming, and perhaps find a new audience the station hadn't otherwise hooked.

Podcasting audience potential is far bigger than FM. The assumption that FM broadcasts gain more listeners than podcasts is just that: an assumption. In fact, even if you're doing a mainstream programming format, the audience may be smaller than you think.

FM listenership numbers are measured based on a sample size from Nielsen Audio; and, though there are many critiques of this system, there can be a strong correlation between it and what programs are 'popular' and prove best during on-air fundraising, at noncommercial stations nationwide. Nielsen Audio measures listenership by cume or "cumulative audience," the number of different people in the sample group who listen to a station for at least five minutes during any time period. Consider WSOC, a popular country radio station in Charlotte, NC. Its March 2019 cume was just under 5,000 listeners. WFAE, a news/talk station in the same city, only had 1,600 listeners in its cume the same period. In 2017, Charlotte's population was 859,000. Now, consider a smaller city like Sacramento (just over 500,000 in 2017), which you might think has a more engaged audience, since it is California's capital city. KXJZ, one of the city's news/talk stations, garnered just 1,900 listeners tuning in for at least five minutes in May 2019.

To put some perspective of community radio into this mix, consider Portland, OR's KBOO, measured by Nielsen Audio with a May 2019 cume of 253 listeners and 153 listeners in the March 2019 cume. Portland's population in 2019 was around 870,000. In Kansas City, NPR affiliate station KANU's cume in May 2019 was listed as 400 listeners. In Salt Lake City, community radio station KRCL's May 2019 cume was around 600 listeners. Salt Lake City's population was 217,000 in 2017. Why so many swings? Station programming format, competition and other variables could be weighed in when understanding regional differences. Some critics allege Nielsen Audio does not adequately measure smaller broadcasters' audiences effectively as well.

Volunteers and board members may assume that, by virtue of being on terrestrial radio, you naturally speak to a larger audience. In the practical sense, that is accurate because radio's barriers for entry are low – most people can hop in their cars, for

instance, and tune in immediately. Yet the popularity of podcasting shows that the medium's audience is steadily growing. Barriers to entry are lowering, especially on mobile devices, where podcasts are easy to access moreso than years ago. Streaming and download sizes for even podcasts below the Top 200 may be stronger than some of the stations noted above.

'How we do things.' Finally, some stations may experience issues where stakeholders feel podcasting is not how the station can or should interact with people. Radio, the notion goes, is how we do things.

Herein there may be confusion over what constitutes a core value. Radio is a method for delivering a service, much like the Pony Express was a means to deliver a telegram or letter long ago. Core values are the qualities of our content: curiosity, inclusion and thoughtful dialogue could be considered core values. We want to embody the spirit of inclusion, for example, in all we do, from our radio broadcasts to our operations. However, we do not necessarily need to embody the Pony Express in our interactions with the public, or radio transmission in our board meetings. Understanding what are core values are is helpful for any station, because they inform how we want to do the work we do, not necessarily the form in which it takes shape.

Podcast formats, elements and hosts

If you have made it here, you may have decided that your community radio station should engage in podcasting. This section is devoted to helping you select podcast formats that might be best for your station, its financial resources and its capacity to produce high-quality podcasts; picking the right people to help; and tips for engaging the audience.

Types of podcasts

Podcasting can be an exciting, new adventure for your radio station. It can help you as a leader support your station in building bridges. What sort of podcast should your station do? How can you help community podcast producers focus their ideas and be most effective?

There are two preliminary considerations to make. Format is the form in which your podcast will take – for instance, if it will be a single host or a highly produced program like WNYC's Radiolab. You will then want to determine your genre, or category. Familiar genres include true crime, educational, news and politics, games, comedy and parenting podcasts.

Once you have committed to podcasting, one of the most important exercises is determining the format of your podcast elements. Your elements will determine the time you will spend on your podcast, and the costs you may have to absorb. There are several ways podcasts can be presented. Here are the most common elements:

- Solo podcast: This kind of podcast is where an individual host shares their knowledge or perspective with the audience, and perhaps interacts with the audience via questions and answers.

- Roundtable podcast: These podcasts have two individuals or more talking about a topic or series of topics.

- Interview podcast: These are podcasts that are almost exclusively a host interviewing a guest or guests about a topic of the show, or a segment on a subject.

- Multi-host podcast: Such podcasts are similar to roundtables in that they rely on several voices, but they may pivot to individual hosts hosting interviews or segments, and lead hosting duties rotating among hosts.

- Magazine podcast: These podcasts are likely what listeners most associate with podcasts. They include produced pieces, and may have music segues and storytelling elements.

Some of these types of podcasts could be coordinated with a partner – for example, a local publication, an arts organization or an establishment – to share expenses and production. Local university departments and nonprofits may also serve as partnerships your station can explore.

The time and financial investment will vary for each format. A magazine format may require several producers and a longer timeframe to complete a podcast. A solo podcast may be produced quickly at less cost, but may not have the same impact as other formats. Review your budget and calendar as you consider your formats, especially if you aspire to do a more complex podcast.

Finding your host

Hosts are the voices of your station and your brand. Listeners recognize those voices immediately and associate your station with them. Thus one of the great challenges of some podcast models is determining the right host for your station's podcast.

Your station is encouraged to thoroughly vet a podcast host. Is this person interesting and informative on mic? Does s/he sound credible? Has s/he produced anything before and, if so, have you heard it? Have you screened the host for past activities or commentary that could alienate your audience? If this host is there to bring a particular cultural perspective to your station, does the community in question find this person is engaged in and representative of the community? Remember that this is not a judgment

of anyone's skill, but rather how your station best serves the audience, how to put a host in the best position to succeed, and how to find the right fit for everyone.

Your station's hiring process should proceed as you normally do, with a job description, a hiring process and determining other needs of the position. An outline for hiring is presented in this toolkit's section on podcasting departments. As with any staff or contractor, paid hosts should be handled in accordance with labor law and station policy.

Programming collectives

Popular in community radio is the concept of "collective" – volunteer-based terrestrial radio programming where a group of people work together. There are some benefits to collectives. However, stations are encouraged to think through the idea of "collective" podcasts and to ask questions.

Some key issues stations should inquire about when approached to host a collectively produced podcast:

Who does what? It is mostly a misnomer that collectives share work in that people inevitably develop specialties. For your station this is important to understand if one collective member does all the audio editing and the others do not, for example. People tend to do the parts they're good at, and there are many parts of podcasting.

What are the standing (documented in writing) or informal rules and policies of a collective? All rules should be identical to station policy. Stations should not permit collectives to create separate policies (e.g. absences, conduct, etc.) for liability and fairness reasons.

How is conflict and discipline conducted? Mistakes and miscommunication can happen. If a collective member has an argument with another, how is that handled afterward, beyond talking it out? What if someone does a bad job? In asking these questions, your station wants to understand how people are informally treated, so to avoid problems later.

Are there any romantic relationships within the collective, past or present? Third-party sexual harassment claims can be made by those who are exposed to behavior of others and not directly involved in an interaction. Perceptions of mistreatment, discrimination

and unfairness may emerge following breakups. Affiliation with your station may mean you're asked to judge who stays and who is terminated from a podcast or program.

The important issue with collectives to remember is that the collective, as it relates to your podcasting and broadcast, is an extension of your station. As a general rule, volunteers should not be permitted to create their own management structures outside of station oversight, nor should they operate separately from station policy. The people in a collective should be recognized as station volunteers and go through all the same volunteer orientation your singular volunteers get. Volunteer agreements should be secured, as they are for your broadcast volunteers.

Podcast formats

If your station is working with community producers, your producers may need to determine from an idea what the podcast will be. This determination of format will assist the producers in figuring out how to get the podcast accomplished. These producers will require more studio and production time, depending on the kind of podcast they hope to release.

There is an endless list of podcast categories your station could pursue. A few of the most popular topics include:

- *News:* If your station produces a newscast, or wants to, a daily news podcast might be a good start, since it can be any length you choose. Weekly local news roundups may also be an option.

- *Music commentary:* Conversations about music are popular. Your station should bear in mind that distributing copyrighted music in a podcast requires licensing of the music via the Harry Fox Agency, and can be quite expensive. For this reason, virtually all stations choose to include only royalty-free music or directly licensed tracks in podcasts. Also, there is a common myth that copyrighted music may be used if only a few seconds; in fact, any use is to be licensed. Fair use, which is referred to in some circles as permission to use music, has a very limited scope.

- *True crime:* Among the most successful podcast categories, true crime includes local mysteries and other subjects of intrigue. Be mindful that graphic descriptions should be appropriately noted, and marked as explicit in your

podcast metatags, the podcast episode information you share with your podcast host.

- *Lifestyle/outdoors:* If your area has a robust camping, hiking, cycling or other kind of scene, this category of podcast could be for you. Storytelling about particular parks or nature trails could also be of interest.

- *Food/drink:* Some regions have a big artisan cuisine, farm-to-table, craft beer or specialty food scene. This category is one where having a hyperlocal focus is a real strength, as it encourages audiences to visit a community to partake.

- *Politics:* Debating local politics is no longer the province of the diner. Hearing different perspectives as a means of fostering unity and understanding could be a good undertaking for a community radio station, as opinion is a major topic of podcasts.

As noted elsewhere, stations are urged to turn outward. What is the need for your station's podcast? What kind of podcast will serve the real needs of your local community?

If outreach and inclusion are part of your goals in selecting different kinds of podcasts, please remember that these are intentional strategies that mean you meet with people, build trust and relationships, and offer something meaningful to one another. You will not grow your youth audience by putting on young people to do a radio show they feel like doing, or expand your minority audience by adding a program or two that is suspected of appealing to those communities, or attract any constituency you aspire to reach by adding a podcast. And, even if you do, gains tend to be short lived, and can be rooted around whether your host(s) stay or go. Contrast with actual inclusion work, which lasts far beyond volunteers and staff and is about alliances organizations have with communities.

Launching a station podcasting department

For a number of stations, having your own station-produced podcasts holds appeal. In this section, we'll explore what it takes to do that. the word "department" is used as a generic way of saying "stations that want to hire people as staff to produce podcasts branded as your station's podcast." It is stated with trust that there is understanding the difference between a station podcast produced by professional radio/podcasting staff and a podcast produced by a community member volunteering time at no pay for a station to add its name. A later section will examine podcasting programs for stations to welcome community members to produce podcasts using station facilities.

Remember your goals

Before you launch a team, or hire for it, make sure to review your goals you originally set. What are you hoping to accomplish? Do the hires you want to make position you for the most success? Make sure your goals are realistic to accomplish with the team structure you have in mind. There is no need to overburden or pressure your team, so take stock of these goals before you get started.

Key questions

What are the timeline expectations for accomplishing your station goals? If your station is small enough that coordinating shared responsibilities in goals is not too difficult, the important issues are as follows:

How will station support for the podcasting department be allocated and budgeted?
Your station will need to invest time in promotions, outreach and technical setup. Are these costs considered as part of the expenses for individual departments, or from the

podcasting department budget? And how many hours will the station allocate on a weekly basis from each division to support its new podcasting department?

Do other areas need more resources to supporting your new podcasting department? Don't overwork your other areas. If your station is getting into podcasting, make sure every department has the resources to do what you need.

Who is in charge of what? Be certain everyone knows who to ask about particular tasks and where to go for help.

Whatever your size, there are four station resources to consider: money, time available, staffing and your workflow (how people are used to things getting done at your station). You should be able to explain these for yourself and all your stakeholders.

In hiring, you should consult NFCB's Solution Center for job descriptions, if you need help creating such. If your organization wishes to hire contractors, make sure your station adheres to appropriate labor laws in your areas. The contractor matter is especially notable for California stations; a 2019 law specifies a freelancer or contractor may only create 35 items before her or his employer must transition the worker to become an employee of the organization.

Team setup

The goal of composing a podcasting team at your station is to establish a set of organizational values and practices that support and nurture development of station podcasting. Orienting your organization to podcasting can grow your donor and audience base. However, you want to think carefully through your team setup and organization of work.

First as a part of setting up a team, your station should establish a project organization chart with clearly defined roles. Each team member needs to know what function s/he plays on the team, how that role fits with the other team members' functions and what happens if s/he doesn't do the job.

Typically, a station may have a podcast's executive producer, editorial producer (guests, scripting, etc.) and a technical producer (editing, etc.). Your station may find it necessary to add others to help them produce regularly.

Communication is essential on every team. Everyone needs to realize that the team isn't only accountable to one person but also to each other. After all, if one person fails, the whole team fails. So, it's crucial that each individual team member must know what everyone else is doing. You might also consider setting up regular meetings between team leads and station managers, as well as development staff, so progress can be communicated to the board of directors and donors.

Beyond the objective of regular podcasting, team setup is a good time to revisit your initial goals. Are there quickly achievable goals you can set to boost team morale? Driving through a project from inception to completion is tough work, and people can easily become discouraged when the team faces roadblocks or setbacks. Be sure to celebrate key milestones along the way to keep morale up and momentum going.

What are your communication tools and systems?

How will your podcast department work together? It is probably best, from a documentation and ease of use standpoint, to look at digital tools like Google Suite, Slack or Todoist to help your team manage its podcast workflow and future productions. Here are the production workflows you will deal with:

- Calendar: Are there dates of significance you want to podcast around, or guests in town on particular dates you want to build podcasts with? You'll also want to mark production and release dates.

- Spreadsheet: You will want to track the timing for your podcast and segments, especially if you intend to broadcast your podcast.

- Word processor: For scripts, research, intros, working documents for future podcasts, notes about scripts for producers, etc.

- Chat: A transparent way for producers to talk, update one another, communicate changes to a schedule and a place where everyone can follow a thread.

- To-do list: From agreements to returning calls, a good to-do list will let everyone know what needs to happen.

- Social media scheduler: You don't want to sit on social media all day, and need to post regularly about the podcast. What tools are you using for promotions on your platforms of choice?

Your tools should be chosen with an eye to the size of your team. In some instances, some cloud-based tools are limited to how many people may access them, and require team accounts. Also, consider what is most comfortable for your team members to use, and test out your platforms before going live.

Tips for selecting people

Selecting the right team is one of the hardest things for any nonprofit. Before you start positing for open positions, look at what talent already exists at your station to understand what your organization really needs. Can you move or promote a person in-house? Are there redundancies to be aware of?

If you determine hiring is your station's next step, you will want to create a realistic compensation and benefits package. Nonprofits consistently underpay; in the case of hiring for podcasting, where jobs are plentiful and pay competitively, your station should set a ceiling amount you'll pay, then outline non-monetary opportunities that could help you attract candidates. Examples of perks include working from home once a week, extra vacation time, and education support.

Now, your station will want to agree on required skills for the job, and nice-to-have skills. Once you have this list and your package together, talk to people outside your organization about the role. What feedback do your test subjects have? Would they apply? What holds them up? What would a great candidate want, and can the station provide it? If your station is wooing someone from elsewhere, what can you offer that their other jobs do not?

At this point, you are ready to post. You may want to weigh the advantages of recruiters, or just handle your search internally. If you're going it alone, determine how much time it will take your station and who will be involved in your process. Vet your support for qualifications. Do participants have hiring experience or know what to look for? Figuring these issues out before interviews will make things smoother.

During a search, it's important to stay flexible. Things fall apart, or take other avenues you won't expect. Remember you can only control so much, so stay focused on your

goal and do not get derailed by frustration. Once your station has selected candidates and offers have been accepted, follow up with everyone and thank them for applying. You never know. A professionally closed process may keep a good candidate in your orbit in the future.

Regular assessments and check-ins

Don't leave your team floating without feedback or check-ins. Your station should be regularly following up with your podcast team. Problems can quickly spin out of control, and regular meetings can make staff feel like you care, and will address their needs.

If your organization is not doing annual staff evaluations, it should. Check-in meetings are intended to be informal feedback sessions – sharing your comments and listening to what your team is seeing. Don't hold criticism until an annual evaluation; chances are, your podcasting team wants to do the best work possible, and wants constructive feedback. Do so with professionalism and compassion.

Community podcasting programs

Some community radio stations want to implement a community podcast model, in which the stations provide training, equipment and other support to community members to create the podcasts. This section explains how to do so, and the considerations your station should resolve in advance.

There are many benefits to community podcasting programs. Such initiatives are less of a financial investment than hiring podcast production teams. Community podcasting programs may also help stations that are without adequate open programming slots or just want to create new opportunities for the community to podcast with a credible partner like a radio station.

How do you set up a community podcasting program? You should first select how you want your program to work. Here are a few forms your work could take:

- A community podcast training program lasting 3-6 sessions, teaching participants the basics of podcasting.

- An open call for podcast ideas, from which the station selects 1-2 podcasters to partner with and train.

- A collaboration with a state or local arts/humanities organization to provide studio space for podcasting, while the partner manages the training component.

- A local podcast collaboration where selected podcasts will be broadcast on your station on a particular day or time as well as published digitally.

- A teaching program coordinated with a local school to teach podcasting to students.

- A free training program where residents can get podcast instruction, studio use and technical assistance for minimal or no cost.

- A low-cost studio rental program to support local podcasting.

Here are a few real-life examples of community podcasting programs and collaborations:

- Radio Boise Voices Program: training program in partnership with Idaho Humanities Council in which three podcasting trainings were hosted in the community, 30-36 people total. $50 per workshop, which can be waived. Idea is to produce content to be aired on the station, and potentially podcasts for the best ones.

- Georgia Public Broadcasting podcast collaborations: ask the mayor, branded podcast with area publication, football Fridays.

- College radio station WTJU works with campus units and students to create a local podcast network.

- KRCL Podcast Partners: one-year commitment includes mentorship and studio use, but selected rather than fee-based. After the one year, studio time is charged at a reduced rate. Podcasts must fit with the mission and not accept outside financial support.

Whatever your station selects, successful community podcasting programs require planning.

For example, your station should decide first what your financial capacity is to manage a community podcast endeavor. For instance, training takes time and resources, materials must be printed, more producers mean more use of your studio and a need to coordinate use, and hosting podcasts will require more resources for your online team and money paid monthly to a podcast hosting company. These are fixed costs, in some cases, your station will have factor these needs into its budget.

In addition, each community radio podcasting initiative will require trainers and coursework for community members. How many hours does your station want to ask trainers to work? Beyond the hours during the training or training sessions, your station should estimate 10-20 hours in composing training materials and additional time in walkthroughs and assessing your training.

This cost will vary and could be considerable during the planning and preparation stage. Once done, there will be fluid costs for staff working with community volunteers.

A side note: some stations may want to do this part of the work exclusively by volunteer trainers or curriculum writers. Before you do so, ensure you have professionally experienced people who can accomplish the desired goals, and realistic workloads and expectations. It is quite likely that the timetable will be longer with volunteers attempting to create your materials, so do all you can to not overload these valuable supporters with too much of the tasks ahead.

A typical intake model for a community podcasting program is one in which the prospective volunteer producer completes a volunteer intake form, and possibly a podcast proposal form. The volunteer is then screened by the station. From here, stations could review volunteer applications with an eye to needs; not every volunteer is necessarily the best producer, and may need to be assigned other roles to determine their strengths. Once assessment is complete, a volunteer producer should get a basic station orientation, including policies and explanation of its nonprofit model and mission. Depending on your model, your station may approve the podcasts it wishes to move forward to production; or to begin onboarding individual producers for roles as part of the station's community podcasting program.

However your local process develops, make sure it is transparent and in writing. In all dealings with volunteers, transparency and documentation cut down on confusion and build trust in your processes and professionalism.

Community radio stations are experienced with handling volunteer producers, and many of the same principles your station uses in bringing in volunteers are applicable to inviting people to host podcasts at your station. As with terrestrial radio volunteers, podcast producers should be onboarded with station policies and procedures. Broadcast instruction is helpful because it will help community podcast producers understand your standards on station premises as well as what your community radio station expects of those associated with its brand. Lastly, understanding and agreeing to follow payola, plugola and language policies will benefit your radio station and its community standing, as well as make terrestrial broadcast an opportunity for these podcasts.

A question to resolve from the outset will be financial relationships among the station and podcast producers. Some producers get into podcasting to build a brand and/or to make a living. Ad/underwriting sales, guests who are paid for interviews, podcast hosts who charge guests for interviews/placement on podcasts, and pay for product placements on podcasts on podcast social media accounts may be unusual in the community radio setting, but can be common in some podcasting subcultures. Though

these matters can be a legal/IRS gray area for nonprofit community radio, from a brand standpoint, station donors are likely to take issue with such behavior. Your station can potentially be a fiscal sponsor or umbrella for these arrangements, but you are urged to speak with a labor attorney to ensure your nonprofit operates within your state's employment regulations.

Speaking of podcasting's culture, if your station will host community created podcasts on its website and/or channel, attention must be given to how these podcasts align with your brand. Community radio is not public-access television, where an organization may be contractually obligated to take any content from any resident. You do not have to accept everything. At the same time, community podcasting programs provide your station a chance to do something a little different than what the station typically does. This mandate could foster new audience relationships and atypical programming choices to associate with your station. If you decide your station should do something radically different with its brand in the podcasting space than what your listeners and donors are accustomed to, take time to educate them about the purpose of your station's podcasting, so that you can win their support and advocacy for your efforts in this platform.

And finally, your station should consider how it will address podfade, or the issue of initial energy wearing off after 5-8 episodes, leading to a slowdown and podcast end. Most podcasts do not reach 20 episodes. How can your station help support community podcasters to keep the momentum going? Can you develop infrastructure to make your network an advantage for them? Podfade is a big issue that will reflect on your station, so give thought to it early.

Production ins and outs: music and more

Once your station is into a podcasting production groove, there are several issues you may deal with. In this section, we'll examine some of the more important technical and practical questions your station may have to address.

Audio production

What editing software will you use for your productions or train community producers to use? There are a variety of open-source packages you could use. Audacity is the most popular audio editing software available on Mac, PC and other platforms. However, you might investigate mobile apps as well.

Community podcast producers not recording on premises may ask about appropriate microphones to purchase. Technology is always changing, but makers such as Audio Technica make USB and other affordable, quality gear to consider. Be aware of connectors; new Mac computers do not have new USB ports with different sizes.

You might also consider a portable digital recorder, such as one made by Tascam, Zoom or Marantz. They often come with built-in microphones or XLR inputs. Once recorded, you can transfer recordings to your computer for editing later.

Distribution

Distribution means the places where your podcast will be shared to make it most accessible to listeners. Ideally your podcast host will automate submission, but you may also contact one of the distribution channels via their respective websites and add your podcast feed so future episodes appear automatically.

The most important distribution channels, which maintain public directories, to have your podcasts listed are:

- Apple Podcasts: most popular

- Spotify: soared to second on the strength of major investments

- TuneIn: default for smart speakers of varying types

Others include Stitcher, Pandora, iHeart and Google Podcasts. Stitcher and iHeart are especially meaningful for smart speakers.

Engagement and marketing

Once you choose topic and format, how you engage your listeners in the podcast is important. Virtually every podcaster wants audience feedback. For stations, involving the audience is a great way to create loyal listenership and, ultimately, foster relationships that lead to new donor connections.

There are far more marketing materials and tutorials available than this toolkit may cover. However, if you are seeking listener engagement, there are a variety of tested tools and methods. These include:

- Voicemails/voice memos: there are many free services, such as Google Voice, that allow listeners to leave messages. As with radio, your outgoing voicemail message should inform participants that their message may be aired. Your station may want to manage voicemail numbers internally, so that they may be retained if a host retires. Depending on the nature of the message requests, your station may also use a single voicemail box for your associated podcasts.

- Listener emails/social media tags: Your station and/or producers will want to choose one or two social media platforms to start on, and develop a strategy for post frequency as well as hashtags. To ensure success, it may be helpful to enlist others with influence in these spaces to participate and get things started.

- Submission call-outs: Some stations have used Google Forms or other tools to collect longform communications from audience members.

- Live Events: Live podcast tapings and other in-person meetups are a good way to engage listeners for both radio and podcast.

- Email lists. Write to your audiences on the lists they frequent.

Promoting your podcast helps your work get heard broadly, as well as by your station's audience. Some avenues to not overlook include:

- All staff/major donor/board/volunteer emails should mention your podcast and ask others to spread the word

- Two-way/features, on the air and on social media, like Facebook Live

- Local media press releases, announcements to radio press such as Current and Radio World, and podcast newsletters

- Cross-promotion with other podcasts

- Ads/other podcasts such as Facebook Ads, Listen Notes, Google Adwords, Overcast

Keywords are essential to your marketing strategy. Use keywords and guest names first in podcast titles, releases and other promotions. This kind of positioning helps you perform better in Apple's Podcast keyword search results as well as grabs eyes in inboxes. For instance, Sally Kane of NFCB - Episode 50 is a lot better than Episode 50 – Sally Kane of NFCB. Resources like Google Trends and Google Keyword Planner will help your station with its marketing strategy.

Smart speakers

Have you tried your podcast on smart speakers? Are you promoting smart speakers in your education efforts? You should. In 2017, listening via smart speaker rose 61% from the previous year, according to the 2017 Smart Audio Report. To the question "Is the time you spend using your Smart Speaker replacing any time you used to spend with…?" 39 percent of people said to radio.

Key to your smart speaker strategy and education effort is getting your podcast on TuneIn, Stitcher or IHeart. These aggregators have relationships with Amazon and Google, makers of the two biggest smart speaker brands. You can test out your

podcast's availability anytime by asking your smart speaker to play the podcast of your choice. If it's in one of the aforementioned directories, your speaker will play it.

Music

Music is a continual question for podcasters. Here is the long and short of music licensing and podcasts.

Radio stations deal with performance rights organizations like ASCAP, BMI and SESAC. You pay a blanket license to play songs in their respective catalogs. This covers royalties to songwriters, but not artists and labels, which have largely been left out of the licensing mix for many years. The license has specific restrictions; for instance, that streams and broadcasts cannot be interactive, i.e. rewound, etc.

Podcasts are still considered largely a downloaded format, and require what is called a mechanical license. However, as more podcasts are streamed, there is yet another schema called an interactive license. This is for music that can be rewound, skipped ahead, heard beyond 14 days, et al. Music licenses for podcasts can be acquired via the Harry Fox Agency and are measured by the number of streams and downloads, and charged back to the license buyer thusly.

Your station could seek direct licenses with artists, but you are encouraged to work with an attorney on such material. Your contracts should cover both mechanical and interactive licenses for podcasts, and non-interactive licensure if your station intended to broadcast the podcast. Signers on contracts giving your station rights to music should include all songwriters to the songs in questions. Cover songs should be avoided.

There are sources for music licensed without fees, such as Free Music Archive, Jamendo, Bensound, Blue Dot Sessions and Musopen. In some cases, music has been shared under a Creative Commons license with specific usage requirements, such as attribution for the artist and noncommercial use only, so ensure your station abides by the rules for this music.

Podcast hosting

It is considered a best practice to not host your podcast on your current website. This is primarily because your existing host likely won't provide you the analytics tools you

need, and because many website hosts have Terms of Service language that exempts audio files from "unlimited" plans.

A few podcast hosts currently available include Libsyn, Soundcloud and Streamguys, although many options are out there, and change constantly.

As baselines, your station will want to find a podcast host that is reliable and offers good bandwidth so listeners can stream seamlessly; an ability to host your audio file; and capacity to create an RSS link so people can subscribe to it. Other features you'll want to look for:

- Ability to embed your podcast player on a website

- Audiograms

- Easy to use /customizable player

- Push to iTunes, TuneIn, Spotify etc…

- Monetization options

- Upfront costs and billing

- Podcast metadata (title, artwork, category etc.)

- Analytics

- Listen offline / download option

One of the best ways to screen a host is checking other podcasts to hear what sounds good. Note where other podcasts buffer or have problems streaming, or have download issues. There are also podcast host review websites that might offer you the latest features of a host as well as discount codes. You might also check out hosts for trial accounts to test and see what works best for your station.

Podcast monetization

Among the biggest challenges for any community radio station in general is money, and that challenge is even greater when you are trying to generate financial support for a new initiative like podcasting at the station.

Financial basics

Your podcast will need to cover one-time costs and ongoing costs. One-time costs tend to be fixed and you'll only need to worry about them once or regular intervals, but always at the same rate. Ongoing costs are also at regular intervals, but can vary in rates. Examples of fixed costs include microphones and other equipment, software subscriptions and website domain. Ongoing costs include staff, transcriptions and podcast marketing.

Financial leadership is needed to maintain fiscal control as well as to meet the expectations of stakeholders. Your station will want to develop your budgets based on revenue history and expense projections. What sort of underwriting history do you have, and what can your podcast reasonably expect to bring in?

In addition, leaders will need to be familiar with the financial plan and how to interpret and evaluate it for your podcast. Evaluation should happen on a continuing basis to avoid or minimize the impact of risks.

Finally, leaders need to work together with the podcast team and/or other staff to administer individual budgets. This effort entails cutting ambiguity in financial matters. Your station should also be able to articulate how are you pacing towards meeting overall financial goals.

Spot formats and measurement

The Federal Communications Commission has a variety of specifications that compel your terrestrial broadcasts to be noncommercial in nature. These rules include how station sponsorship is worded and how underwriting is presented on air. The FCC has, to this point, not intervened in stations' digital endeavors such as podcasting and websites. Although this has been interpreted by some stations as a green light for you to do anything you want, Internal Revenue Service policies governing 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations as well as donor expectations of your brand are crucial factors to consider.

Underwriting announcements in podcasts are regarded by virtually all terrestrial and digital audiences as acceptable for stations. The three major spots in podcasts are:

1. Pre-roll: start of the podcast

2. Mid-roll: middle of the podcast

3. Post-roll: end of the podcast

These can be pre-produced announcements or scripts read by the host.

The podcast rate standard is CPM, or cost per thousand listeners. Stations determine their rates by multiplying the CPM by the number of listeners. So, for a podcast with a $20 CPM for pre-roll placement, $15 for mid-roll and $10 for post-roll would charge, if the podcast has 10,000 listeners, $200, $150 and $100 for each placement per episode respectively. Should your station choose to engage your existing underwriters, make sure they're open to support podcasts at this level.

If your station wishes to opt-in on advertising partnerships that many podcast hosts offer, you'll need to attain 1,000 listeners or more. Different podcast hosts offer dynamic ad insertion tools and networks from which you can select spots. Such podcast hosts will validate the number of listeners you have and match you with advertisers. You can choose the kind of spots you wish to run.

Revenue shares can be an incentive for podcast producers to cultivate underwriters. Should you choose to do this, make sure your station has a written agreement to delineate percentage of revenue a producer gets and how much the station receives. The station should make sure to work in its costs for processing payments and

associated staff time. Finally, you'll want to check how your policies align with labor laws.

Other monetization: programs and grants

If your station aspires to be local podcasting hub, where you train residents interested in podcasting, your station has a few revenue options. You might consider charging for some parts or all of your instruction, as a few stations do. You can also rent production space to individuals doing podcasts. Typically, an organization can reasonably charge its break-even rate plus 10 percent to support its operations and offset costs.

Training programs may also be supported via grants. Check with local and state offices for funding. Youth training programs may be financially supported by schools. With schools and state and local agencies, your station should be able to provide a curriculum, protocols for instructors and safety of students. Your station may also be required to abide by state and local policies.

Grants may also be available for content specific podcasting. For example, historical preservation societies could offer grants for educating the public via podcasting about a particular part of history. While there are not community radio station infrastructure grants for podcasting, you could utilize a grant to hire staff, buy equipment and so forth.

More monetization: merch, events, etc.

Given community radio's scale, other revenue sources may provide a better return on investment. Some ideas:

- Individual donors via the station

- Patronage/online giving

- Local events and merchandise

- Side work (supporting podcasts through helping partners and local businesses with their own podcasts)

- Training programs

Conclusion

The people who come to manage community radio or want to manage a station tend to be smart and committed, and are willing to learn all the skills they need to know. What is asked of community radio leaders is a remarkable list, which includes the logistics of managing people, be they staff members or volunteers, and shaping a station's future. However, what community radio requires is more involved than just having good people skills. Understanding radio formatting and how to build content both look deceptively easy, until you realize creating something people will listen to and financially support is more than it seems.

Taking on the day-to-day is one issue, but what happens for a community radio station uncertain about its future? All of the above and many others skills can make a manager's tenure successful or difficult. Podcasting is one such demand facing stations.

Podcasting may not solve major organizational problems. For instance, if your radio station has on-air fundraising declines, your terrestrial programming, as the basis for giving, must be addressed. Should you need to find a younger audience, it is important to be intentional in your engagement and terrestrial radio content selections that appeal to these demographics, and that staffing reflects the people you hope to foster relationships with. Lingering culture issues will not be resolved by injecting local podcasters into your station; do all you can to remedy challenges before you bring in a new section of volunteers and staff into such a climate.

Still, podcasting represents a potential leap forward for community radio. As WTJU's Nathan Moore recently shared a podcast (or podcast network) will thrive when it's got strong partners and/or existing networks of potential listeners interested in the content.

Please visit nfcb.org for more resources.