



## Low-Powered FM Frequently Asked Questions “LPFM FAQ”

- **What is LPFM?**

Low-Powered FM, or LPFM, is a special set of rules created specifically to address the need to retain local, community-oriented radio stations in the face of massive consolidation that has happened in the radio industry. It is ideally suited for local, community-based organizations such as churches. These special rules apply only in the USA.
- **Is this a regular radio station?**

Absolutely. An LPFM station has most of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of so-called “full powered” stations
- **How far does the signal go?**

The “Low-Powered” in LPFM limits the station power to 100 watts, and the “height” of the antenna is also limited. Properly designed, the signal can go 6-20 miles and can cover most communities.
- **How can LPFM help our ministry?**

Your radio station can broadcast the Gospel in many forms such as sermons, music and teaching programs. Programs can also help to strengthen believers by providing family-oriented teaching programs and even Christian entertainment. Your station can also help you to be more involved in the community by announcing or even covering appropriate community events.
- **Is my organization qualified for an LPFM license?**

Your organization must be a non-profit organization located near the proposed transmitter site (approximately 10-20 miles), run by a local governing board, and not owning any other radio or TV station. KaraTek can provide more detailed information to determine your organization’s eligibility.
- **How much will it cost for the license? When do we need to pay this cost?**

There are no licensing fees for non-commercial non-profit radio stations. However, KaraTek recommends that professional help be used to prepare the application in order to maximize the possibility of securing the license. In most situations, these costs would be under \$1000.00, although there are times when we would anticipate higher costs. When working with KaraTek, we ask that you deposit the estimated funds with us so we can disburse them as needed.
- **How much will it cost to build the station?**

Station costs can vary considerably, depending on the availability of space for the studio and antenna, how sophisticated the operation will be, and other costs that may be driven by building codes and zoning ordinances. Generally, we ask you to be prepared to invest in the vicinity of \$20,000, but costs for an LPFM can vary from half to well above this price. KaraTek can provide a detailed estimate for your situation.
- **When do we apply for the license?**

The actual license application is submitted electronically to the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) during a “filing window”. This filing window is a short period of time,

often a week, that the FCC accepts applications for new radio stations. Currently, Congress is in the process of working on new laws that will apply to LPFM while the FCC is preparing for this window by “clearing it’s desk” of related applications.

- **When we apply for a license, will we automatically get it?**

No. If there are others that apply during the filing window for a station that would not be permitted near yours, such as on the same frequency, these are considered “mutually exclusive”. This must be resolved before permission to build the station is given, and some applicants may not be successful if there is not enough “room” in the area for multiple LPFM stations.

- **How long will it take to get a license?**

After the application filing window has closed, a “construction permit” is awarded to anyone that submitted an application where no one else was asking for the same frequency near their location. These are called “singleton” applications and are generally awarded within 3 months of the filing window. In cases where more than one party is essentially asking for the same station, or “mutually exclusive”, the parties are asked to propose a solution. If no solution comes from this, then the FCC itself will either find a “winning party” through a point system, or propose that the parties “share” the station by broadcasting at different times.

- **How long do we have to build the station?**

Once the construction permit is awarded, you have three years to be on the air.

- **How many people will it take to run the station?**

You can run the station using as little as 1 part time person. Modern computer automation still allows you to remain on the air 24 hours a day. As a non-profit organization, you can also recruit volunteers to help run the station.

- **Do our people need special training to run the station?**

There are certain tasks that do require training, but there are no special requirements for the people on your radio staff. KaraTek is able to train radio staff and to be a resource whenever any problem is encountered.

- **What can I say or play on the station?**

LPFM stations, like all radio stations in the USA, have a wide range of programming they are allowed to air. There are restrictions on the use of offensive language, which should not be a problem for a church! There are also some requirements to identify the station, have a certain amount of programming that addresses community needs (topics are to be chosen by you), and some announcements related to licensing and license renewal as well as emergency preparedness.

- **Do I need special licensing to play music?**

Yes. At this point in time, radio stations must pay the writers of the songs, but not the performers. Three organizations, ASCAP, SESAC and BMI cover the bulk of available songs, and they all offer “blanket” licenses to play music from their songwriters. Cost is fairly low, especially for an LPFM station. *Note: there is currently pending legislation in Congress that may require compensation for the performers of songs, which may entail another expense. Proposed costs for LPFM are again quite low.*

- **Are there programs available that I can use?**

There is a wide variety of programming that you can use on your station. KaraTek can provide assistance in directing you to sources of these programs.

- **Can we put our station on the Internet?**  
Absolutely. Remember that some programs you might use could have rules that forbid “streaming” or require fees, and that music licensing for the Internet is separate from that on your station. An Internet station can also be a great way to get started in broadcasting.
- **What additional costs are necessary for an Internet stream?**  
Beside the equipment itself, there are costs for music licensing and a “streaming service” that enables many people to listen at one time. KaraTek can help with both your equipment needs and music licensing if you are interested in being on the Internet.
- **Can we run advertising?**  
No. Advertising is forbidden on a non-commercial station. However, the rules allow you to have business sponsors of programming that you may identify over the air. KaraTek can assist you in determining what you can say about a program sponsor.
- **How much are the ongoing costs of running a station?**  
Significant costs are employee salaries and benefits, equipment maintenance, building space and utilities, program costs (including music licensing), insurance and other typical business expenses. Depending on how your station is set up, this can vary from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars each month.
- **How much of the project can KaraTek help me with?**  
KaraTek can provide assistance all the way from the initial feasibility study to “signing on” the air. We have experience and tools to help us in estimating coverage, broadcast licensing, specifying and building stations, automation, training, project planning and fund raising. In short, we can be there for you throughout the process.
- **What does KaraTek charge for the services you provide?**  
KaraTek is a faith-based ministry that provides our services at cost, or even less when sufficient funding is available. We break our projects down into three main categories: equipment (including transportation and handling), installation labor and overhead labor (planning and work in our office). All these costs are detailed to you as we plan the project.
- **How do I get started?**  
Contact KaraTek to get your copy of our USA-based radio station planning document. In order for KaraTek to assist your organization, you must be in agreement with our Statement of Faith and sign a covenant for us to work together. Both of these items are contained in the radio station planning document. Remember that the LPFM filing window is coming soon, so now is the time to start your planning!