

Review of NZ On Air Regional Television Funding Policy

Terms of Reference

Purpose

NZ On Air, in a constrained funding environment, wishes to review its funding criteria for regional television programming in particular, in the context of other regional media in general, to assess the impact of public funding for regional television.

Definition

Regional Television means broadcast television services originating from and intended for audiences in a discrete geographic region within New Zealand.

Other Regional Media means radio, print and online media made specifically for a particular region or a clearly defined community of interest in a region. For the purposes of this exercise, *radio* means stations that broadcast in a defined region to a defined audience, including access and student radio, but excluding NZ.ME and MediaWorks networked stations and LPFM frequencies.

Also for the purposes of this exercise, a *Region* means either a province or a clearly defined geographical community with a minimum population of 50,000.

Scope

The review will consider the following matters, consult as necessary, and provide an analytical report that discusses and evaluates practical options for improvement.

- A brief historical background of broadcasting licensing arrangements, how commercial and non-commercial spectrum was traditionally obtained, and how transmission options have changed after DSO
- Brief historical and contextual background on the development of the Regional and Community Broadcasting Policy Framework and NZ On Air's current funding policy
- The extent to which current regional television and other regional media (whether or not they receive public funding) collectively reflect local character and identity, provide local information and news, and provide media access for and by local communities
- The extent to which collaboration opportunities are being used to improve outcomes
- Options to improve NZ On Air's regional television policy to ensure funding is adding value to outcomes

We anticipate the report will be succinct, audience-focused, with detailed data presented as appendices.

Key matters to be covered in the report include:

Current state:*Regional Television*

1. A short description of current regional channels, their objectives, transmission arrangements, typical programme schedules, target audience, coverage, and community awareness (plus information on channels that have recently ceased operating or changed their transmission arrangements).
2. Information on proportion, type and funding source of regional (locally produced) content, other NZ content, and foreign content carried on each channel.
3. A broad assessment of business viability and revenue opportunities by channel type.
4. A comparative assessment of how well-connected each channel is with the audiences they serve and the level of collaboration, if any, with other regional media.
5. A brief assessment of any international models that may be relevant to a small country.

Other Regional Media

6. A short description of current regional and community radio stations operating in the same catchment as a regional television station, their objectives, general programming type and target audience.
7. A short description of key online and print media specifically serving regions in a regional television footprint, their objectives, and target audience.
8. A broad assessment on how well-connected the key media outlets are with the communities they serve and the level of collaboration, if any, with other regional media.

Summary

9. A comparative assessment of the collective weight and service quality of all regional media services to each defined region including access and community radio: are audiences in each region comparatively well served with regional information or not?

Future state:

10. A brief commentary on optimal, cost-effective and collaborative ways to deliver appropriate regional media services for a small country, discussing the role of the market and the role of limited public funding in the digital age.
11. Is there an optimal number of regional channels for a country of 4 million people? Are there optimal locations? Where is there most evidence of audience demand? Is changing demography an influencer?
12. What are the main barriers to and opportunities for channel success? What should the role of government be?
13. What are the most appropriate transmission arrangements?

14. Is the current NZ On Air funding focus on regional news and information programming still appropriate?
15. Are market developments in online media likely to improve timely access to local information? What might this mean for regional television and radio?

Timeline:

30 November 2014:	Reviewer appointed
31 January 2015:	Draft report provided for comment to NZOA: comments to reviewer by 10 February
1 March 2015:	Final report delivered