

Why community media needs better funding!



Investing in democracy, building people's voices

South Africa has over 200 community radio stations and five community TV stations. For those who live outside major cities, community media is the only alternative to the SABC and is often the only source of media that can focus on local issues that affect members of that community.

By law, community media organisations should be non-profit, democratically controlled by their communities and most have a mandate to serve the information needs of the poor and working class.

There are also hundreds of small independent and community newspapers that – like the broadcasters – could give a voice to the voiceless, and hold local elites to account.

But most small and community media have struggled to deliver on their democratising potential: instead they face a daily struggle to survive. They are largely dependent on advertising and must please their advertisers to maintain this trickle of income.

Government is the largest advertiser, meaning that many community media organisations will find it hard to take positions that are independent or critical of government. They survive on crumbs and struggle to employ skilled and independent journalists, or hold discussions on the burning issues of the day.

Too many community media projects are forced to play it safe by focusing on entertainment, doing 'public relations' for government or big businesses, and staying away from issues likely to upset local leaders.

If we want a vibrant democracy we must invest properly in community media assets like radio stations that give more power to the people, and that are democratically owned by the communities they serve.

- **Government advertising:** Currently, the state spends less than 10% of its advertising budget on the community media sector. This can be increased to facilitate:
 1. Governance, this includes training community members of community radio.
 2. Day to day running of stations, this includes maintenance and upgrades of machinery.
 3. Monthly maintenance of the radio stations.
- **Introducing community media support grant:** We call for an **annual grant** to community media stations, to help them provide a basic quality service, including: training and support for journalists, running costs and equipment upgrades!

We call for:

1. Solutions and "a long-term and sustainable fiscal framework for community media" that would promote the sector's growth, its ability to generate revenues and sound governance.
2. Need to develop "a public funding model" for the sector.
3. Currently, the state spends less than 10% of its advertising budget on the community media sector, which is seen as an important source of information for many segments of the population. We call for the state to commit to spending 30% of its advertising budget on community media outlets (including radio, television, newspaper and digital outlets)
4. For MDDA to aggregate the costs and reduce them pay such costs in an organised way between Sentech and MDDA.

5. Community media should have access to sufficient resources to produce programming and facilitate participatory process that ensure meaningful freedom of expression, access to information and community ownership and control of projects.
6. Invest in our democracy. If we want community media that serve the people, it must be paid for through the tax system.
7. We must invest in non-commercial media. A good place to start would be to ensure every local community radio and TV receives a grant R3-million a year.
8. This investment in our democracy would be enough to give greater independence to media projects and let them employ skilled journalists to undertake investigations, hold those in power to account, and address the burning issues of the day. We must demand proper public funding for community media.

For comment, contact:

Lazola Kati Right 2 Know – Lazola@r2k.org.za – 0729567753

Thami Nkosi Right 2 Know – tnkosi37.tn@gmail.com – 0626245992

Support this call!

https://awethu.amandla.mobi/petitions/mobilize-people-around-a-call-fro-an-annual-grant-for-community-radio-stations/launch#=_=

**TOGETHER WE HAVE
A STRONGER VOICE!**

