



Underwriting Copy Approval Policy & Guidelines

This document is to outline the underwriting copy approval procedures for Seacoast Radio Network - 88.1 OBX Country as well as provide general underwriting guidelines as it pertains to FCC regulations. These procedures and guidelines are put into policy to install referenceable documentation of the organization's practices and to maintain a high level of community broadcasting compliance.

Seacoast Radio Network - 88.1 OBX Country reserves the right to decline underwriting support for reasons related to legal and compliance matters.

Underwriting Copy Approval Policy

I. PROSPECTIVE, NEW, AND RETURNING UNDERWRITERS

A. Beginning conversations with prospective, new, or returning underwriters should always include the following as needed:

1. Explanation of "What is Underwriting"
2. Underwriting Copy Restrictions

II. UNDERWRITING PROPOSAL

- A. Underwriting Director will compose underwriting copy (proposed script) in a formal proposal with proposed contract dates and schedule.
- B. Fully completed underwriting proposal will be sent to Program Director for any edits and approval.
- C. Once approved, Underwriting Director will send proposal to the underwriter for any edits and approval. Program Director will be consulted as needed per underwriters edits and suggestions.

III. UNDERWRITING CONTRACT

- A. Upon approval on underwriting proposal from all parties, information will be transferred to an underwriting contract.
- B. Underwriting contract will be signed by a representative of both Seacoast Radio Network - 88.1 OBX Country and the corresponding underwriter. In most cases this will be WIID Underwriting Director and main underwriter contact.

Underwriting Copy Guidelines

PERMISSIBLE UNDERWRITING SCRIPT LANGUAGE

Noncommercial radio stations may include the following information in underwriting acknowledgements, provided that the information merely identifies, but does not promote, the for-profit sponsor or the sponsor's products or services:

- Name
- Address, telephone number, and/or website (*NOTE: website must follow acknowledgement guidelines*)
- Brand or trade name of the sponsor's product or service
- Value-neutral descriptions of products or services
- Non-promotional slogan
- Historical information, such as the length of time the sponsor's establishment has served the area

SCRIPT RESTRICTIONS AND EXAMPLES

Acknowledgements may not contain comparative or qualitative language.
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To ensure that on-air acknowledgements merely identify rather than promote a contributor or its facilities, products, or services, acknowledgements may not contain comparative or qualitative language and must be value-neutral.

Sponsorship acknowledgements should not include language that tends to distinguish the sponsor from its competitors.

Because "context" is critical to determining the meaning of a word, there is no exhaustive list of promotional terms. Here, however, are examples of words that, in context, have been found to be promotional:

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| • Efficient | • Prompt | • Leading |
| • Economical | • Fair price | • Award-winning |
| • Dependable | • Reliable | • Grammy-nominated |
| • Dedicated | • Excellent | • Board-certified |

Examples of complete announcements that have been found to be promotional:

- "I find the people at Temecula Chrysler Center to be very accommodating, and the owners, John Harrison and Gary Anderson, to be delightfully honest."
- "Overland Bank reaches out to the business community . . . to deliver quality financial services to your place of business."
- "Providing quick connection and clear sound, bringing you closer to Korea, for international long distance service."

The third acknowledgement, on behalf of AT&T, was aired in the Korean language. FCC staff found it objectionable because it implies that the AT&T long distance connections are quicker and clearer than those of the competition.

Because the FCC gives weight to a broadcaster's good faith judgment, it will sometimes excuse announcements that a broadcaster ably defends.

In January 2003, the FCC refused to impose sanctions on a noncommercial broadcaster for announcements that, on the surface, seemed promotional. The FCC approved the following copy in underwriting announcements:

- “Daily lunch specials” was permissible where it referred to menu offerings rather than price.
- “Professional equipment and supplies” was permissible where it referred to the general type of merchandise offered. “Home style food” and “bakes its pies daily” were permissible because they identified a caterer’s products in a “general, categorical manner.”
- “An intelligent four-wheel drive system” neutrally identified a tractor dealer’s product.
- “Surgery never has to be unpleasant” was permissible as a statement that “does not appear to distinguish the underwriter’s medical skills from those of other oral surgeons.”

Acknowledgements may not contain price information.
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This prohibition applies to information about interest rates, or the savings or value associated with a product or service. Even oblique references to price are prohibited. Use of the word “free” is prohibited when it refers to cost.

For example, FCC staff found that the following acknowledgements are promotional because they include price information:

- “David A. Lander believes that if his client does not recover damages, he does not collect a fee.”
- “We provide pleasure in convenience and the wisdom of thrift.”
- “This WIID traffic watch update brought to you by Jiffy Lube, now offering a discount on air-conditioning recharge with a Pennzoil change and 14-point lube check.”

Words and phrases that may imply price information should be closely scrutinized. Such words include “happy hour,” “ladies night,” “best buy,” “clearance,” and “special.”

Acknowledgements may not contain a call to action.

A call to action is a command that the listener do something that leads to a purchase.

Two examples of such acknowledgements are:

- “Stop by our showroom to see a model.”
- “Try product X next time you buy oil.”

Although noncommercial radio stations may identify an underwriter’s business address as part of an acknowledgement, as well as the origination point of a remote broadcast, the station may not urge listeners or viewers to visit the location from which it is doing the remote broadcast.

While noncommercial radio stations may air an underwriter’s telephone number as part of an acknowledgement, the station may not encourage listeners to call that number. For example, a station may say “the telephone number is 555-1234,” or “they may be reached at 555-1234,” but not “phone 555-1234” or “call 555-1234.”

In 2004, NPR aired a controversial announcement that contained the phrase “Learn more at www.sponsorswebsite.com.” Its explanation was that it is not a violation of the underwriting rules to direct people to a company’s website, where additional information is available. FCC staff informally advised NPR that its reasoning seemed valid; however, the FCC issued no formal ruling (and no FCC complaint was filed).

This announcement should not be construed as a decision that “calls to action” are now permitted in underwriting acknowledgements. Informal staff opinion such as this carries no weight, other than to show that a good faith effort was made to follow regulations.

Acknowledgements may not contain inducements to buy, sell, or lease.

Examples of such acknowledgements are:

- “A bonus available this week.”
- “Special gift for the first 50 visitors.”

FCC staff sanctioned a radio station for airing the following acknowledgement:

- “Big O Tires Express Lane Service guarantees that four tires will be installed in 20 minutes or less.”

A for-profit business cannot mention that it donates a percentage of its sales every day, or on a particular day, to the station or another nonprofit entity, as that is considered an inducement to buy.

Acknowledgements may not interrupt regular programming.

Section 399A provides that underwriting acknowledgements may not interrupt regular programming. A noncommercial station may clearly air an acknowledgement for a program sponsor at the beginning or end of the program, or at both the beginning and end of the program, without undermining the noncommercial nature of public broadcasting. Acknowledgements made in conjunction with “longer” programs are permitted not only at the beginning and end of a program, but also between identifiable segments of the program or during “station breaks.” The FCC has not specifically defined what constitutes a “longer” program or a “station break.”

Acknowledgements may not promote a for-profit underwriter, its services, facilities, or products.

Stations should be particularly careful when DJs or programmers read underwriting announcements live. Adding personal endorsements such as “I shop at this store and the service is great” or “They have really good burgers” are promotional statements. Even if they do not appear in the written text of the underwriting announcement, they are still considered violations of FCC regulations.

In fact, stations should be careful about promoting the services, facilities, or products of its underwriters at any time. The FCC is inclined to see such promotional statements as attempts to cultivate the underwriter’s goodwill and attract additional contributions.