

Request to Extend STAs

Arkansas Educational Television Commission (AETC), dba Arkansas PBS, seeks extension of its five (5) experimental LPTV/TV Translator STAs in four unserved and largely rural areas in Arkansas to address educational broadcast transmission gaps during the emergency situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for this project was provided by the CARES Act through the State of Arkansas.

The FCC granted the STAs by letter dated October 5, 2020. Since that date, AETC has diligently proceeded with the project, but AETC has encountered permitting and procedural delays at the state level as well as unexpected engineering challenges with the construction of the five (5) transmitter facilities and the planned launch of these new services.

Initially CARES Act funding was to expire on December 30, 2020. However, in December, Congress granted an extension through 2021. On January 19th, Arkansas PBS was granted an extension through March 31, 2021. On March 11, 2021, AETC submitted a project report and request for extension of the allocated funding to the Governor and CARES Act committee in the State of Arkansas, as well as additional funding to complete the project. See attached ARPBS Tower Expansion report. This report explains the state funding status and explains that the use of the approved funds will be extended through the end of the state fiscal year on June 30, 2021. We do anticipate another extension for a couple of months to complete this project.

The attached Site Progress report details the engineering challenges and status of each transmission site buildout. See attached AETC FCC STA Extensions – Site Progress March 2021.

Despite these challenges, AETC is poised to launch the first service (the Russellville station) before the end of March 2021 with two other services/stations (Yancy and Forest City) planned to be completed in June/July 2021 and the remaining two services/stations (Gaither and Buck Knob) planned to be completed in August and September 2021.

For the reasons set forth in its initial STA request and in this extension request, AETC respectfully requests an extension of 180 days for its five experimental LPTV/TV Translator STAs.