

Expression of Interest

Bhutan Broadcasting Service Terms of Reference for Reality Shows for 2022 and beyond (Updated in 2024)

Background

The first reality show on the BBS was broadcast in 2008. It was an instant hit. The viewers, especially those living in rural areas, loved it. Its popularity grew and so did the numbers. But it wasn't without problems.

The reality shows were being organised by the same reality show organisers year after year and the people started complaining. They said they too should be given the opportunity of hosting reality shows on the BBS.

There were also complaints that a lot of money was involved and the talent shows weren't necessarily being won by the talented.

In 2022, the BBS introduced the system of selecting the reality shows by publicly inviting expressions of interests to address these issues.

New applicants

In 2022, there were six reality shows;

1. Druk Super Star
2. Druk Gi Kalapingka
3. The Voice of Bhutan
4. Drinchen Phami Sungkey
5. Druk Gi Tsepem
6. Palden Drukpa

In addition to the six reality shows, there were six new applicants, waiting for the opportunity to host their own shows on BBS. *They had applied for and been granted permits to host shows on the BBS.*

They constantly asked the BBS management to give them the opportunity to host their shows on BBS. They argued that the BBS should not give a monopoly to the same six reality show organisers year after year. They argued that, as a public service broadcaster, BBS should give fair opportunity to all interested Bhutanese.

Talent show not being won by the talented

In the past, the reality shows selected the winners by votes through SMS. Since 2018, the reality show organisers started using mBoB, mPay and other banking apps in addition to the SMS votes to decide the winners.

Using the banking apps (mBoB, mPay), the contestants were asked to deposit money directly into the accounts of the show organisers. The amount decided who remained in the competition and who was eliminated. Ultimately, the money decided the winner. The amounts were not disclosed to the participants, BBS, or the public.

Although this payment was called a voting system, votes were bought and not cast. Some of the contestants had to resort to selling property, borrowing money and reportedly other means.

This practice was disallowed since it went against the principle of a talent competition and also degraded the image and reputation of the show.

Revenue generation for reality shows

The reality show organisers keep 80% of the revenue from the SMS votes.

The two telecos receive 20%.

In addition to the revenue from the SMS votes, the reality show organisers get eight minutes of advertisement airtime every hour.

Each show lasts up to two and half months, over ten weeks. This translates to eight hours of advertisement airtime for the reality show organisers to sell.

In addition, they can look for sponsors.

BBS' role

The BBS provides all the professional support. It provides the studio, the airtime, the equipment and the personnel. It provides the cameras, the cameramen, the video editors and the graphics designers.

As a fee, BBS will charge Nu. 70,000 (seventy thousand Ngultrums) per episode if the show is hosted at a BBS studio and Nu. 50,000 (fifty thousand Ngultrums) if it is hosted at other studios.

Initially, the BBS was paid 20% of the SMS votes.

In 2010, that was Nu. 1.9 million from just one show, the Druk Star.

In 2011, there were two shows – Bhutan Star and Druk Super Star. From the former the BBS received Nu. 2.5 million and from the latter Nu. 2.8 million.

The amount was slashed by more than half when it was replaced with a fixed rate per episode.

The way forward

In 2022 when the guidelines were introduced, there were six reality shows. There were also six new applicants.

For equity and fairness, the BBS proposed to invite Expressions of Interest from interested individuals and parties/firms to organise reality shows.

Objectives;

1. To provide opportunity to interested individuals and parties/firms in a transparent and fair manner.
2. Promote Bhutanese culture and tradition.
3. Provide a platform for budding Bhutanese performing artists.
4. Provide healthy and wholesome entertainment.
5. Encourage originality, innovation, and creativity.
6. Ensure transparency.
7. Ensure that the talent show is won by the most talented.
8. Ensure that the participants/ contestants are not exploited.

General Guidelines

1. BBS will select five shows every year.
2. Each show will last nine weeks, two months on average.
3. There will be two episodes every week, one on Saturday and one on Sunday.
4. Each episode will be three hours.
5. The prizes will be declared publicly at the start of the show.
6. *It shall also be announced once every month during the show.*
7. *If the prizes are to be given in the form of scholarships, it shall be made amply clear*

- both in public announcements and contracts drawn (with BBS and the contestants) where the winners will get to study, the name of the university, the degree (Masters/ Bachelors/ Diploma) and how much/ what percentage the scholarships will cover.*
8. *It shall also be made amply clear, whether the prizes will cover other costs such as airfare, visa fees, insurance etc.*
 9. *The monetary value of the scholarship would also be specified in the contract agreement.*
 10. *If the winners are not able to avail themselves of the scholarships because they couldn't obtain the required IELTS marks/ points, their visa was rejected, weren't given college/ university admission or for any other reason, they would be given the full monetary value of the scholarship/ prize they have won.*
 11. *To ensure transparency, the organiser shall provide a comprehensive income/ expenditure report to the BBS within a month of the show's completion.*
 12. *The report shall be factually accurate.*
 13. *The BBS on its parts shall treat the report as confidential.*
 14. *If the show allows viewers abroad to vote, the app/ system/ account through which they vote shall be jointly operated.*
 15. *If they are to vote by depositing/ transferring money into a bank account, the bank account shall be jointly operated.*
 16. *The organiser shall ensure that the contestants are 18 years or above.*
 17. *The vote count for every contestant will be announced live publicly whenever necessary till a final winner is announced.*

Conditions for judging

1. Only SMS votes from the public will be used to decide the winner.
2. Limited bulk voting may be allowed.
3. Participants will not be allowed to approach individuals in person for votes.
4. Participants may solicit for votes only when they are on the show.

Conditions for organisers

1. Show organisers will be given eight minutes of advertisement airtime every hour.
2. They may also seek sponsors for their shows.
3. BBS will provide the necessary professional support including the studio, airtime, equipment and personnel.
4. *BBS will charge Nu. 70,000 (seventy thousand Ngultrums) per episode if the show is hosted at a BBS studio and Nu. 50,000 (fifty thousand Ngultrums) if it is hosted at other studios.*
5. *The payment shall be made in two installments.*
6. *The first half shall be paid soon as half the episodes are broadcast.*
7. *The second shall be paid soon as the show ends.*

Requirements for applicants

A proposal with the following details;

1. the title,
2. number of contestants,
3. number of judges and their CVs,
4. mandate of judges,

5. genre,
6. format,
7. procedure and criteria for selecting and eliminating contestants,
8. duration of the show, when it is likely to begin and end,
9. prizes,
10. marketing and promotion plan, sponsorship, advertising and other revenue projections,
11. They will clearly explain how the popularity of the contestants would be decided, how they would be eliminated and how the winner would be decided,
12. They will also explain how they are going to ensure transparency and fair play,

Terms of Agreement

1. Once everything is decided and agreed, the show organiser and the BBS will sign a legally binding agreement.
2. Differences, if any, will be resolved amicably and mutually as far as possible.
3. If the differences persist, BBS will have the right to ban the show organiser from hosting shows on BBS thereafter.
4. The organiser will follow the BBS commercial services advertising and sponsorship guidelines.
5. They will follow strictly the broadcasting norms and policies of the BBS.
6. To ensure voting is fair and transparent, all reality show organisers shall reveal the total weekly votes.
7. The weekly votes will be counted in the presence of a BBS representative and one nominated by the organiser.
8. BBS will retain the broadcast right to the show.
9. *The show organiser shall provide a Bank Guarantee equivalent to 50% of the total cost of the show before signing the contract agreement.*
10. *Alternatively, they may provide 25% of the total cost of the show in cash as security deposit before signing the contract agreement and another 25% also in cash soon as half the number of episodes is broadcast.*
11. *Once the selection of the EOIs has been finalised, the show organisers would be required to deposit Nu. 100,000 (One hundred thousand Ngultrums) in good faith.*
12. *The money thus deposited shall be refunded in its entirety soon as the show ends.*
13. *Should the show organiser decide to withdraw, he/ she shall forfeit the money deposited in good faith.*

Evaluation

The organiser must submit the following mandatory documents to be eligible to participate in the expression of interest.

1. Valid Trade License
 2. Tax Clearance Certificate
 3. Copy of Commitment Letter
 4. *Security clearance certificate*
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