

First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program

Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Opening date:	[TBC]
Closing date and time:	11.30 PM AEST on [TBC] (8-10 weeks after opening)
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, please contact FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than insert [TBC]
Date guidelines released:	[TBC]
Type of grant opportunity:	Open competitive

Version 1.0

These Guidelines were released by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts on [TBC] to assist interested applicants to prepare and submit proposals for funding under the First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we meet, work and live. From the desert to the high Country, connecting to our beaches and sand, through the snow, the rivers and salt waters, in our cities, the bush and islands, we reflect, respect, and celebrate the unique and diverse communities we serve.

We walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, celebrating the oldest continuing living cultures in the world – listening, learning, and yarning, to understand the past and work as one towards an inclusive future. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present. We are committed to creating positive change and promoting meaningful reconciliation

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1 First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program: processes

The First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program is designed to achieve the Australian Government's objectives

This grant opportunity is part of the Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia, which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' (the department's) Outcome 5.



Consultation on draft guidelines

The department works with stakeholders to design the grant opportunity according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 \(CGRPs\)](#)



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the grant guidelines on [GrantConnect](#)



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and address all the eligibility and merit assessment criteria and submit to be considered for grant funding



We assess all grant applications

We assess the application/s against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible. If eligible, we assess your eligible application against the merit assessment criteria, and an overall consideration of value with relevant money and compare it to other applications, if applicable.



We make grant recommendations

We provide advice to the decision maker on the merits of each application.



Grant decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



We notify you of the outcome

We advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



We enter into a grant agreement

We will enter into a grant agreement with you if you have been successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and will be proportional to the risks involved.



Delivery of grant

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement.
We manage the grant by working with you, monitoring your progress and making payments.



Evaluation of the First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program

We evaluate your specific grant activity and the First Nations Community Wi-Fi program as a whole. We base this on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

1.1. Introduction

These guidelines contain information on how interested parties can apply to seek funding under the First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program, which aims to deliver free community wide Wi-Fi solutions in eligible remote and very remote First Nations communities.

Eligible communities are those listed at **Appendix A** and are defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 'remoteness category' as being in a 'remote' or 'very remote' area of Australia.

You must read these guidelines to determine your eligibility before filling out an application form (**Attachment A**). These guidelines set out:

- the purpose of the grant program and grant opportunity
- the eligibility and merit assessment criteria
- how grant applications are considered and assessed
- who decides which project will receive funding and how applicants are notified
- how grantees receive grant payments
- how grantees will be monitored, provide updates and be evaluated
- the responsibilities and expectations for applicants and grantees in relation to the funding opportunity.

We administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#) (CGRPs).¹

2 About the grant program

The First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program (the Program) was announced in the 2024-25 Budget as part of a range of First Nations digital inclusion measures under the Australian Government's \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia, which outlines the Government's commitment and plan for increasing connectivity, bridging the digital divide, improving mobile coverage, and protecting communities against natural disaster.

The 2024-25 Budget announced \$48.0 million in funding, starting in 2024-25 and consisting of:

- \$20 million to deliver additional free community Wi-Fi in more remote First Nations communities, through an open competitive grants program (this grant opportunity);
- \$4 million to establish a First Nations Digital Support Hub;
- \$18 million to establish a network of digital mentors to develop digital capability and support safe internet use; and
- \$6 million to expand and improve the national collection of data on First Nations digital inclusion.

This funding extends the Government's investment of up to \$20.0 million announced in February 2024 to provide free community Wi-Fi services to around 20 First Nations communities, and responds to recommendations from the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group established in January 2023.

¹ [Federal Register of Legislation - Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#)

2.1. About the grant opportunity: First Nations Community Wi-Fi for Remote and Very Remote Communities

The purpose of the First Nations Community Wi-Fi program is to provide free community wide Wi-Fi in remote and very remote First Nations communities to improve and expand the level of digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The ability to access free community Wi-Fi services increases First Nations people's opportunities to enjoy the benefits of digital connectivity such as; access to online content, access government and community services and programs, health services, education and business opportunities, which are increasingly being managed digitally.

The grant program contributes to the Department's progress towards Portfolio Budget Statement; *Outcome 5: to Promote an innovative and competitive communications sector, through policy development, advice, and program delivery, so all Australians can realise the full potential of digital technologies and communications service.*

The grant opportunity will also contribute to the following Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms:

- CtG Target 17: By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion, leading to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.
- CtG Priority Reform 3, emphasising the importance of systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Refer to the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) for more information on these targets and priority reforms.

The First Nations Community Wi-Fi program grant opportunity will:

- be delivered through an open competitive grants process;
- commence in 2024-25 financial year, ending in 2026-27 financial year; and
- be administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department) in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#) (CGRPs).²

Funding is targeted towards providing free community wide Wi-Fi connectivity in eligible remote and very remote First Nations communities across Australia (see **Appendix A** for a list of eligible communities).

Funding will deliver new or upgraded community wide wi-fi services and will enable bespoke telecommunications projects to be tailored to the economic and social requirements of a community. Eligible applicants are encouraged to work with eligible First Nations communities during the application development period to develop solutions that meet community needs (see Section 3.4 of the Guidelines)

2.2. Grant objectives and outcomes

The objective of the Grant Opportunity is to:

² [Federal Register of Legislation - Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#)

- Deliver place-based community wide Wi-Fi solutions in remote First Nations communities, by 30 June 2027, that responds to local priorities and community needs, and is reliable, sustainable, stable, accessible, and free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in those communities.

The intended outcomes of the Grant Opportunity, for eligible communities, is to:

- increase connectivity through wide range of innovative solutions and technologies, such as low earth orbit satellites (LEOSats), for First Nations communities who have no connectivity or communities where current terrestrial networks are not meeting community needs;
- improve access to a reliable internet connection;
- improve access to media and broadcasting platform;
- improve access to online services and information;
- create a pathway for longer term, sustainable and affordable Wi-Fi solutions for the communities;
- contribute to achieving equal levels of digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by 2026, under Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap;
- increase community partnerships and self-determination through close engagement and collaboration with First Nations communities; and
- maximise economic inclusion and social benefits for communities.

Proposed Solutions must deliver new or improved connectivity (not duplicate) existing government and private sector programs.

Proposed Solutions for communities that have existing connectivity will only be eligible under the Program if the applicant can demonstrate a clear need for improvement in the community and that the Proposed Solution would deliver a demonstrable and substantive improvement in service quality, coverage, affordability, reliability and/or speed compared to the existing services.

For areas that NBN Co predominantly services or proposes to service with Fixed Line or Fixed Wireless technologies, Proposed Solutions will only be eligible within those NBN service areas if the applicant can demonstrate a clear need for improvement in the targeted location, and the Proposed Solution would deliver a demonstrable and substantive improvement in service quality, coverage, affordability, reliability and/or speed compared to the NBN Fixed or Wireless network.

The existing indicative NBN Fixed and Wireless service areas are available on the National Map at www.nationalmap.gov.au. While it is expected that the expansion of coverage following NBN Co's Fixed Wireless upgrade will be substantial, applicants should assume this will extend the existing coverage area by up to 15km.

The opening and closing dates and any other relevant information will be published on the department's website at www.infrastructure.gov.au/FNDI and on [GrantConnect](#). If there is any discrepancy between these two publications, GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

3 Services and deliverables

3.1. For eligible communities that have no existing services

Proposed Solutions must meet a minimum level of service standard, including:

- **Service Quality:** e.g. latency, packet loss, contention ratio;

- **Coverage:** e.g. area, people, percentage of residential and/or business properties that will be covered by the Proposed Solution;
- **Reliability:** e.g. service availability, service restoration times, backup, and redundancy;
- **Affordability:** e.g. free community-wide Wi-Fi, including access to essential on-line services; and/or
- **Speed:** e.g. latency, upload and download speeds.

3.2. For eligible communities that have existing services

For communities that have existing services, but do not meet community expectations or needs, the Proposed Solution must provide a demonstrable improvement over the existing telecommunications solutions in the area, including affordability, and be developed in consultation with First Nations communities.

Where single point community Wi-Fi connection provides a lack of reach, penetration or service quality across the community, a community wide Wi-Fi network solution should clearly demonstrate the improved benefits.

For broadband access technologies, a like-for-like technology where there is an existing broadband service would only meet the requirement if the applicant can demonstrate a clear need for improvement, and the Proposed Solution would deliver a demonstrable and substantive improvement in:

- **Service Quality:** e.g. latency, packet loss, contention ratio
- **Coverage:** e.g. area, people, percentage of residential and/or business properties that will be covered by the Proposed Solution
- **Reliability:** e.g. service availability, service restoration times, backup, and redundancy;
- **Affordability:** e.g. free community-wide Wi-Fi, including access to essential on-line services; and/or
- **Speed:** e.g. latency, upload and download speeds.

These service improvements may include, but are not limited to, upgrades to address seasonal congestion, backhaul capacity upgrades to improve quality of service or infrastructure in areas where there is existing but patchy coverage across the community.

3.3. First Nations Communities of Priority – Remote and Very Remote

Eligible communities of priority have the following features:

- Is a Community, Town Camp or Homeland that is in a remote or very remote area and whose population consists of more than 70 percent First Nations peoples;
- The community's opportunity to connect to telecommunication services may be significantly improved through the provision of free community wide Wi-Fi and there is currently no or poor levels of existing connectivity options in the community;
- The community is willing to receive the Proposed Solution, work closely with successful applicants and provide access to land and facilities, where required; and
- The community has no or low levels of connectivity and adoption.

3.4. First Nations Communities' needs and support

During the application period, applicants must consult and engage with the First Nations community they are proposing a solution for. Engagement with First Nations communities

requires a thoughtful, respectful approach to ensure their perspectives and needs are prioritised, this enhances the potential for successful outcomes.

Engagement with communities should result in the identification of the most suitable area/s within a community to be covered by the Proposed Solution. The area/s may include: health or education facilities, community sites, or areas with a demonstrable need for improved public safety (for example, where people are unable to call 000 because of limited coverage or lack of infrastructure).

To give effect to the place-based objective of the Program, applicants should provide evidence that their Proposed Solution is:

- a priority to First Nations peoples and the relevant community;
- meets the need of First Nations people within the community; and
- is supported by a First Nations authority or governance structure, such as:
 - Traditional Owner groups
 - Community organisations; or
 - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled organisations.

Letters of support from First Nations organisations should identify that engagement with First Nations peoples and organisations has been undertaken in a meaningful and culturally safe way and is underpinned by principles of self-determination, reflective practice and a commitment to mutually beneficial relationships.

Applications will be assessed on the engagement and development of partnerships with First Nations peoples. The partnership should also identify how the project builds the operational and leadership capacity of First Nations peoples.

Consultation with the relevant state, territory, and local governments is encouraged in addition to First Nations community engagement. State, territory, and local governments may own infrastructure in areas that could potentially be used for Proposed Solutions or have work planned. They may also have specific requirements in relation to the use of their infrastructure that will need to be identified in the application.

4 Grant amount and grant period

4.1. Grants available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$20 million (GST exclusive) over 3 years, starting in 2024-25 financial year for the Program.

This includes dedicated funding of \$3.5 million towards improving digital connectivity for First Nations communities in Central Australia, as part of the Australian Government's \$250 million plan for *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*.

The total grant amount available of \$20.0 million (GST exclusive), is made up of:

- \$3.5 million (GST exclusive) for applications to provide free community Wi-Fi solutions aimed at improving digital connectivity for First Nations communities in Central Australia;
- \$3.5 million (GST exclusive) for applications to provide free community Wi-Fi solutions aimed at improving digital connectivity for smaller Homeland and Outstation First Nations communities in very remote areas; and

- \$13 million (GST exclusive) available for applications to provide community wide Wi-Fi solutions to other eligible First Nations communities of priority in remote and very remote areas across Australia.

In terms of the grant opportunity:

- there is no minimum grant amount per application;
- the maximum grant amount for providing a solution in a single community is \$1.5 million (GST excl); and
- the total amount of all grants approved cannot exceed the amount of available funds under the program.

Where Proposed Solutions in Central Australia or smaller Homeland and Outstation communities are assessed as not offering value with relevant money to the Commonwealth, and the total funding available of up to \$3.5 million in both these categories is not fully recommended, any remaining funding can be re-allocated to other Proposed Solutions of merit within the broader \$13 million funding pool. The Minister will be the final Decision Maker for funding.

4.1.1. Co-funding Contributions

It is not a mandatory requirement that co-funding contribution be provided. However, to increase the reach of the Program, applicants are strongly encouraged to seek co-contributions (cash or in-kind), towards their Proposed Solution from state, territory or local governments, local communities and/or other third parties.

- For example, the Commonwealth's funding is intended to subsidise the provision of free community wide Wi-Fi solutions. State and territory governments may wish to extend and enhance the free community wide Wi-Fi service to individual premises by funding the provision of network termination devices (NTDs) and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) telephones internally to one or more premises.
- Proposed Solutions of this nature will be considered on their merits as part of the Assessment Criteria, including value for money.

Applicants are solely responsible for forming relationships and negotiating the provision of additional services and contributions with any relevant third parties, and for testing and/or verifying any advice received from these third parties.

For Funded Projects that include a co-contribution from a state or territory government, the Department expects that Grantees will enter into a Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth and a separate agreement with the respective state or territory government.

For Funded Projects that include co-contributions from other parties, the Grantee will bear any costs, and cover the other parties' funding if the other parties' funding is not secured following execution of the Grant Agreement between the Grantee and the Commonwealth.

For Proposed Solutions that include co-contributions from third parties, a copy of the terms of the third parties' commitment to the Applicant is to be attached to the application for funding.

4.2. Grant period

You must complete all capital works by 30 June 2027. Following this period, you will be expected to maintain and upgrade (as required) the Funded Project, and provide free community wide Wi-Fi services and project reporting for the Operational Period (7 years), as defined in section 4.3. of the Guidelines.

This grant is for a non-ongoing program and no further funding will be available.

4.3. Operational period

Grantees are required to provide free community wide Wi-Fi for the Operational Period. All funded First Nations Community Wi-Fi solutions should provide free community-wide Wi-Fi services for a minimum period of seven (7) years after all Asset(s) and arrangements has (have) become operational.

5 Eligibility criteria

We can only accept applications:

- where you can provide evidence from your board (or chief executive officer or equivalent if there is no board) that the project is supported, and that you can complete the project and meet the costs of the project not covered by the grant.
- where you can provide evidence of how you will provide your share of project costs, such as an Accountant Declaration that confirms you can fund your share of project costs.

We cannot provide a grant if you receive funding from another Commonwealth source for the same purpose. You can apply for grants under any Commonwealth program, but if your applications are successful, you must choose either the First Nations Community Wi-Fi grant or the other Commonwealth grant.

5.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

Your application must satisfy all the eligibility criteria to be considered.

To be eligible you must:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN), or be able to provide evidence of exemption; and
- be registered for the purposes of GST, or be able to provide evidence of exemption; and
- have an account with an Australian financial institution; and
- be a legal entity with the capacity to enter into a legally binding agreement or contract;

AND be one of the following entity types:

- a **licensed telecommunications carrier** under the Telecommunications Act 1997; or
- owner or intended owner of the Proposed Solution infrastructure who holds or intends to hold a **Nominated Carrier Declaration (NCD)** under the Telecommunications Act 1997 in relation to the infrastructure to be built or improved/upgraded; or
- a **joint (consortia)** application with a lead organisation,³

³ The Australian Government recognises that some organisations may seek to form consortia in order to apply for a grant under the Program. Consortia are eligible to apply and the relevant conditions applicable to consortia are at section 8.2 'Joint Applications'.

At least one organisation must be a **licensed telecommunications carrier** or **infrastructure owner who holds or intends to hold an NCD** in relation to the infrastructure to be built, improved or upgraded.

The licensed carrier or infrastructure owner (in the case an NCD applies) must be the entity that enters into a Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth. However, such an application may be led by any of the following entity types:

- First Nations community-controlled organisations
- Not-for-profits
- Industry, business, and community groups.
- Licensed carriers or infrastructure owners (in the case an NCD applies)
- State and territory governments
- Local governments, local governing bodies, and regional development bodies;

5.2. Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme' (www.nationalredress.gov.au);
- a Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agency or body (including government business enterprises);
- an individual;
- unincorporated association;
- overseas resident/organisation; or
- any organisation not included in section 5.1.

5.3. What qualifications, skills or checks are required?

If you are successful, all relevant personnel working on the project must maintain the following qualifications/skills/accreditation/registration/checks:

- Working with Vulnerable People registration
- Working with Children check
- Australian Skills Quality Authority accreditation

6 What the grant money can be used for

6.1. Eligible grant activities

To be eligible your Proposed Solution must:

- provide free community wide Wi-Fi access in public areas to one or more remote First Nations communities, using satellite technology where fixed and terrestrial networks are not viable
- consider innovative emerging technology solutions such as LEOSats in areas where terrestrial networks are not viable or unable to meet community needs

- not have started construction or be part of the applicants forward build network or upgrade plans from the period commencing from the date the Grant Opportunity opens until 30 June 2027
- consider back-up power supply, which provides back up power for a minimum of 12 hours and, where technically feasible, for other Proposed Solutions, in the event of the loss of external power to the site
- consider network redundancy, where technically feasible, in the event that backhaul connectivity and other community Wi-Fi network elements experience degradation or failure
- show evidence of a commitment from at least one retail service provider to deliver free telecommunications services for the relevant Operational Period at section 4.3
- consider providing digital support in each community to support safe and effective access and connection to the Wi-Fi service and enhance digital literacy skills
- provide ongoing program reporting and information that can be used by the department to inform future policy.

We may approve other activities, subject to these being inside the project's scope and aligned to the intent of the grant.

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project and eligible grant activities as defined in your grant agreement.

6.2. Eligible locations

Your project must be delivered in at least one or more eligible remote or very remote First Nations Communities identified in the list of eligible communities at **Appendix A**.

Your application can include Proposed Solutions at different locations if each location is eligible. Each Proposed Solution will be individually assessed according to the Assessment Criteria. Part or all the Asset may be located in an Ineligible location provided it delivers services in an Eligible location.

Eligible areas for dedicated funding for free community Wi-Fi solutions in First Nations communities in Central Australia, are those within the Northern Territory Government administrative region of Central Australia, which is defined as the area covered by the ABS Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3) under the name 'Alice Springs' and three Local Government Areas (LGAs) – Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert (with the exclusion of the community of Lajamanu and the exclusion of the LGA of Barkly). Please see **Appendix B** for a map of the Northern Territory Government administrative region of Central Australia.

Eligible areas for dedicated funding for free community Wi-Fi solutions in smaller Homeland and Outstation First Nations communities are identified in the list of eligible communities at **Appendix A**

6.3. Ineligible Locations

Ineligible locations are those not located in remote or very remote Australia, as defined by the ABS Remoteness Category, and listed at Appendix A.

- The Department will provide map overlays showing eligible communities and ineligible areas on request.

6.4. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project and eligible grant activities as defined in your grant agreement.

Eligible expenditure items include:

- capital costs of building or installing Funded Community Wi-Fi Projects (excluding site acquisition), and planning approval costs. Grantees will be responsible for any actual capital costs which exceed estimated costs.
- installation and assurance of the community wide Wi-Fi service provided in a community
- contracting a managed service provider to plan and design a community solution, install necessary infrastructure and activate the community wide Wi-Fi services
- cost of an independent audit of project expenditure up to a maximum of one (1) per cent of total eligible project expenditure
- You must incur the expenditure on your Funded Project between the start date and completion date for your Grant Agreement for the expenditure to be eligible
- if your application is successful, we may ask you to verify project costs that you provided in your application. You may need to provide evidence such as quotes for major costs.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for grant funding. The Program Delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

6.4.1. Eligible backhaul costs

Funding may be sought for the capitalised cost of Backhaul over the Operational Period of a Funded Project, regardless of Backhaul technology. For remote locations where, existing fibre or microwave Backhaul (or a combination of both) is not available or readily accessible, satellite Backhaul technology may be utilised to deliver the Funded Project. If satellite Backhaul technology is put forward for a Proposed Solution, the applicant should clearly define the quality of service or connectivity to be provided (such as capacity, upload/download speeds and latency).

In addition to upfront capital costs related to the installation and deployment of Backhaul (such as special linkage charges), the capitalised net present value (using a discount rate equivalent to the 10-year Treasury Bond Rate applied at the date of the application) of operational costs relating to leased optical fibre, microwave, or satellite Backhaul over the minimum Operational Period of a Proposed Solution may be included in the estimated asset capital cost of building the Proposed Solution. These capitalised operational costs for Backhaul must be clearly identified separately in the application.

6.5. What the grant money cannot be used for

6.5.1. Ineligible activities

You cannot use the grant for the following activities:

To ensure that applicants do not seek Program funding for Proposed Solutions in areas where they have already planned to invest commercially, all applicants must certify that none of the Proposed Solutions for which Grant Opportunity funds are being sought were at any time part of their forward build network expansion or upgrade plans from the period commencing from the date the Grant Opportunity opens until 30 June 2027.

6.5.2. Ineligible expenditure

Expenditure items that are not eligible include:

- routine operational and maintenance expenses not related to the agreed project;

- costs to provide electricity via mains power for the operation of the community wide Wi-Fi service;
- wholesale rebates for the provision of free community wide Wi-Fi services;
- costs relating to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports (except costs of independent audit reports we require) and preparing any project variation requests;
- purchase of land;
- major construction and capital works, e.g. acquisition of land;
- the covering of retrospective costs;
- wages (not associated with the capital costs of building or installing the Funded Project) and redundancies;
- costs and expenses associated with the application and assessment process, and the preparation, negotiation, and execution of the Grant Agreement and of other documentation;
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent;
- overseas travel; and
- activities for which other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies have primary responsibility.

6.5.3. Audit

The Department may audit a Grantee's compliance with requirements.

7 The assessment criteria

You must address all of the following assessment criteria in the application. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the size, complexity and grant amount requested.

The application form includes text limits [text limits TBC].

We will assess your application based on the points weighting given to each criterion therefore applications will need to address each of the five merit criteria accordingly:

1. Place based approach and needs based solutions (40 points)
2. Sustainability and Economic benefits (25 points)
3. Social Benefits (15 points)
4. Capacity, capability, and resources to deliver the Proposed Solution (15 points)
5. Co-funding contribution (5 points)

The obligation is on the applicant to demonstrate how the Proposed Solution meets each merit criterion. Applicants should provide a response to each merit criterion, as well as evidence of support to reinforce the claims made in its responses.

We will assess eligible applications against each merit criterion using the weighting indicated to develop an overall score. Each application will also undergo an overall Value for Money assessment to determine whether the Proposed Solution represents value of relevant money to the Commonwealth.

The application form asks questions that relate to the merit criteria and you should provide sufficient evidence to support your answers, including evidence of community support or a clear engagement strategy for any proposed economic and/or social benefits offered by your Proposed Solution in response to the Merit Criteria.

If your Proposed Solution is in a location that has existing services, you should provide evidence that your Proposed Solution provides a demonstrable improvement in connectivity levels over existing telecommunications services in the Proposed Solution area. The extent of this improvement will impact the assessment of the Proposed Solution's ability to deliver the economic and/or social benefits.

We encourage you to seek the support of the relevant First Nations community, local government and/or state or territory government in preparing your application. For example, they may be able to assist you in identifying the expected outcomes of the Proposed Solution, particularly the economic and social benefits that would be available to the local community, if the Proposed Solution is funded.

7.1. Criterion 1: Place based approach, needs based solutions (40 points)

A **place-based approach** for the community may cover:

Culturally aware and inclusive: You must ensure that your communications and engagement methods are underpinned by an understanding of cultural factors. Culturally competent communication is necessary to build trust, promote empowerment and support the community in achieving the outcomes of the project.

Translation services should be used to ensure information about the Funded Project and its progress is as accessible as possible.

Respectful: You must support a collaborative approach to the project with the community and respect the role each other has, and seek to build relationships that foster trust and mutual respect.

Collaborative: You must act together with the community to maximise the impact and effectiveness of the project to ensure that is fit-for-purpose and will meet the community's needs and expectations.

Coordinated: You must share relevant information with the community and operate on a 'no surprises' basis to ensure consistent communications and engagement, and ensure that communities are made aware of, and are supported in managing, any issues or concerns raised.

Examples of how your proposal could demonstrate this approach include:

- Community Engagement Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Letter of endorsement from the community (representative with authority to act on behalf of the community)

7.2. Criterion 2: Sustainability and Economic benefits (25 points)

7.2.1. Sustainability

The ongoing sustainability of a Funded Project is a fundamental and critically important consideration in assessing Proposed Solutions.

Whilst there is no mandatory requirement for applicants to provide co-funding towards the capital costs (including capitalised Backhaul) of delivering a Funded Project, the ongoing Operational Costs will be the responsibility of the Grantee. The extent to which Proposed Solutions can demonstrate the sustainability of the Funded Project, including the ongoing provision of free community Wi-Fi, both during and beyond the Operational Period will be taken into consideration under this criterion.

Examples of how your Proposed Solution can demonstrate ongoing sustainability may include, but are not limited to:

- a. self-funding models, whereby premium services offered could subsidise the ongoing costs and provision of access to essential services over free community Wi-Fi networks;
- b. how Funded Projects can be upgraded and services improved over time with the evolution of available technologies, including during the Operational Period and beyond;
- c. how Funded Projects can provide consistent levels of service quality and performance, particularly during severe weather events or natural disasters. For example, the levels of back-up power beyond 12 hours or redundant Backhaul links; and
- d. the level to which Funded Projects will provide ongoing support to communities on the safe use and effective access to the free community Wi-Fi services, that delivers the social and economic benefits that communities need to prosper.

7.2.2. Economic benefits

The economic benefits for a region may cover increases in employment opportunities or economic activity, improvements in productivity, wider access to markets or fairer and more equitable economic outcomes. In addressing this criterion, applicants should articulate the level of improvement in telecommunications that will be delivered by the Proposed Solution and demonstrate how this will lead to economic benefits for the targeted region or community.

Examples of how your Proposed Solution could demonstrate these economic benefits include:

- a. increasing the number or value of jobs, creating new businesses or efficiencies in the production of goods and services in the region beyond the construction phase (this includes direct and indirect opportunities created through the Proposed Solution);
- b. providing opportunities for growth in existing sectors, e.g. tourism, agriculture, manufacturing;
- c. facilitating greater competition in telecommunication retail services, including the opportunity for co-location of equipment on new infrastructure funded through the program, where technically feasible;
- d. whether the Proposed Solution provides an innovative approach to improve productivity, efficiency or addresses an identified problem; and/or
- e. evidence of the community/local intent to employ the Proposed Solution, which may include evidence or support from:
 - i. State and territory governments;
 - ii. Local government and regional development authorities;
 - iii. Industry, business, and community groups;
 - iv. Not-for-profits; or
 - v. First Nations community-controlled organisations.

7.3. Criterion 3: Social Benefits (15 points)

Social benefits for the community may cover improving access to health and education services, improving public safety, and improving regional amenity, community connections and inclusion. In addressing this criterion, applicants should articulate the level of improvement in telecommunications that will be delivered by the Proposed Solution and demonstrate how this will lead to social benefits for the community.

Examples of how your Proposed Solution could demonstrate these social benefits include:

- a. facilitating provision of more efficient and effective health or education services, including improved access to health or education resources in the home;
- b. improving public safety and network resilience in a defined area. This may include the ability to call 000 from more locations, providing alternative technologies with which to do so, or improving the effectiveness, resilience, or safety of Public Safety Premises;
- c. improving regional amenity, community connections and inclusion. This may include improving affordability, providing services that help to attract and retain a workforce or enhancing cultural heritage; and/or
- d. addressing disadvantage within the community. This may include addressing low digital inclusion, providing affordable services to places with entrenched disadvantage (including benefits such as discounted pricing models), or providing people who are excluded with improved opportunities to access support services.
- e. Highlight how the Proposed Solution will address Target 17 of the Closing the Gap initiative (as outlined in section 2.1 above), or any other targets under the Closing the Gap initiative.

7.4. Criterion 4: Capacity, capability, and resources to deliver the Proposed Solution (15 points)

You should demonstrate **your capacity to deliver the Proposed Solution** within the specified cost and timeframe, including through identifying:

- a. Your track record and your capacity to deliver the Proposed Solution, including
- b. examples of delivering similar projects and solutions;
 - i. your resources and access to personnel and/or partners with the right skills and experience;
 - ii. your ability to deliver in the context of your organisation's broader program of work (including any pipeline of works through Commonwealth and state or territory government programs and previous Program rounds); and
 - iii. your access, or future access to, any necessary infrastructure, power or backhaul.
- c. The maturity of the Proposed Solution, including outlining
 - i. The key technical components of the solution, and a comprehensive project cost budget and breakdown;
 - ii. a robust project delivery plan and schedule;
 - iii. approvals that will be required and any steps taken to progress these; and
 - iv. evidence of contingency planning that mitigates the risk of delays in getting the necessary approvals to commence work, particularly for greenfield and remote projects.

In addition, you should outline how you will maintain the infrastructure and the benefits provided by the Proposed Solution during the Operational Period, including managing expected increased data demands over the course of the Operational Period.

7.5. Criterion 5: Co-funding contributions and total investment (5 points)

You should demonstrate this through identifying the total investment the grant funding will leverage. A higher level of contribution from non-Commonwealth sources, comparative to the cost of the Proposed Solution, will help drive a higher score in the assessment process for this criterion.

While financial contributions from other Commonwealth sources will be considered as part of the Value for Money assessment, those contributions will not count towards the score for this Merit Criterion.

In-Kind contributions will also be considered where they are genuine contributions to the project.

Assessment of applications will consider how applications achieve proportional geographic distribution and equitable allocation of funding across jurisdictions including the following considerations:

- the number of First Nations Communities a solution will cover including the project volume and overall cost (i.e. a number of smaller size communities could be covered for the same cost of a larger community);
- a cluster of communities leading to deployment and operational efficiencies; and
- a smaller number of projects with communities of larger population.

8 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines, the application form and the sample grant agreement.

These documents are available on [GrantConnect](#). GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information. Any alterations and addenda⁴ will be published on GrantConnect and by registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes to these guidelines.

To apply you must:

- complete the grant opportunity application form
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria and merit assessment criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- submit your application/s to FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au by [the closing date and time - tbc].

You are responsible for ensuring that your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995 \(Cth\)](#). We will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au. We do not have to accept any additional information, or requests from you to correct your application after the closing time.

⁴ Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications, Questions and Answers (Q&A) documents and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents

You cannot change your application after the closing date and time.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing time.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

We will acknowledge that we have received your application within three working days.

If you need further guidance about the application process, or if you are unable to submit an application online, contact us at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au.

8.1. Attachments to the application

We require you to submit the following documents with your application:

- a business case and outline of your proposed project including community engagement plan
- an indicative budget
- a project management plan
- a risk management plan
- evidence of funding strategy, e.g. financial statements, loan agreements, cash flow documents
- evidence of support from your organisation's board, CEO or equivalent
- trust deed (if relevant)
- accountant declaration
- letter of support from community

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form.

8.2. Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project for communities, including First Nations community-controlled organisations.

In these circumstances, you must appoint a **'lead organisation'**. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into a grant agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group and include a letter of support from each of the partners.

Each letter of support should include:

- details of the partner organisation
- an overview of how the partner organisation will work with the lead organisation and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully complete the grant activity or project/services.
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the partner organisation will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities of the partner organisation and the resources they will contribute (if any)

- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the grant agreement.

8.3. Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

We will only accept late applications where prior written agreement has been granted.

If you are successful, we expect you will be able to commence your project on execution of a Grant Agreement.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Guidelines released and applications open	TBC
Applications close	5:00pm AEDT TBC 2025
Assessment of applications	4 weeks
Approval of outcomes of selection process	4 weeks
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	4-6 weeks
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	2 weeks
Earliest start date of grant activity or project/services	On execution of Grant Agreement
End date of grant activity or agreement	Following the completion of the Operational Period
End date of Asset Operational Period	7 years

8.4. Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, contact the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts at FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au.

The Department will respond to emailed questions within two working days.

9 The grant selection process

9.1. Assessment of grant applications

We first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

Only eligible applications will move to the next stage of assessment.

Once eligibility is determined, we will then assess your application against the assessment criteria (see Section 5) and against other applications, where applicable. We consider your application on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the assessment criteria
- how it compares to other applications; and

- whether it provides value with relevant money.⁵

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, we will have regard to:

- the overall objective/s to be achieved in providing the grant
- the relative value of the grant sought
- extent to which the geographic location of the application matches identified priorities
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives.
- How the grant activities will meet the needs of communities and provide an affordable, sustainable and reliable service.

9.2. Who will assess applications?

An assessment committee within the department will assess each application on its merit and compare it to other eligible applications (where relevant) before recommending which grant applications should be awarded a grant. The assessment committee will be made up of:

- a Chairperson;
- a member from the department or external advisor with technical expertise and relevant experience in the telecommunications industry; and
- three other assessment committee members from the department.

We may ask external advisors to inform the assessment process. Any advisor, who is not a Commonwealth Official, will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRPs.

The assessment committee may seek additional information about you or your application. They may do this from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The assessment committee may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

9.3. Who will approve grants?

The Minister for Communications decides which grants to approve, taking into account the recommendations of the assessment committee and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

10 Notification of application outcomes

We will advise you of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we will advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

⁵ See glossary for an explanation of 'value with money'.

If you are unsuccessful, we will give you an opportunity to discuss the outcome.

You can submit a new application for the same grant (or a similar grant) in any future grant opportunities under the program. You should include new or more information to address any weaknesses that may have prevented your previous application from being successful.

10.1. Feedback on your application

If you are unsuccessful, you may ask for feedback within 10 working days of being advised of the outcome. We will give written feedback within one month of your request.

10.2. Further grant opportunities

If there are not enough suitable applications to meet the program's objectives, we will reopen the application period for a further two weeks.

11 Successful grant applications

11.1. The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed. If you choose to start your project before you have an executed grant agreement, you do so at your own risk. You must not start any First Nations Community Wi-Fi grant activities until a grant agreement is executed.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Minister. We will identify these in the agreement.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

11.1.1. Standard Grant Agreement

We will use a grant agreement based on the Regional Connectivity Program, due to similarities with this Program.

The agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed. The sample grant agreement is available on [GrantConnect](#). We will use a schedule to outline the specific grant requirements.

You will have 30 days from the date of a written offer to execute this grant agreement with the Commonwealth ('execute' means both you and the Commonwealth have signed the agreement). During this time, we will work with you to finalise details.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application.

You may request changes to the grant agreement. However, we will review any required changes to these details to ensure they do not impact the grant as approved by the Minister.

11.2. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

Whilst you are required to be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations, you may be requested to demonstrate compliance with the following legislation/policies/industry standards:

[list requirements]

[If applicable] To be eligible for a grant, you must declare in your application that you comply with these requirements. You may need to declare you can meet these requirements in your grant agreement with the Commonwealth.

[add other specific regulatory requirements]

[insert any other relevant details].

11.3. How we pay the grant

The grant agreement will state the:

- maximum grant amount to be paid
- proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage)
- any financial contributions you must make
- any in-kind contributions you will make
- any financial contribution provided by a third party

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

11.3.1. Payment structure

We may make an initial payment on execution of the Grant Agreement.

We will make subsequent payments as applicants achieve satisfactory completion of funded project milestones and demonstrate this by a satisfactory report, based on applicant's actual eligible expenditure.

For example, payment would be made:

- on execution of the contract (10% of awarded funding),
- on acceptance of the Project Management Plan and Risk Management Plan (15% of awarded funding),
- on acceptance of Acquisition, Approvals and Access Statements (funding amount to be negotiated),
- on acceptance of Project Completion (15% of awarded funding)
- final payment (10% of awarded funding).

The payment structure can be negotiated based on your forecast eligible expenditure and adjusted for unspent amounts from previous payments. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress.

We set aside 10 per cent of the total grant funding for the final payment, which will be paid when you submit a satisfactory final report demonstrating you have completed any outstanding obligations.

We will make payments according to an agreed schedule set out in the grant agreement. Payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the project.

11.4. Grants payments and GST

'Payments will be GST Inclusive'. If you are registered for the [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\)](#), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and issue you with a [Recipient Created Tax Invoice](#).

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](#).⁶ We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

12 Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the GrantConnect website within 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.4 of the [CGRPs](#).

13 How we monitor your grant activity

13.1. Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your project or organisation.

We need to know of any key changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details
- business structure

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

You must notify us of events relating to your grant and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

13.2. Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the grant agreement. We will provide sample templates for these reports as appendices in the grant agreement. We will remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed grant activity milestones and outcomes
- contributions of participants directly related to the grant activity or project/services
- expenditure of the grant.

The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the size, complexity and grant amount.

We will monitor progress by assessing reports you submit and may conduct site visits or request records to confirm details of your reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

⁶ <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

13.3. Progress reports

Progress reports must:

- include evidence of your progress towards completion of agreed activities and outcomes
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- include a financial acquittal report showing progress of expenditure in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money
- be submitted by the report due date (you can submit reports ahead of time if you have completed relevant activities).

We will only make grant payments when we receive satisfactory progress reports.

You must discuss any reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

13.4. Ad-hoc reports

We may ask you for ad-hoc reports on your grant. This may be to provide an update on progress, or any significant delays or difficulties in completing the grant activity or project/services.

13.5. Final report

When you complete the grant activity or project/services, you must submit a final report.

Final reports must:

- identify if and how outcomes have been achieved
- include the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred
- be submitted within 30 days of completion in the format provided in the grant agreement.

13.6. Financial declaration and Audited financial acquittal reports

We may ask you to provide an independently audited financial acquittal report. A financial acquittal report will verify that you spent the grant in accordance with the grant agreement. The financial acquittal report template is attached to the sample grant agreement.

13.7. Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving outcomes.

Subject to specific variation provisions in the Grant Agreement, applicants can request a variation by providing written notice to the Department setting out the reasons for the variation and proposing steps that could be taken to better achieve the purpose or address the risks of the Funded Project. However, applicants should note that the Program is a competitive grant program, with Projects selected for funding following assessment against the merit criteria in the Guidelines, as well as from a Value for Money perspective. This assessment considers the total of the Project as proposed, including the total Project costs. The Commonwealth's expectation is that all Funded Projects are delivered as proposed and contracted, without material change. This approach is required to maintain probity principles throughout implementation of this competitive program. Any requests for material changes to Projects are subject to this consideration

13.8. Compliance visits

The Department (including entities acting on our behalf) may visit applicants during the development and construction of the Funded Project, or at the completion of the Funded Project to review compliance with the Grant Agreement. We may also inspect the records applicants are required to keep under the Grant Agreement. For large or complex Funded Projects, we may visit applicants after they finish the Funded Project. We will provide applicants with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

13.9. Record keeping

We may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

13.10. Evaluation

We will evaluate the Grant Opportunity to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from applications and reports for this purpose. We may also interview applicants, or ask for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted applicants and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes. Grantees may be required to participate in Program reviews and evaluations.

We may contact applicants up to one year after the Asset Completion Dates for each Funded Project for more information to assist with this evaluation.

13.11. Acknowledgement

The Australian Government logo should be used on all materials related to grants under the program. Whenever the logo is used, the publication must also acknowledge the Commonwealth as follows:

'First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program project – an Australian Government initiative'.

If you make a public statement about a grant activity or project/services funded under the program, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.'

14 Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, is conducted according to the published grant opportunity guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud and corruption, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRPs.

You should be aware of your obligations under the [National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022](#), noting that under the Act grantees will generally be considered 'contracted service providers' [see <https://www.nacc.gov.au/resource-centre/nacc-fact-sheets>].

14.1. Enquiries and feedback

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts via FirstNationsDigitalInclusion@infrastructure.gov.au.

The department's Governance Section is responsible for handling complaints about this grant opportunity. All complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing and can be made via

the [online enquiries form](#) or by using the central office contact details provided and addressing it to the Director—Governance Section.

We will investigate your concerns and reply within 30 working days of receiving your complaint to inform you of the progress in resolving it

If you do not agree with the way the department has handled your complaint, you may complain to the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

14.2. Conflict of interest

Any conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts of interest can affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel, including sub-contractors:

- have a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who can influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer [or member of an external panel]
- have a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- have a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/ grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there are no conflicts of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

14.3. Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the Australian Privacy Principles and your intention to impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

14.4. Confidential Information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- the committee and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively, including for an integrity purpose
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman, Privacy Commissioner or National Anti-Corruption Commissioner, or staff of their agencies
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, or
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

14.5. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Coordinator
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications
and the Arts
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: FOI@infrastructure.gov.au

15 Consultation

These Grant Opportunity Guidelines are informed by the submissions received as part of consultation on the draft Guidelines.

16 Glossary

Term	Definition
accountable authority	see subsection 12(2) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013
administering entity	when an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all the grant administration processes
assessment criteria	are the specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged? These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive grant opportunity, to determine application rankings.
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by
contracted service provider	A contracted service provider is a person who is a party to a Commonwealth contract or is a party to a subcontract with a contracted service provider and is responsible for the provision of goods or services under contract, either directly or indirectly.
co-sponsoring entity	when two or more entities are responsible for the policy and the appropriation for outcomes associated with it
date of effect	can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable.
decision maker	the person who makes a decision to award a grant
eligibility criteria	refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Eligibility criteria should be developed to enable objective validation and are either 'met' or 'not met'. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
Commonwealth entity	a Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act

Term	Definition
Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs)	establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.
grant	for the purposes of the CGRPs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. under which relevant money⁷ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁸ is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth; and b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.
grant activity/activities	refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake.
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement and specifies the details of the grant.
GrantConnect	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRPs?
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single [entity] Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant.

⁷ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

⁸ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC)	The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) is an independent Commonwealth agency. It detects, investigates and reports on serious or systemic corruption in the Commonwealth public sector. The Commission operates under the National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022 .
PBS Program	described within the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement , PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower levels, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be Grant Programs. A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
selection criteria	comprise eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
selection process	the method used to select potential grantees. This process may involve comparative assessment of applications or the assessment of applications against the eligibility criteria and/or the assessment criteria.
value with money (value for money)	<p>value with money in this document refers to 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the project proposal and activities; • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives; • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved; and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.

17 Technical Terms

Term	Definition
4G	Fourth generation broadband cellular network technology
5G	Fifth generation broadband cellular network technology
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDT	Australian Eastern Daylight Time
AEST	Australian Eastern Standard Time
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
Asset	“The component of Proposed Solution to be constructed or upgraded at (or in connection to) a site”.
Central Australia	As defined at section 6.2
Date of Asset Completion	The date on which the Grantee has delivered the contracted service for a particular Asset.
Backhaul	A link between the core or backbone of a network and sub-networks, transporting data from a series of disparate locations to a more centralised location.
Commonwealth Grants Rules Guidelines or CGRPs	Guidelines issued by the Finance Minister under section 105C of the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i> , which establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration.
Commonwealth Official	A Commonwealth representative who is working or consulting on the Program.
Decision Maker	As set out in section 4, the Minister for Communications.
Eligible Location(s)	As described in section 6.2.
Eligibility Criteria	The mandatory criteria set out in section 4, which applicants must meet for their application for the Grant Opportunity to be considered.
LEOSat(s)	Low Earth Orbit satellite(s)
Terrestrial network	Communication systems known as terrestrial networks use wired or wireless signals that pass through the atmosphere to function on the earth's surface. Traditional landline telephone lines, cellular networks, and Wi-Fi are a few examples of terrestrial networks.

Fixed-line	A type of internet connection that uses a physical line (including but not limited to fibre, Hybrid Fibre-Coaxial and copper) to provide services to a premise.
Fixed Wireless	A type of internet connection that uses fixed transmission towers or base stations to provide wireless services to a premise via antennas.
FOI	Freedom of Information
Funded Project	A telecommunications infrastructure project found suitable during the assessment process and selected for funding under this Program.
Funding Strategy	A written plan that outlines the financial capacity of the applicant to deliver a Proposed Solution through the Program.
Grant Activity	All the projects that the Grantee is required to undertake as set out in the Grant Agreement.
Grant Agreement	A document with contractual effect that sets out the relationship between the Grantee and the Commonwealth, and specifies the details of the grant.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRPs.
Grant Opportunity	The Program Grant Opportunity as described in section 2.1.
Grantee	An applicant who has been selected to receive a grant under the Grant Opportunity.
Guidelines	These Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the Free Community Wi-Fi Program for remote and very remote First Nations Communities.
GST	Goods and Service Tax
Ineligible Areas	Has the meaning given in section 6.3.
Intellectual Property	Includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. all copyright (including rights in relation to phonograms and broadcasts); 2. all rights in relation to inventions, plant varieties, trademarks (including service marks), designs, circuit layouts; and 3. all other rights resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary, or artistic fields.

Assessment Criteria	The specified principles or standards set out in section 7, against which applications will be judged. The Assessment Criteria will be used to assess the merits of proposals and to determine application rankings.
National Broadband Network (NBN)	The national wholesale-only, open access telecommunications network that is being built by, or in conjunction with, NBN Co (including any existing network incorporated into the NBN).
NCD	Nominated Carrier Declaration
Operational Period	Has the meaning given in section 4.3.
Operational Costs (OPEX)	Costs for additional goods or services that are purchased for the ongoing operation of an asset.
Program	Has the meaning given in section 2.
Proposed Solution	Infrastructure for which an applicant has sought funding under the Program.
Proposed Solution	A Proposed Solution put forward under the First Nations Community Wi-Fi Program, as set out in section 2.2.
Selection Process	The method used to select Grantees, which will include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. an initial assessment against Eligibility Criteria; 2. a detailed assessment against Assessment Criteria; 3. a Value for Money assessment and consideration of other government priorities; and 4. comparison of similarly weighted applications for consideration of funding.

Value for Money	<p>Refers to achieving 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical, and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations in accordance with the CGRPs.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, a Commonwealth Official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the quality of the project proposal and activities; b. fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to Government objectives; c. that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the applicant's and the Government's objectives being achieved; and d. the applicant's relevant experience and performance history.
We/us	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts/or Commonwealth Officials administering the Program.
WHS	Work Health and Safety

18 Appendix A. List of Eligible Communities

[A list of Eligible Communities (locations) will be provided to eligible applicants during the formal, open grant process, after considering feedback from public consultation processes on the program]

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19 Appendix B. Northern Territory Government Administrative Regions

