



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Mobile Black Spot Program Round 8 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

December 2024

Version 1

Opening date:	17 December 2024
Closing date and time:	17.00 AEST on 30 April 2025 (19 weeks after opening)
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than two weeks before the closing date
Date guidelines released:	17 December 2024
Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted competitive

© Commonwealth of Australia December 2024

Ownership of intellectual property rights in this publication

Unless otherwise noted, copyright (and any other intellectual property rights, if any) in this publication is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia (referred to below as the Commonwealth).

Use of the Coat of Arms

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet sets the terms under which the Coat of Arms is used. Please refer to the Commonwealth Coat of Arms—Information and Guidelines publication available at <http://www.pmc.gov.au>.

Contact us

This publication is available in Word or PDF format. All other rights are reserved, including in relation to any departmental logos or trademarks which may exist. For enquiries regarding the licence and any use of this publication, please contact:

Director – Creative Services
Communication Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Email: publishing@infrastructure.gov.au

Website: www.infrastructure.gov.au

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	7
2.	About the grant program	7
2.1.	About the Program	7
2.2.	About the grant opportunity	8
2.3.	Project Noticeboard	9
3.	Grant amount and grant period	9
3.1.	Grants available	9
3.2.	Applicant co-contribution	10
3.3.	Third Party funding co-contributions	10
3.4.	In-kind co-contributions	11
3.5.	Grant period	11
4.	Eligibility criteria	12
4.1.	Who is eligible to apply for a grant?	12
4.2.	Minimum requirements	13
	Services required	13
	State Government endorsement	13
	Back-up Power	13
	Multi-MNO solutions – Active sharing, Co-location and co-build	14
	Backhaul access and pricing	15
	Dispute resolution	15
4.3.	Options for enhanced resilience	16
	Auxiliary power	16
	Site hardening	16
5.	What the grant money can be used for	17
5.1.	Eligible grant activities	17
5.2.	Eligible Areas	17
5.3.	Eligible expenditure	18
5.4.	What the grant money cannot be used for	18
6.	The assessment criteria	18
7.	How to apply	20
7.2.	Applicant registration	21
7.3.	Pre-application lodgement	21
7.4.	Submit initial proposals for Proposed Solutions	22
7.5.	Completing and lodging an application	22
7.6.	Costing Arrangements for MNIP-led applications	25
7.7.	Joint (consortia) applications	25
7.8.	Closing date for funding applications	26
7.9.	Late applications	26
7.10.	Further information about the application	26
7.11.	Questions during the application process	27
7.12.	Errors identified in applications	27
8.	The grant selection process	27
8.1.	Assessment of grant applications	27
8.2.	Program Delivery Risk Assessment	28
8.3.	Value with Relevant Money	28
8.4.	Who will assess applications?	30
8.5.	Who will approve grants?	30
9.	Notification of application outcomes	31
9.1.	Application outcomes	31
9.2.	Feedback on your application	31

10.	Successful grant applications	31
10.1.	The grant agreement.....	31
10.2.	Specific legislation, policies and industry standards	32
10.3.	Australian Industry Participation (AIP) Plan	32
10.4.	WHS Accreditation Scheme.....	33
10.5.	Keeping us informed	33
10.6.	How we pay the grant	33
10.7.	Grant payments and GST.....	34
11.	Announcement of grants	34
12.	How we monitor your grant activity	34
12.1.	Keeping us informed	34
12.2.	Reporting.....	34
12.3.	Asset completion report.....	35
12.4.	Financial declaration or audited financial acquittal reports	35
12.5.	Independent audit report.....	35
12.6.	Grant agreement variations	35
12.7.	Compliance visits	35
12.8.	Evaluation.....	35
12.9.	Acknowledgement.....	36
13.	Probity	36
13.1.	Grant opportunity probity.....	36
13.2.	Enquiries and feedback	37
13.3.	Conflicts of interest	37
13.4.	Privacy	38
13.5.	Confidential Information	38
13.6.	Intellectual Property rights.....	39
13.7.	Freedom of Information	39
14.	Consultation	40
15.	Glossary	40

List of figures and tables

Table 1: Expected timing for this Grant Opportunity.....	21
--	----

Mobile Black Spot Program Round 8: processes

The Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives.

The opportunity is part of the above **grant** program which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' Outcome 5. It is part of the Australian Government's \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia. The **department** works with stakeholders to plan and design grant programs according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles](#).



The grant opportunity opens – release of Guidelines and call for applications

Timing: Guidelines released on 17 December 2024

We publish the **Guidelines** on [GrantConnect](#). At the same time, we issue a call for applications from eligible applicants for funding under the Program. For applicant eligibility, see section 4.1.



Applicant registration and pre-application documentation

Timing: Registration due by 7 February 2025 (*7 weeks after opening*)

Organisations wishing to apply for funding must contact the department to register as potential applicants within seven weeks following release of these Guidelines in order to obtain access to the application documentation. At this time, applicants must submit their coverage maps as outlined in section 7.3.

The application documentation outlines the requirements on potential applicants prior to submitting an application for funding.

Organisations can register their interest with the department by emailing MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au and providing the following information:

- (a) Organisation name;
- (b) Contact name;
- (c) Contact phone number; and
- (d) Contact email address.



Initial proposal period

Timing: Initial Proposals due by 14 February 2025 (*8 weeks after opening*)

Applicants have eight weeks from the release of the Guidelines to develop and submit initial proposals for locations where they are interested in applying for funding under the Program, including sites where they would be interested in developing joint applications or co-locating with other applicants. The department strongly encourages applicants to refer to the [Round 8 Project Noticeboard](#) and consult with relevant third parties during this period including, but not limited to: other potential applicants, State, Territory and Local governments, emergency management organisations, and local communities.

The application documentation provides the required template for initial proposals.



Submitting final application.

Timing: Applications due by 30 April 2025 (*11 weeks after initial proposals due*)

Applicants will have 11 weeks from the close of the Initial Proposal Period (19 weeks from the release of the Guidelines) to develop and submit their final application for funding under the Program.

Applicants must complete the application form by the closing date/time and address all of the Eligibility and **Assessment Criteria** to be considered for a grant. This includes the Application Pack, including the Assessment Tool, Application Form and checklist, for each Proposed Solution for which it is seeking funding, specifying in each case the information set out in section 7.5.2.

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to discuss and plan co-development and co-funding opportunities prior to finalising applications. This could include discussions with State, Territory and Local governments or other industry entities. It is expected that potential applicants may

engage in discussions on possible multi-Mobile Network Operator (MNO) solutions in areas of mutual interest.

Applicants cannot include a Proposed Solution in their final application if that solution was not included in their list of initial proposals. This exclusion does not apply in the following circumstances:

- where a Mobile Network Infrastructure Provider is partnering with a National MNO(s) on a solution that was included in the relevant National MNO's initial proposal list;
- where a solution involves two National MNOs, provided the solution was on one of the relevant National MNO's initial proposal list; or
- where a solution involves all three National MNOs

Applicants must seek endorsement from relevant State and Territory Governments for their Proposed Solutions (see sections 2.2.6, 4.2.4, 4.2.5, , 5.1 and 5.2).



We assess all grant applications

We assess the applications against the **Eligibility Criteria**. We assess each eligible application against the Assessment Criteria including an overall consideration of **Value with Relevant Money** and compare it to other applications.



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 are successful. The terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement will depend on the risk profile as determined by the department of your **Grant Activity**.



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 Program

We may evaluate your specific Grant Activity and evaluate the Program as a whole. We base this both on the information you provide to us and that which we collect from various sources.

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. These **Grant Opportunity** Guidelines (Guidelines) contain information for Round 8 of the Mobile Black Spot Program (**the Program**).
- 1.1.2. You must read these Guidelines before filling out an application.
- 1.1.3. This document sets out:
- the purpose of the Program;
 - the Eligibility and Assessment criteria;
 - how grant applications are considered and selected;
 - how **Grantees** are notified and receive grant payments;
 - how Grantees will be monitored and evaluated; and
 - responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.
- 1.1.4. This grant opportunity will be administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the **department**).
- 1.1.5. We administer the Program according to the ***Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles*** (CGRPs)¹.
- 1.1.6. Consistent with the [CGRPs](#) this grant opportunity is categorised as a targeted competitive funding round as it is open to a small number of potential grantees based on the specialised requirements of the grant activity under consideration.
- 1.1.7. We have defined key terms used in bold in the Guidelines in the Glossary at section 15.

2. About the grant program

2.1. About the Program

- 2.1.1. The Program is a long-running Australian Government initiative. The objective of the Program is to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia. It was first opened for applications in late 2014, and was established following the 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review identifying that a lack of adequate mobile voice and broadband coverage was a major concern to regional communities.
- 2.1.2. Under Rounds 1-7, the Program has funded the deployment of up to 1400 new mobile base stations across Australia. Further information about projects funded under earlier rounds of the Program is available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/mbsp.
- 2.1.3. The department is responsible for administering the Program on behalf of the Government. The Program contributes to the department's Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) *Outcome 5: 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 services*.

¹Available via: www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00854/latest/text

- 2.1.4. Under Outcome 5, the Program is a component of the department's **PBS Program 5.1 – Digital Technologies and Communications Services: To provide an environment in which all Australians can access and benefit from digital technologies and communications services, supporting inclusiveness and sustainable economic growth.**
- 2.1.5. The program aims to extend new and improved mobile coverage across Australia, including in regional and remote areas, and to improve competition outcomes for these communities. The total amount of new and improved handheld coverage delivered under the Program each financial year is measured, with a target of ≥90 per cent of the total contracted coverage delivered by assets for which asset completion reports are received and approved in that financial year.
- 2.1.6. The Commonwealth has the power to make, vary or administer this grant program under Item 211 of the table in Part 4 of Schedule 1AB to the [Financial Framework \(Supplementary Powers\) Regulations 1997 \(Cth\)](#).

2.2. About the grant opportunity

- 2.2.1. The Government has committed \$55 million (GST exclusive)/\$60.5 million (GST inclusive) to Round 8 of the Program. This opportunity is part of the [Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia](#) (Better Connectivity Plan), which is providing more than \$1.1 billion to rural and regional communities.
- 2.2.2. The Government is committed to increasing connectivity, bridging the digital divide, improving mobile coverage and protecting communities against **Natural Disasters**. The Better Connectivity Plan includes \$656 million provided in the October 2022 Budget to improve mobile and broadband connectivity, resilience and digital inclusion in regional, remote and peri-urban Australia. \$480 million has been delivered by the Government to support NBN Co to upgrade the NBN Fixed Wireless network, with associated benefits to NBN satellite services.
- 2.2.3. The objective of Round 8 of the Program is to deliver resilient new and improved mobile coverage and competition in areas prone to Natural Disasters (see section 5.2 for **Eligible Areas**), including bushfires, cyclones and floods, by co-funding with **Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)**² and **Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (MNIPs)** to deliver new or upgraded telecommunications infrastructure.
- 2.2.4. The intended outcome of Round 8 of the Program is to fund deployment of new or upgraded mobile phone infrastructure that will provide resilient mobile coverage in areas prone to Natural Disasters, to assist during times of emergency.
- 2.2.5. For the purposes of Round 8 of the Program, a Natural Disaster arises from a **Natural Hazard** event which can cause not only significant damage to property or loss of life, but also cause prolonged outages to an Eligible Area (defined at section 5.2).
- 2.2.6. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage early with State and Territory Governments to:
- identify Natural Disaster prone areas that would benefit from new and improved coverage;
 - identify priority areas for investment for the jurisdiction; and
 - seek an endorsement from State or Territory Governments for Proposed Solutions.

² All references to MNOs throughout this document are to National MNOs as described at 4.1.2, unless otherwise specified.

Contact details for State and Territory Government representatives will be made available to registered applicants.

- 2.2.7. The Government will not own and is not responsible for the operation of the infrastructure, aside from any co-contributions provided for **operational costs** during the **Operational Period** if successful under the program. Grantees will own and/or hold the necessary rights to the infrastructure to deliver the contracted services during the Operational Period. While the Government encourages Grantees to continue to provide services into the future, asset ownership and operation beyond the Operational Period is a matter for Grantees.

2.3. Project Noticeboard

- 2.3.1. During the application period, applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with State, Territory and Local governments, emergency service organisations and local communities regarding the locations for which they intend to build Proposed Solutions. These consultations should include any specific areas identified within the location that would be considered desirable to be covered by the Proposed Solution.
- 2.3.2. A Project Noticeboard has been established to help State, Territory and Federal parliamentarians and local governments to identify mobile coverage, reception and quality of service issues in areas prone to Natural Disaster to further assist applicants to develop their proposals. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult the Noticeboard in considering locations for initial proposals. The Noticeboard is available at <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/mbsp/projectnoticeboard>.
- 2.3.3. The Noticeboard opened for nominations on 23 October 2024, and will close on 7 February 2025, seven weeks after the release of these Guidelines.
- 2.3.4. Applicants are required to consult with the State and Territory Governments on their Proposed Solution Locations to seek endorsement (as per section 4.2.4 and 4.2.5) that each Proposed Solution delivers new or improved coverage to an area prone to Natural Disaster.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

- 3.1.1. Up to \$55 million (**GST** exclusive)/\$60.5 million (**GST** inclusive) will be available for applications under Round 8 of the Program. Funding will be made available over five financial years from 2025-26 to 2029-30.
- 3.1.2. There is no minimum or maximum grant amount under the Program, noting the total grant amount must not exceed the available funding of \$55 million (**GST** exclusive) (see section 3.1.1).
- 3.1.3. All **Proposed Solutions** may seek a Commonwealth funding contribution (**Commonwealth Contribution**) of up to 50 per cent of the Total Solution Cost, as outlined in section 5.3.1.
- 3.1.4. Any Proposed Solutions which involve all three National MNOs using co-location for one or more MNOs may seek a Commonwealth Contribution of up to 75 per cent of the Total Solution Cost, as outlined in section 5.3.1. If one of these MNOs subsequently withdraws from a Proposed Solution, or withdraws from the funded solution once contracted, the Commonwealth funding contribution will be capped at 50 per cent of the Total Solution Cost.

- 3.1.5. Any Proposed Solutions which involve all three National MNOs using **active sharing** or **roaming** technology may seek a Commonwealth Contribution of up to 100 per cent of the Total Solution Cost, as outlined in section 5.3.1.
- If one of these MNOs subsequently uses co-location for the Proposed Solution or funded solution, instead of active sharing or roaming technology, the Commonwealth funding contribution will be capped at 75 per cent of the Total Solution Cost.
 - If one of these MNOs subsequently withdraws from a Proposed Solution, or withdraws from the funded solution once contracted, the Commonwealth funding contribution will be capped at 50 per cent of the Total Solution Cost.
- 3.1.6. For the purposes of the Program, the Total Solution Cost means the combined total cost of estimated **Asset Capital Costs** and incremental Operational Costs for a Proposed Solution. See section 5.3 for eligible expenditure.

3.2. Applicant co-contribution

- 3.2.1. With the exception of Proposed Solutions involving all three National MNOs seeking a Commonwealth Contribution of up to 100 per cent of the Total Solution Cost outlined in 3.1.5, all Grantees will be expected to make a financial (cash) co-contribution to the capital costs of building or installing each **Funded Solution**, as well as ongoing operational expenses over the Operational Period specified at section 3.5.2. Applicants seeking a Commonwealth Contribution of up to 100 per cent of the Total Solution Cost outlined in 3.1.5 are encouraged to make a financial (cash) co-contribution to increase the reach of the Program.
- 3.2.2. Financial co-contributions made by other MNOs that have committed to provide mobile coverage through a Proposed Solution at the time of application, but are not an applicant for the purposes of the application, will be considered in the same manner as other third-party co-contributions, as specified in section 3.3.

3.3. Third Party funding co-contributions

- 3.3.1. To increase the reach of the Program, applicants are encouraged (but not required) to seek financial (cash) and in-kind co-contributions from State, Territory or Local governments, local communities and/or other third parties. Interested third parties are also encouraged to contact applicants directly in relation to potential co-contributions.
- 3.3.2. Where applicants can confirm the level of co-contributions that State, Territory or Local governments or other third-parties propose to make, applicants should include this in their application in respect of the relevant Proposed Solution.
- 3.3.3. Applicants are solely responsible for forming relationships and negotiating contributions with any relevant third parties, and for testing and/or verifying any advice received from these parties.
- 3.3.4. For Funded Solutions 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.
- 3.3.5. State, Territory and Local governments may own infrastructure in locations that could potentially be used for Funded Solutions. These governments may have specific requirements that will need to be reflected in the applications put forward by applicants for each Proposed Solution.

- 3.3.6. For Proposed Solutions that include co-contributions from third parties, a copy of the terms of the third party's commitment to the applicant is to be included with the application for funding.
- 3.3.7. In the event that a Funded Solution includes a co-contribution from a third party, the Commonwealth will not be liable for any costs that may arise in relation to that co-contribution. For example, if the third party's funding is not secured following execution of the Grant Agreement between the Commonwealth and the Grantee, the Grantee will be required to cover the third party's funding.
- 3.3.8. Recognising the operational arrangements for Australia's External Territories, in the event that a Proposed Solution is located within the External Territories, any funding contributions received from other Commonwealth bodies will be counted as third party co-contributions, as per section 3.3.1 to 3.3.7.
- 3.3.9. Any funding provided by other Commonwealth bodies under section 3.3.8 will not be counted towards the maximum percentage of Commonwealth contribution permitted under sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.

3.4. In-kind co-contributions

- 3.4.1. A third party may wish to provide an incentive for applicants to include a particular location in their funding applications. Third party incentives may include in-kind co-contributions towards the construction of a Proposed Solution such as the co-contributions outlined in section 3.4.2.
- 3.4.2. In-kind co-contributions could include:
- assistance with identifying and consulting with the local community on a suitable site;
 - securing the necessary planning and site approvals;
 - lease arrangements;
 - civil works required for access to the site;
 - assistance with coordinating power to the site; or
 - facilitating access to existing infrastructure.
- 3.4.3. Third party in-kind co-contributions are the responsibility of the applicant, and can be reflected in a reduction in the amount of funding the applicant seeks for a Proposed Solution.

3.5. Grant period

- 3.5.1. All Funded Solutions must be completed on or before 30 June 2030.
- 3.5.2. Funded Solutions must remain operational, and provide the required services outlined in section 4.2 to the coverage areas on a commercial basis, for a minimum period of ten (10) years after the Funded Solution has (have) become operational.

4. Eligibility criteria

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

4.1.1. To be eligible to apply for funding under the Program you must:

- have an **Australian Business Number (ABN)**
- be registered for the purposes of the Goods and Services Tax (GST)

and be one of the following entity types:

- a National Mobile Network Operator (MNO); or
- a Mobile Network Infrastructure Provider (MNIP).

4.1.2. For the purposes of the Program, a National MNO means a company that:

- Supplies a public mobile telecommunications service within the meaning of the *Telecommunications Act 1997 (Cth)*;
- Holds an apparatus or a spectrum licence (or both) for the supply of public mobile telecommunications services under the *Radiocommunications Act 1992 (Cth)*; and
- Operates a mobile network that provides mobile coverage to at least 80% of the Australian population.

4.1.3. For the purposes of the Program, a MNIP means a company, other than a National MNO, that provides communications infrastructure in Australia or overseas, including the installation and operation of infrastructure to be used by one or more MNOs to provide public mobile telecommunications services.

4.1.4. MNIP applications must be accompanied by written evidence of intent from at least one National MNO to enter into a commercially binding commitment to use the infrastructure to deliver mobile services as described at section 4.2 for the Operational Period of the Proposed Solution (see section 3.5.2). Funding may be awarded to eligible MNIPs on the condition that the MNIP and relevant MNO(s) enter into a binding commercial commitment. However, no payments will be made for Funded Solutions that are dependent on an MNO(s) until the relevant binding commercial commitments are in place. The department reserves the right to terminate the relevant Funded Solutions if the binding MNO(s) commercial commitments are not entered into in a reasonable timeframe, as agreed by the department.

4.1.5. MNOs and/or MNIPs may also apply jointly for funding through the Program. Joint applications must be underpinned by commercially binding arrangements or the clear intention to enter into such arrangements should the application be successful. Subject to a joint application being successful, the Commonwealth will only enter into a Grant Agreement with one of the joint applicants, being the **Lead Applicant**, and on the condition that the relevant parties enter into a binding commercial commitment. However, no payments will be made for Funded Solutions that are dependent on an MNO(s) until the relevant binding commercial commitments are in place. The department reserves the right to terminate the relevant Funded Solutions if the binding MNO(s) commercial commitments are not entered into in a reasonable timeframe, as agreed by the department.

4.1.6. The ownership of assets constructed as part of an MNIP-led or joint application is a matter for the respective parties and subject to the terms of their commercial agreement and the requirement to offer the required service for the 10 year operations period (see section 3.5.2).

4.2. Minimum requirements

- 4.2.1. Unless indicated otherwise in these Guidelines, this section 4.2 sets out the minimum requirements that Grantees will need to comply with if their application is successful. These requirements will be included as schedules to the Grant Agreements. Under section 8.1, Proposed Solutions that do not meet the minimum requirements may be excluded from further consideration, at the department's absolute discretion.

Services required

- 4.2.2. All Proposed Solutions must deliver **New Coverage** from one or more National MNOs to an Eligible Area, as outlined in section 5.2. Where an application includes a **Cluster Solution**, at least one of the solutions that form part of the cluster must provide New Coverage to an Eligible Area.
- 4.2.3. Proposed Solutions are expected to enable consumers to perform a range of functions using mobile devices, such as making and receiving phone calls, sending emails and text messages, browsing the internet, accessing online services, downloading files, using mobile apps, and accessing emergency communications services. To meet this expectation all Proposed Solutions must:
- deliver broadband data services and a voice service:
 - for **Macrocells**: deliver **4G** and **5G** services
 - for **Small Cells**: deliver **4G and/or 5G** services.

State Government endorsement

- 4.2.4. All Proposed Solutions must be endorsed by the relevant State or Territory Government (see section 2.2.6, 5.1 and 5.2). If endorsement from a State or Territory Government cannot be provided at the time an application is lodged, applicants must provide written advice from the relevant State or Territory Government representative referenced at section 4.2.6 that either their endorsement is not required, or that it will be provided at a later date, which must be agreed by the department.
- 4.2.5. Applicants will be required to provide evidence of this endorsement for each Proposed Solution. Inclusion of a location on the MBSP Round 8 Noticeboard (see section 2.3.2) does not constitute endorsement for the purposes of section 4.2.4.
- 4.2.6. The department will provide registered applicants with the contact details for State and Territory Government representatives for the purposes of seeking endorsement as per section 4.2.4.

Back-up Power

- 4.2.7. All Macrocell base stations in Funded Solutions must have an auxiliary back-up power supply which provides back-up power for a minimum of 12 hours in the event of the loss of external power to the site.
- 4.2.8. Other base stations (e.g. Small Cells) in Funded Solutions must have an auxiliary back-up power supply which provides back-up power for a minimum of 12 hours in the event of the loss of external power to the site, unless (to the satisfaction of the department) it is not feasible to do so.
- Applicants should provide sufficient justification for Proposed Small Cell Solutions where it is not feasible to provide a minimum of 12 hours back-up power supply.

Multi-MNO solutions – Active sharing, Co-location and co-build

- 4.2.9. Applicants and MNOs/other interested parties are encouraged to work together to develop **Multi-MNO solutions**, including Proposed Solutions that use active sharing technologies and/or mobile roaming. Applicants are solely responsible for any engagement and discussions with any relevant third parties.
- 4.2.10. In addition to any services arrangements negotiated with an MNO and confirmed at the time of the application, each Proposed Solution must:
- offer co-location to other MNOs; or
 - the applicant must provide evidence (as per section 4.2.11) that the Proposed Solution is unable to support an additional MNO for technical, or other reasons (for example because the applicant does not own or control the site).
- 4.2.11. If a Proposed Solution is unable to support an additional MNO other than those already participating or is not capable of supporting co-location, applicants must provide a detailed explanation of why it is not technically feasible to reconfigure the Proposed Solution.
- 4.2.12. The department may seek technical advice on applicant’s submissions under section 4.2.11 if the department’s view is that co-location is technically possible, then:
- the applicant must be prepared to offer co-location at an incremental cost to an MNO seeking to co-locate on the Proposed Solution; or
 - the department may remove the Proposed Solution from the assessment process.
- 4.2.13. Applicants who are successful in receiving grant funding for a Proposed Solution, must give any other MNO(s) not already participating in the solution the opportunity to co-locate and to participate in the detailed design phase for that Funded Solution using the process set out in section 4.2.13 - 4.2.17. An increase in the number of MNOs participating in a Funded Solution after funding has been awarded will not lead to an increase in the Commonwealth Contribution.
- The incremental cost for a Funded Solution to support an additional MNO will be provided to the other participating MNOs to allow for greater transparency in co-location negotiations.
 - Applicants are solely responsible for obtaining the necessary specifications from all MNOs that have confirmed, or are interested in co-location, and ensuring these specifications can be accommodated at the respective site.
 - The Grant Opportunity supports Grantees offering other MNOs the opportunity to co-invest in Funded Solutions including (but not limited to) provision of Backhaul.
- 4.2.14. MNOs interested in co-locating on a Funded Solution (i.e. the MNO expresses an interest in co-locating on Funded Solutions after funding has been awarded) will be required to express their interest to the successful grantee prior to the start of the detailed design stage for that Funded Solution.
- 4.2.15. All parties will be required to negotiate in good faith with each other in relation to the Funded Solution access and price terms, and enter into commercial arrangements.
- 4.2.16. In accordance with the dispute resolution process outlined at sections 4.2.24 and 4.2.25, any disagreements regarding co-location matters will be determined by an independent third party, to be appointed at the respective parties’ shared cost, and in accordance with the dispute resolution process.

- 4.2.17. Following the process set out in sections 4.2.13 - 4.2.16, if it is determined that there is no interest in co-location from another MNO, the Grantee will not be required to design or build the site to allow for co-location.

Backhaul access and pricing

- 4.2.18. Where a Grantee reaches an agreement under sections 4.2.13 - 4.2.17 with an MNO (the **Co-locating MNO**) for a Funded Solution, and subject to section 4.2.19, the Grantee must offer Backhaul to the Co-locating MNO if the Grantee is in a position to do so (see section 4.2.19).
- 4.2.19. The Grantee will be taken to be in a position to offer Backhaul to the Co-locating MNO if the Grantee owns or controls an optical fibre or microwave link which connects the Funded Solution to the Grantee's network.
- 4.2.20. The price at which the Grantee offers Backhaul to any Co-locating MNOs must be more favourable than the regulated prices set under the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Domestic Transmission Capacity Service Final Access Determination (DTCS FAD), for example, by offering a defined rent-free period or other discounting mechanism.
- The ACCC has released the DTCS FAD 2020³, including a DTCS pricing calculator that may assist interested parties to calculate the regulated price for Backhaul.
- 4.2.21. Where a Grantee chooses to provide Backhaul to a Funded Solution using an optical fibre connection, it must ensure that it provides sufficient Backhaul capacity, transmission and interfacing equipment to meet the Backhaul requirements of any Co-locating MNO on the Funded Solution.
- 4.2.22. Where a Grantee chooses to provide Backhaul to a Funded Solution using a microwave connection, the Grantee must provide Backhaul services to any Co-locating MNO over that microwave connection, unless:
- the Funded Solution is designed and built to allow Co-locating MNOs to install, operate and maintain their own microwave Backhaul equipment on the Funded Solution; and
 - the Co-locating MNOs are permitted to install, operate and maintain their own microwave Backhaul equipment on the Funded Solution.
- 4.2.23. The terms and pricing of Backhaul services provided by a Grantee to any Co-locating MNO must be negotiated commercially between the Grantee and Co-locating MNO in accordance with the principles set out in sections 4.2.18 to 4.2.22.

Dispute resolution

- 4.2.24. Disputes between parties in relation to co-location and Backhaul for a Funded Solution will be referred for determination to an independent third-party expert, at the parties' own shared cost.
- 4.2.25. The Grantee and Co-locating MNOs will be bound by the determination made by the independent third-party expert.

³ See the DTCS FAD at www.accc.gov.au/public-registers/telecommunications-registers/s152bcw-access-determinations-register/final-access-determination-no-2-of-2020-for-the-domestic-transmission-capacity-service-dtcs

4.3. Options for enhanced resilience

- 4.3.1. To support the deployment of more physically resilient infrastructure, in addition to the minimum requirement set out at section 4.2, applicants are required to submit separate costed options for Auxiliary power (section 4.3.5).
- 4.3.2. Applicants may also submit costed options for Auxiliary backhaul (section 4.3.6) resilience enhancements for each Proposed Solution and site hardening enhancements that are above the standard commercial deployments for the site as specified in section 4.3.8.
- 4.3.3. The department will assess the cost of the enhanced resilience measures as part of the assessment process, and make recommendations to the Decision Maker about each measure.
- 4.3.4. The Commonwealth will contribute 100 per cent of the incremental cost of any additional resilience enhancements which are approved for funding.

Auxiliary power

- 4.3.5. In addition to the minimum requirement set out at section 4.2, applicants are required to submit separate incremental costs for the deployment of auxiliary power for 24 hours for each Proposed Solution. Applicants may also submit separate incremental costs for periods beyond the 24 hours required in this section, where the applicant considers it appropriate to the Proposed Solution.

Auxiliary backhaul

- 4.3.6. For Proposed Solutions which rely on fibre or microwave backhaul, applicants may submit separate costs for the deployment of auxiliary satellite backhaul, which can be utilised in the event that the primary backhaul from the Proposed Solution is compromised.
- 4.3.7. Auxiliary backhaul costs are not required for Proposed Solutions which already utilise satellite backhaul.

Site hardening

- 4.3.8. The type of Natural Disaster/s that the location of the Proposed Solution is prone to may determine the nature of the site hardening upgrades that would be beneficial for the Proposed Solution.
- 4.3.9. Applicants must indicate the type of Natural Disaster/s that the location of the Proposed Solution is prone to. Proposed Solutions may be located in Eligible Areas considered to be prone to more than one type of Natural Disaster.
- 4.3.10. Proposed Solutions which are located in Eligible Areas considered by the relevant State or Territory Government (as per section 4.2.4) as being at risk of bushfire may separately provide the additional cost that would be incurred in upgrading the applicant's standard Proposed Solution deployment for the site to provide site hardening for bushfire. This may include:
- extended fire protection zones
 - improved fire-resistant infrastructure
 - providing external generator ports.

- 4.3.11. Proposed Solutions which are located in Eligible Areas considered by the relevant State or Territory Government (as per section 4.2.4) as being at risk of flood may separately provide the additional cost that would be incurred in upgrading the applicant’s standard Proposed Solution deployment for the site to provide site hardening for flood. This may include:
- flood proofing the equipment housing
 - elevating the site
 - providing external generator ports.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grant activities

- 5.1.1. To be eligible for funding under the Program, each Proposed Solution must:
- deliver New Coverage – voice and data (sections 4.2.2 – 4.2.3 and 7.5.2) – to an Eligible Area (section 5.2);
 - not be sited at a location identified on the participating MNO’s 2024-25 to 2029-30 forward build network expansion or upgrade plans. Proposed Solutions at sites that have been **land-banked** by an MNIP, but are not on participating MNOs’ forward build plans, are eligible for funding; and
 - be endorsed by the relevant State or Territory Government, including that it is located in a Natural Disaster prone area and that it aligns with their investment priorities (see section 2.2.6, 4.2.4 – 4.2.6).
- 5.1.2. Proposed Solutions which do not receive endorsement from a State or Territory Government will not meet the eligibility criteria as per section 5.1.1.
- 5.1.3. Applicants may propose any infrastructure solution or combination of solutions (Cluster Solution), so long as it delivers the relevant minimum standards specified at section 4.2.

5.2. Eligible Areas

- 5.2.1. Eligible Areas under Round 8 of the Program are those areas which are both:
- endorsed by the relevant State or Territory Government as being prone to Natural Disaster (section 4.2.4 - 4.2.5); and
 - located outside of the Ineligible Areas, being the Urban Centres and Localities geographical units classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as ‘Major Urban’, i.e. with a population of 100,000 or more⁴. The department will provide map overlays showing Ineligible Areas on request.
- 5.2.2. A non-exhaustive list of readily available public sources that identify Natural Disaster affected and prone areas across Australia will be included in the Application Pack. Proposed Solutions located in areas identified by one or more of these sources must still be endorsed as per section 5.1.1.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021, [online] Significant Urban Areas, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State, *Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3, July 2021 – June 2026*. Available at: www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/significant-urban-areas-urban-centres-and-localities-section-state [Accessed 2 December 2024]

5.3. Eligible expenditure

- 5.3.1. All Proposed Solutions which meet the minimum requirements will be eligible to receive a Commonwealth funding contribution (Commonwealth Contribution) towards the Total Cost of the Proposed Solution, which is the combined:
- estimated Asset Capital Costs of building, or installing a Funded Solution, including **integration** costs associated with active sharing where relevant; and
 - 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 the estimated Operational Costs over the minimum Operational Period of a Funded Solution.
- 5.3.2. Asset Capital Costs and Operational Costs sought under the Commonwealth Contribution at 5.3.1 must be clearly identified separately in the application, and will be considered as part of both the assessment against the Assessment Criteria (section 6) and Value with Relevant Money assessment (section 8.3).
- 5.3.3. Grantees will be responsible for any actual Asset Capital Costs and/or Operational Costs that exceed estimated costs.
- 5.3.4. Applicants must clearly identify whether integration costs for active sharing have been averaged over more than one Proposed Solution in their application, and provide advice on the costing implications if only a subset of Proposed Solutions are funded.

5.4. What the grant money cannot be used for

- 5.4.1. Applicants must not seek Commonwealth funding for Proposed Solutions where they have already planned to invest commercially. All applicants must certify through the provision of a statutory declaration that any Proposed Solutions for which Commonwealth funds are being sought were not, at any time, part of any participating MNOs' 2024-25 to 2029-30 forward-build network expansion or upgrade plans. Consistent with section 5.1.1, Proposed Solutions at sites that have been land-banked by an MNIP, but are not on any participating MNOs' forward build plans, are eligible for funding. In addition, applicants must not have started construction on a Proposed Solution prior to submitting an application under the Program.
- 5.4.2. The department may audit a Grantee's compliance with section 5.4.1.
- 5.4.3. Proposed Solutions must be infrastructure projects and cannot consist of **Consumer Level Products or Equipment**.
- 5.4.4. The department will not, in any circumstances, meet any costs or expenses incurred by an applicant in connection with their application. Applicants must bear their own costs and expenses associated with the application and assessment process, and the preparation, negotiation and execution of the Grant Agreement and of other documentation.

6. The assessment criteria

- 6.1.1. Proposed Solutions will be assessed against the **New Coverage Assessment Formula** to derive the cost to the Commonwealth per square kilometre of **Weighted New Coverage**. All other factors being equal, Proposed Solutions with a lower cost per square kilometre will rank higher than solutions with a high cost per square kilometre.

6.1.2. The New Coverage Assessment Formula is:

$$\frac{\text{Weighted Cost to the Commonwealth (\$)}}{\text{Weighted New Coverage (km}^2\text{)}}$$

6.1.3. The New Coverage Assessment Formula is based on the following components:

- **Cost to the Commonwealth (\$)** refers to the Commonwealth portion (GST inclusive) of the estimated Total Cost for the Proposed Solution (see section 5.3.1), including capitalised Operational Costs. The **Weighted Cost to the Commonwealth** is calculated for Proposed Solutions with:

- three national MNOs using active sharing or roaming technology:

$$\text{Weighted Cost to the Commonwealth} = \text{Cost to Commonwealth} \times 1/2$$

- three national MNOs using co-location for one or more MNOs:

$$\text{Weighted Cost to the Commonwealth} = \text{Cost to Commonwealth} \times 2/3$$

- less than three national MNOs:

$$\text{Weighted Cost to the Commonwealth} = \text{Cost to Commonwealth} \times 1$$

- **Weighted New Coverage (km²)** refers to the size (in square kilometres) of the mobile coverage footprint area which will receive **New Coverage** where there is no **Existing Coverage** from any MNO, at each signal level specified at section 7.5.2. The Weighted New Coverage is calculated by:

$$\begin{array}{rcccc} \text{Weighted New} & & \text{-85dBm New} & & \text{-95dBm New} & & \text{-105dBm New} \\ \text{Coverage} & = & \text{Coverage} & + & \text{Coverage} & + & \text{Coverage} \\ \text{(km}^2\text{)} & & \text{(km}^2\text{)} \times 1 & & \text{(km}^2\text{)} \times 0.5 & & \text{(km}^2\text{)} \times 0.25 \end{array}$$

- Where a Proposed Solution provides New Coverage from more than one participating MNO, each participating MNO's New Coverage will be counted cumulatively in calculating the Weighted New Coverage, regardless of whether the New Coverage areas overlap one another.
- This is in recognition of the benefits of multi-MNO solutions, and to ensure that these Proposed Solutions are not disadvantaged in the assessment process due to the higher costs that may be incurred for these solutions.

6.1.4. New Coverage will be measured by comparing the 4G coverage provided by the Proposed Solution against existing 4G coverage (including as-yet unbuilt base stations funded under other Commonwealth and/or State or Territory government programs), as per the MNOs' submitted coverage maps at the coverage levels set out in section 7.5.2.

6.1.5. New Coverage assessed under section 6 will be limited to coverage projected within 20km of the Proposed Solution site. The department, at its absolute discretion, may agree to assess coverage beyond this limit for individual Proposed Solutions, if requested by the Applicant. Such requests must be included at the time of application, and include justification.

- 6.1.6. The department reserves the right to apply a scaling factor to the weighting factors in the Weighted New Coverage calculation if the existing range does not result in an adequate scoring differential. For example, if the New Coverage outcomes had significant clumping, the department may apply a factor (e.g. 0.5) to increase the scoring range and better differentiate the scoring of Proposed Solutions.

7. How to apply

- 7.1.1. Before applying, you must read and understand these Guidelines.
- 7.1.2. All application documents may be found on [GrantConnect](#). Any alterations and addenda⁵ will be published on GrantConnect and by registering on the GrantConnect website, you will be automatically notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.
- 7.1.3. To apply you must:
- complete the Grant Opportunity application form;
 - provide all information requested;
 - complete the application pack and all attachments;
 - demonstrate that you meet all Eligibility Criteria;
 - provide responses to the Assessment Criteria;
 - include all necessary attachments;
 - complete and include the Application Checklist confirming that the application is complete; and
 - submit your application/s on or before the due date.

⁵ Alterations and addenda include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents; changes to closing times for applications; Questions and Answers (Q&A) documents; and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents.

Table 1: Expected timing for this Grant Opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
MBSP Round 8 Noticeboard opens	23 October 2024
Guidelines released and applications open	17 December 2024
MBSP Round 8 Noticeboard closes	17.00 AEDT, 7 February 2025 (7 weeks after opening)
Applicant registration and pre-application documentation for applicants intending to submit proposals under the Program	17.00 AEDT, 7 February 2025 (7 weeks after opening)
Submit initial proposal for Proposed Solutions	17.00 AEDT, 14 February 2025 (8 weeks after opening)
Applications close	17.00 AEST, 30 April 2025 (11 weeks after initial proposals are due)
Announcement of Successful Applications	To be advised
Commencement date of Grant Activity	On Execution of Grant Agreement
End date of Grant Activity	As defined at section 3.5.1 of these Guidelines and as specified in the respective Grant Agreement
End date of Operational Period	As defined at section 3.5.2 of these Guidelines and as specified in the respective Grant Agreement

7.2. Applicant registration

- 7.2.1. Potential applicants must register their interest with the department and provide a signed Non-Disclosure Agreement prior to being granted access to the confidential Program documentation.

7.3. Pre-application lodgement

- 7.3.1. Upon registering as a potential applicant, MNOs who intend to submit applications for funding, or are partnering with potential applicants, under this Program must first submit their existing 4G and 5G coverage information, including the coverage from funded base stations to be delivered under other Commonwealth and/or State or Territory government programs regardless of the stage of construction.
- 7.3.2. Existing Coverage information required at section 7.3.1 must be submitted to the department in accordance with the timing set out in Table 1 (Expected Timing). The department may, at its discretion, accept mobile coverage information submitted by MNOs after this date.
- 7.3.3. The Existing Coverage information required in accordance with section 7.3.1 must be supplied as separate layers for both 4G and 5G, for the whole of the Australian continent including the external territories, as follows:
- Coverage Maps: being layers modelled to the Coverage levels as set out in section 7.5.2; and
 - Existing Public Coverage Maps: being layers representing the predictive coverage modelling standards which underpin the publicly available coverage maps on the MNO's website.
- 7.3.4. For avoidance of doubt, the Existing Public Coverage Maps are requested for information purposes only. Assessment will only consider the New Coverage Maps for each Proposed Solution (i.e. a "like-for-like" comparison).
- 7.3.5. Pre-application information can be submitted by any of the methods outlined at section 7.5.

7.4. Submit initial proposals for Proposed Solutions

- 7.4.1. Registered applicants must lodge initial proposals for locations where they are interested in applying for funding under the Program to the department by the closing date and time in Table 1 (Expected Timing). The department may, at its discretion, accept initial proposals submitted by eligible applicants after this date.
- 7.4.2. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult the Project Noticeboard (see section 2.3) in considering locations for initial proposals.
- 7.4.3. Registered applicants will provide their initial proposals using the “Initial Proposals” template provided in the **Application Pack**.
- 7.4.4. The department will collate the lists of initial proposal locations and provide a consolidated list to all registered applicants. The consolidated list will include the following information for each initial proposal:
- a unique identifier;
 - the location;
 - type of base stations being considered (small cell / macro); and
 - the registered applicant’s contact details.
- 7.4.5. The department will also distribute a contact list of all pre-registered applicants to facilitate discussions regardless of whether a pre-registered applicant has identified potential partnering opportunities for any of the sites included on its initial proposals list.
- 7.4.6. Applicants and other interested parties have until closing of the application period to discuss and plan co-development and co-funding opportunities at these sites prior to finalising applications. The department strongly encourages applicants to consult with third parties during this period including, but not limited to: State, Territory and Local governments, emergency management organisations and local communities.
- 7.4.7. The list of locations will be treated as **Confidential Information** by the registered applicants in accordance with section 13.5 and the Non-Disclosure Agreement signed by each applicant.
- 7.4.8. Initial proposal information can be submitted by any of the methods outlined at section 7.5.
- 7.4.9. Applicants cannot include a Proposed Solution in their final application if that solution was not included in their list of initial proposals. This exclusion does not apply in the following circumstances:
- where a MNIP is partnering with a National MNO(s) on a solution that was included in the relevant National MNO’s initial proposal list;
 - where a solution involves two National MNOs, provided the solution was on one of the relevant National MNO’s initial proposal list; or
 - where a solution involves all three National MNOs

7.5. Completing and lodging an application

- 7.5.1. Applications for funding must be lodged using the Application Pack provided following registration, including the Application Checklist.

- 7.5.2. To seek funding for Proposed Solutions, applicants must complete the **Assessment Tool** from the Application Pack to provide information for each Proposed Solution for which they are seeking funding. Your application must provide, specifying in each case:
- the proposed site location (address and coordinates);
 - the total estimated all-up Asset Capital Cost of construction and the estimated Operational Costs (GST inclusive), including, if required, Backhaul and power;
 - the amount of co-contribution (GST inclusive) being provided by the applicant/s;
 - the amount of Commonwealth co-contribution sought (GST inclusive) under the Program. This amount should be consistent with the 'up to' amount specified in sections 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5 and 5.3.1 (Commonwealth Contribution);
 - the amount (if any) of co-contributions (GST inclusive) to be received from third parties including but not limited to State, Territory or Local governments, local communities or businesses, or any combination of these, and any specific requirements or conditions tied to the co-contributions;
 - where any co-contributions are being received, accompanying evidence from all third parties. For example, a letter of support from a suitably senior official from the relevant third party, which outlines the amount of co-contributions to be received and any conditions attached to the co-contributions. The department may ask for additional evidence of co-contributions if it considers the evidence you provide is unsatisfactory;
 - the incremental cost of the enhanced resilience measures outlined in section 4.3;
 - the extent to which the Proposed Solution meets the Assessment Criteria in section 6;
 - whether the Proposed Solution is dependent on the construction of one or more of the applicant's other Proposed Solutions, and explaining the specific dependencies (for example between individual base stations included in the same Cluster Solution);
 - the timeframe required to deliver the proposed solutions included in your application;
 - predictive coverage mapping data for each Proposed Solution modelled to the:
 - New Coverage levels with a **Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP)** of **-85dBm, -95dBm and -105dBm** for 4G and 5G services, at 90 per cent confidence levels for the cell area; and
 - level of coverage the applicant will publicly claim;
 - written support from any consortia members, participating MNOs or other co-contributors (see section 3.3, 3.4 and 7.7), including contact details for each party that can be contacted to confirm the support;
 - the number of MNOs confirmed to provide services through the Proposed Solution, and, if more than one, confirmation of the way in which multiple MNOs will provide services (e.g. Multi-Operator Core Network (MOCN), RAN sharing, roaming, co-location);
 - any additional and/or alternative connectivity benefits offered by the Proposed Solution to the Eligible Area, including services offering from a **Non-National Mobile Network Operator** or radio transmission (if relevant); and
 - the endorsement from the relevant State or Territory government (see section 4.2.4).

- 7.5.3. In addition, applicants must warrant that none of the Proposed Solutions for which Grant Opportunity funds are being sought were at any time part of any of the participating MNOs' 2024-25 to 2029-30 forward-build network expansion or upgrade plans. (see section 5.1.1 and 5.4.1).
- 7.5.4. You must agree that the predictive coverage mapping data supplied in the application can be used by the department to prepare publicly available promotional material for the Program or for policy development and advice as needed.
- 7.5.5. Consistent with section 10.1, applicants must indicate their compliance with a draft Grant Agreement at the time of submitting their applications, including providing a revision marked version of the draft Grant Agreement reflecting any terms that are not accepted in full, and reasons to support any proposed changes.
- 7.5.6. Details for contacting the department to seek clarification or assistance with any aspects of completing an application are at section 7.11.
- 7.5.7. Applications can be lodged using GovTEAMS, the Australian Government's secure online document sharing and project management system. Potential applicants will be provided with information about lodging applications using GovTEAMS upon registering their interest for the Program (see section 7.2).
- Note: Potential applicants may request to use alternative online secure document sharing systems by agreement with the department. Requests can be made by email to MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au, and should be received no later than two weeks prior to the closing of the application period.
- 7.5.8. All electronic files, regardless of transmission method, should be provided in an appropriate Microsoft compatible format. Geo-spatial information such as maps should be provided in either ESRI Shape; MapInfo TAB or MID/MIF; GML; or KML format.
- 7.5.9. The department strongly prefers electronic applications. However, the department may also accept applications via hard copy and/or physical electronic media if there is a reason why electronic submission is not feasible. Applicants wishing to make applications through physical means should contact the department by email to MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au no later than four weeks prior to the closing of the application period.
- 7.5.10. Where physical electronic media is to be provided, the media must be PC formatted. Applicants should include an index of all electronic documents on the physical electronic media. Applications provided in hard copy and physical electronic formats should be delivered via registered post or by hand prior to the closing date. Applications via post are to be addressed and delivered to:
- Director, Mobile Investments – Communities
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601
- 7.5.11. The department will acknowledge receipt of all applications by email to the applicant's nominated contact officer.

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

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

7.6. Costing Arrangements for MNIP-led applications

7.6.1. An MNIP should include all relevant capital and operational costs in its application for both itself and the MNOs it is partnering with for a Proposed Solution.

7.6.2. Any costs incurred by a participating MNO arising from its commercial agreement with an MNIP for a Proposed Solution (e.g. site access fees, and other management and operational fees) are expected to be included in the MNOs' costs.

7.6.3. The MNIP does not need to subtract any shared costs from its costings, except where a cost element has been passed on to (or is being recovered from) the participating MNOs through the commercial agreement, and are reflected in the MNOs' costs.

7.6.4. An MNIP cannot claim any costs that will be covered by MNO fees under their commercial agreement. For example, an MNIP cannot claim any portion of the land rental that is included in the MNOs' costs e.g. if the land rental for mobile base station elements totals \$10,000 per annum, and the MNOs' commercial agreement only covers \$5,000 of this cost, then the MNIP can only include the remaining \$5,000 in its operational costs.

7.6.5. An MNIP may provide any necessary additional information to explain the cost breakdown between the participants in individual Proposed Solutions.

7.6.6. In situations where a participating MNO has specific commercially sensitive costing information, and it does not want to share this information with the MNIP, the MNO can, by prior agreement of the department provide the information directly to the department before the application period closes.

7.6.7. The MNO must seek the department's agreement to the arrangement outlined at section 7.6.6 at least two days prior to the closing of the application period.

7.6.8. If this approach is taken, the MNIP must still include the aggregate (total) costing information for each participating MNO against each individual Proposed Solution.

7.6.9. Consistent with section 4.1.5, all payments will be made to the Lead Applicant only (in this case the MNIP). The MNIP and participating MNOs must negotiate their own separate payment arrangements between themselves through their commercial agreement.

7.6.10. Where specific cost breakdown information is required during the rollout period such as to support payment claims or the final true up, this information can be provided separately by the MNIP and participating MNOs to the Commonwealth.

7.6.11. Applicants must identify in their applications the specific type of information and the situations where this would occur.

7.7. Joint (consortia) applications

7.7.1. We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a Proposed Solution. In these circumstances, you must appoint a Lead Applicant. Only the Lead Applicant can submit the application form, but the Lead Applicant will not necessarily be the entity entering into any agreement with the Commonwealth (see section 4.1.5).

7.7.2. The Lead Applicant must identify all other members of the group (partner organisations) and their role in the Proposed Solution and include, in addition to the requirements at section 7.5.2, a letter of support from each of the partner organisations. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the partner organisation;
- an overview of how the partner organisation will work with the Lead Applicant, including financial co-contributors and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully complete the Proposed Solution;
- 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); and
- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

7.7.3. We reserve the right to contact each member of the group to confirm their participation.

7.7.4. You must have a formal arrangement in place with all partner organisations prior to the execution of the Grant Agreement.

7.8. Closing date for funding applications

7.8.1. The closing date for submitting an application for funding under the Program is as at Table 1 (Expected Timing).

7.9. Late applications

7.9.1. You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates. The department reserves the right to, in exceptional circumstances, accept a late application to the assessment process at its discretion. Without limiting the department's discretion, exceptional circumstances may include natural disasters or unforeseen technical issues with application forms or lodgement systems. Any decision by the department on whether or not to accept a late application to the assessment process shall be final.

7.9.2. If you believe there are circumstances which will affect the timely submission of your application, you must contact the department before the application closing date to negotiate an alternative submission due date. Any decision by the department on whether or not to accept a late application to the assessment process is wholly within the department's discretion and shall be final.

7.10. Further information about the application

7.10.1. At any time during the initial registration, pre-application, application, or assessment processes, the department may:

- contact applicants to check information that may be ambiguous, incorrect or unclear;
- seek either additional information or seek clarification of certain information to assist its assessment of applications; and/or
- seek technical expert advice to verify claims made.

7.11. Questions during the application process

- 7.11.1. All requests for clarification or determination of the meaning of provisions in these Guidelines should be referred to the department by email at MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au. The department's written decision on the matter is final.
- 7.11.2. We will acknowledge and address emailed questions as soon as practicable. Answers to questions will be posted on GrantConnect.

7.12. Errors identified in applications

- 7.12.1. If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact the department immediately at MBSP@infrastructure.com.au.
- 7.12.2. The department may, at its discretion, accept additional information from the applicant or a request to correct the error. However, the department is under no obligation to accept any additional information or a request from the applicant to correct any applications after the Closing Date at Table 9 (Expected Timing).

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

- 8.1.1. The assessment process for the Program will be as follows:
- initial assessment against Eligibility Criteria;
 - merit based assessment of each Proposed Solution against the Assessment Criteria;
 - how each Proposed Solution compares to other Proposed Solutions included in the application and other applications;
 - Program Delivery Risk Assessment as outlined in section 8.2.
 - Value With Relevant Money Assessment and consideration of whether the Proposed Solution supports a Government priority as outlined in section 8.3.
- 8.1.2. Following the closing date for applications, the department will undertake an initial eligibility check to ensure each application is complete, that all necessary supporting documentation has been submitted as part of the application, and that it meets the Eligibility Criteria included at section 4 of these Guidelines. We will consider eligible applications through a targeted competitive grant process against the Assessment Criteria included at section 6 of these Guidelines.
- 8.1.3. We may seek advice regarding your Proposed Solution from State or Territory government agencies, other Australian Government agencies, independent technical experts and other external parties. This advice may be taken into consideration when assessing the Proposed Solution.
- 8.1.4. Where the level of information provided in an application is not sufficient for the assessment committee (see section 8.4) to make a recommendation they may, but are not obliged to, seek more information from the applicant so long as it does not materially change the application. If the assessment process identifies unintentional errors in your application, including mapping errors, we may contact you to correct or clarify the errors, but you cannot make any material alterations or additions.

- 8.1.5. The assessment committee (see section 8.4) may seek additional information about 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.
- 8.1.6. Based on the recommendations of the assessment committee, the department will provide advice to the Decision Maker (see section 8.5) on recommended eligible Proposed Solutions and details of the assessment of each eligible Proposed Solution.
- 8.1.7. Recommendations to the Decision Maker will be ranked according to the outcomes of the assessment process, from highest to lowest ranked, and annotated to identify when available funding has been exhausted.

8.2. Program Delivery Risk Assessment

- 8.2.1. Following assessment against the Eligibility and Assessment Criteria, a risk assessment will also be undertaken to determine the level of risk to the successful delivery of each applicants' Proposed Solutions, should they be recommended for funding. This assessment will have regard to the overall program and Grant Opportunity objectives.
- 8.2.2. Based on the Program Delivery Risk assessment, the department also reserves the right to recommend not funding one or more Proposed Solutions from an applicant which are highly ranked against the Assessment Criteria, based on the assessed risk to the successful delivery of program outcomes.
- 8.2.3. Factors that may be considered as part of the program delivery risk assessment may include, but are not limited to:
- the applicant's previous track record of delivering similar grants projects, including prior commitments given to delivering sites or participation in Funded Solutions under previous rounds;
 - the current status of the applicant's rollout of previously funded similar grants projects; and
 - the applicant's engagement, capacity and intent to deliver on previous commitments and funded solutions across relevant Commonwealth grant programs, including for the duration of operational periods.
- 8.2.4. All factors that make up the assessment committee's decision making regarding the program delivery risk will be documented and form part of the advice to the Decision Maker.

8.3. Value with Relevant Money

- 8.3.1. Following assessment against the Eligibility and Assessment Criteria and the Program Delivery Risk assessment, an assessment will also be undertaken to consider which of the Proposed Solutions represent the best Value with Relevant Money to the Commonwealth and whether they support Government priorities. This is to ensure the grant will add value by achieving program benefits that would not occur without the grant. This assessment will have regard to the overall program outcomes and Grant Opportunity objectives.
- 8.3.2. This assessment will consider both the Value with Relevant Money of each individual Proposed Solution in isolation and in comparison against other Proposed Solutions. Recommendations for funding will use the processes, requirements and Assessment Criteria set out in these Guidelines.

- 8.3.3. Based on the overarching Value with Relevant Money assessment, the department reserves the right to recommend funding one or more Proposed Solutions which were lower ranked against the Assessment Criteria than other eligible Solutions. For example:
- a lower ranked solution that has been designed to target a localised coverage issue affecting a community, may offer better Value with Relevant Money compared to higher ranked solution that predominantly achieves a higher score by providing improved coverage outcomes to hill tops in unpopulated areas; or
 - a Proposed Solution may be a higher risk to deliver compared to a lower ranked solution, including due to the program delivery risk of contracting with the applicant and partners.
- 8.3.4. The department reserves the right to recommend not funding one or more Proposed Solutions which are highly ranked against the Assessment Criteria based on the Value with Relevant Money Assessment.
- 8.3.5. The department may, at its discretion, recommend increasing the level of Commonwealth funding for one or more Proposed Solutions above the maximum percentage per Proposed Solution as outlined in section 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 (Commonwealth Contribution), should it be considered of higher Value with Relevant Money.
- 8.3.6. Factors that may be considered in the Value with Relevant Money assessment include, but are not limited to the:
- degree to which mobile services are improved at the location;
 - degree to which 5G New Coverage is delivered by the Proposed Solution;
 - level of support from relevant State or Territory Governments;
 - level of support from the local community and/or local council;
 - any relevant risk issues, including the degree to which a location is at risk from Natural Disasters, including bushfires, based on the relevant State, Territory and/or Local government frameworks;
 - length of major rail and/or road transport routes that will receive New Coverage, or coverage that is new for a participating MNO but overlaps with another MNO's network, from the Proposed Solution;
 - extent to which the Proposed Solution would contribute to the Program objectives, including addressing an identified local priority or Government priority;
 - the degree to which competition is provided *or enabled* at a single solution, for example from at least two MNOs (i.e. delivers new Multi-MNO outcomes) *or an active sharing solution led by an MNIP with one or more MNOs*. Note that less consideration will be given to multi-MNO outcomes that are expected to occur anyway under existing commercial arrangements such as the MOCN commercial arrangement between Optus and TPG;
 - extent to which the Proposed Solution leverages additional partnerships and in-kind contributions;
 - cost to the Commonwealth of the Proposed Solution (Commonwealth contribution only);
 - nature of the costs included in the estimated Asset Capital Cost and Operational Costs for the Proposed Solution;

- cost to the Commonwealth of the enhanced resilience measures;
- the applicant's track record of delivering similar grants projects, including commitments given to delivering sites under previous rounds and the track record of its partners; and
- any additional and/or alternative connectivity benefits offered by the Proposed Solution to the target area including services offering from a Non-National Mobile Network Operator.

8.3.7. Where possible, the assessment committee will consider recommending funding at least one Proposed Solution in each State and Territory. The assessment committee may take into account factors such as each jurisdiction's relative share of land mass and premises without coverage. This is intended to achieve the policy objectives of the program across the range of Eligible Areas, rather than see outcomes delivered only to the most commercially viable or populous locations.

8.3.8. Any other Value with Relevant Money considerations taken into account by the assessment committee will be documented and form part of the advice to the Decision Maker.

8.4. Who will assess applications?

8.4.1. The department will establish an assessment committee, comprising appropriately skilled officials from the department. Committee members may also be drawn from other Commonwealth agencies and relevant entities such as the National Emergency Management Agency.

8.4.2. The assessment committee will assess each application on its own merits and compare it to other eligible applications before recommending which Proposed Solutions should be awarded a grant (if any).

8.4.3. We will seek advice regarding the Proposed Solutions from the relevant State or Territory government agencies, including but not limited to its support for each proposal, information about the Natural Disaster prone or affected area covered by each proposal and its priorities. This advice will be taken into consideration during the Value with Relevant Money assessment at section 8.3.

8.4.4. We may ask external advisors (such as technical experts and probity advisors) to inform the assessment process. Any third party or advisor who is not a Commonwealth Official will be required to perform their duties in accordance with the [CGRPs](#), and comply with the conflict of interest requirements set out at section 13.3.

8.5. Who will approve grants?

8.5.1. The Decision Maker for the Program is the Minister for Communications.

8.5.2. The Decision Maker 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 Opportunity.

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

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

- 8.5.4. There is no appeal mechanism for the decision to approve or not approve a grant. An applicant who is dissatisfied with the outcome may contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman as set out in section 13.2.

9. Notification of application outcomes

9.1. Application outcomes

- 9.1.1. 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.
- 9.1.2. Consistent with section 13.5.5, the department may share with the State and Territory Governments, on a confidential basis, the application and assessment details for Proposed Solutions within their respective jurisdiction. State and Territory Governments may wish to consider funding any proposals not awarded funding under the Grant Opportunity.
- 9.1.3. Where the Commonwealth does not fund a merit-listed solution(s), the department may agree to contract and manage the delivery of that solution on behalf of the relevant State or Territory Government, subject to the provision of sufficient funding from that State or Territory Government to meet the cost of that solution(s) and the department's delivery costs.

9.2. Feedback on your application

- 9.2.1. If you are unsuccessful in obtaining a grant, you may ask for feedback within 28 days of being advised of the outcome. We will provide written feedback within one month of your request.

10. Successful grant applications

10.1. The grant agreement

- 10.1.1. Each Grantee will be required to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth. Each Grant Agreement will set out the Grantee's obligations in respect of the rollout and service terms for each Funded Solution.
- 10.1.2. In the Grant Agreement, the applicant will be required to commit to operate its Funded Solution infrastructure and deliver Funded Solution benefits over the Operational Period. Applicants may be required to report on the ongoing benefits of the Funded Solution.
- 10.1.3. Consistent with section 7.5.5, a draft Grant Agreement for Funded Solutions will be made available to registered applicants after the opening of the Round. Applicants must indicate their compliance with the draft Grant Agreement at the time of submitting their applications. Where the terms of the draft Grant Agreement are not accepted in full, applicants are required to submit a revision marked version of the draft Grant Agreement reflecting their proposed changes and reasons for the proposed changes.
- 10.1.4. Where an applicant has previously agreed a grant agreement with the Commonwealth under Round 6 or 7 of the Program or the Peri-Urban Mobile Program (a **Previous Grant Agreement**), the applicant may request that particular clauses within the Previous Grant Agreement be transferred to the draft Grant Agreement. When making such a request, the applicant must provide reasons addressing why utilising clauses from the Previous Grant Agreement would be appropriate. Applicants must still indicate their ability to comply with the draft Grant Agreement. Requests of this nature must be made at the time of application submission.

- 10.1.5. The Commonwealth may, at its discretion, agree that particular clauses from the Previous Grant Agreement be transferred to the draft Grant Agreement. However, the Commonwealth is under no obligation to agree to any such request. Any decision by the Commonwealth will be final.
- 10.1.6. Where the Commonwealth has agreed under section 10.1.5 that an applicant may transfer particular clauses from a Previous Grant Agreement to the draft Grant Agreement, and prior to the commencement of the negotiations, the applicant must submit a marked-up version of the draft Grant Agreement to the department containing the clauses from the Previous Agreement that are proposed to be transferred along with any changes proposed under section 10.1.3. The department will review the marked-up version of the Grant Agreement and advise the applicant whether it agrees with the proposed changes or if any further amendments are needed to meet the requirements of this Program.
- Note: No contractual obligations arise for either party until a Grant Agreement satisfactory to the Commonwealth is negotiated and signed by the Commonwealth.
- 10.1.7. We must execute a Grant Agreement with the applicant before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of the applicant's expenditure until a Grant Agreement is executed. Applicants should not start any activities relating to a Funded Solution until a Grant Agreement is executed. The Commonwealth expects Grant Agreement terms to be reached with a successful Grantee within 60 Business days of the commencement of grant negotiations. If terms have not been agreed within 60 Business days, and without limiting any other rights or discretions, the Commonwealth reserves the right not to proceed with a Grant Agreement for the Proposed Solution and to withdraw any offer of funding.
- 10.1.8. For Funded Solutions that involve one or more National MNOs that are not the applicant, no payments will be made until the applicant has entered into contractual arrangements with the participating National MNOs.
- 10.1.9. The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

10.2. Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

- 10.2.1. Whilst applicants are required to be compliant with all laws and regulations, they may be requested to demonstrate compliance with relevant legislation, policies or industry standards. For example, applicants may be requested to demonstrate compliance with health, safety or security related legislation, policies or industry standards that are in any way applicable to a Funded Solution.

10.3. Australian Industry Participation (AIP) Plan

- 10.3.1. Grant applicants should note that funding of \$20 million or more, subject to advice from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, the Australian Industry Participant National Framework principles, including an AIP plan requirement, may apply to the Grant Agreement(s). More information on AIP plan requirements can be found at: <https://industry.gov.au/aip>.

10.4. WHS Accreditation Scheme

10.4.1. Building work undertaken as part of the Funded Solution/s under this agreement may be covered by the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (WHS Accreditation Scheme). The WHS Accreditation Scheme is established under the Federal Safety Commissioner Act 2022 and specified in the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) (Accreditation Scheme) Rules 2019. The WHS Accreditation Scheme applies to building work that is indirectly funded by the Commonwealth or a corporate **Commonwealth entity** if it is carried out under a contract with a value of \$4 million or more (GST inclusive) and the contribution made to the funding of the project that includes the building work by the Commonwealth or Commonwealth Corporate entity is at least:

- \$6,000,000 (GST inclusive) and represents at least 50% of the total funding; or
- \$10,000,000 (GST inclusive).

10.4.2. A successful applicant who is the builder must comply with all conditions of Scheme accreditation and successful applicants who will be engaging builders to undertake the building work must require builders to comply with all conditions of Scheme accreditation.

10.5. Keeping us informed

10.5.1. Applicants should let us know if anything is likely to affect the Funded Solution or organisation. We need to know of any key changes to the applicant's organisation or its business activities which may affect its ability to complete the Funded Solution, carry on business and pay debts due. Applicants must also inform us of any changes to:

- name;
- addresses;
- nominated contact details; and
- bank account details.

10.5.2. If applicants become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the Grant Agreement, they must contact us immediately. Applicants must notify us of events and provide an opportunity for the Minister or their representative to attend.

10.6. How we pay the grant

10.6.1. The Grant Agreement will state:

- the maximum grant amount to be paid;
- the proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the Grant;
- any financial contributions provided by you or a third party;
- any in-kind contributions provided by you or a third party; and
- any other requirements.

10.6.2. We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If applicants incur extra costs, they must meet them themselves. We may make an initial payment on execution of the Grant Agreement. We will make subsequent payments as applicants achieve key milestones (e.g. achieving necessary approvals to commence construction, asset completion demonstrated by a satisfactory report) based on the applicant's eligible expenditure. These payments are subject to satisfactory progress on the Funded Solution.

10.7. Grant payments and GST

- 10.7.1. Payments will be made as set out in the Grant Agreement. If the applicant is registered for GST, where applicable, the department will add GST to the grant payment.
- 10.7.2. Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. The department recommends that Grantees seek independent professional advice on their taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. The department does not provide advice on an applicant's particular taxation circumstances.

11. Announcement of grants

- 11.1.1. If successful, applicants' grants will be listed on the GrantConnect website 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.4 of the [CGRPs](#).

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1. Keeping us informed

- 12.1.1. You must notify the department of any key changes to your organisation or business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due. You must also inform the department of any changes to your:
- name;
 - addresses;
 - nominated contact details;
 - bank account details; or
 - business structure.
- 12.1.2. If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the Grant Agreement, you must advise us immediately.

12.2. Reporting

- 12.2.1. Grantees must submit reports in accordance with the Grant Agreement. We will expect Grantees to report on such matters as:
- progress against agreed activity and outcomes;
 - contributions of participants directly related to the Funded Solution including scheduled co-contributions (if any); and
 - expenditure of the grant.
- 12.2.2. The amount of detail you provide in your reports should be relative to the Funded Solution size, complexity and grant amount.
- 12.2.3. We will monitor progress by assessing reports applicants submit and may conduct site visits or request records to confirm details of reports if necessary. Occasionally we may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments. We may also inspect the records applicants are required to keep under the Grant Agreement.

12.3. Asset completion report

- 12.3.1. For each completed Asset, Grantees must submit an asset completion report as specified in the Grant Agreement. Assets will be defined in each Grantee's Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth.

12.4. Financial declaration or audited financial acquittal reports

- 12.4.1. We will ask Grantees to provide a declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the Grant Agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money. We may need to re-examine claims, seek further information or request an independent audit of claims and payments.

12.5. Independent audit report

- 12.5.1. The department may request an independently audited financial report for Funded Solutions at the Grantee's expense. For example, where claimed costs at a number of sites significantly diverge from past experience, without a reasonable explanation, or there is concern that costs have been claimed for ineligible activities (see section 5.4).
- 12.5.2. The financial audit report will verify that Grantees spent the grant in accordance with the Grant Agreement. We will assess the report and may re-examine applicants' claims or conduct site visits if necessary.

12.6. Grant agreement variations

- 12.6.1. We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your Grant Agreement. Grantees can request a variation by providing written notice to the department setting out the reasons for the variation and proposing the steps that could be taken to better achieve the purpose or address the risks of the Funded Solutions.
- 12.6.2. 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.

12.7. Compliance visits

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

12.8. Evaluation

- 12.8.1. We may evaluate the Grant Opportunity to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also interview Grantees, or ask for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes.

- 12.8.2. Grantees may be required to participate in Program reviews and evaluations. We may contact Grantees up to one year after the Asset Completion Dates for each Funded Solution for more information to assist with this evaluation.

12.9. Acknowledgement

- 12.9.1. The Program 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:

“Mobile Black Spot Program – An Australian Government initiative”.

If applicants make a public statement about a Funded Solution under the Program, we require them to acknowledge the Grant by using the following wording:

“This project received funding from the Australian Government.”

13. Probity

13.1. Grant opportunity probity

- 13.1.1. The Government will make sure that the Grant Opportunity process is fair, conducted according to these Guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud and corruption, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct, and is consistent with the [CGRPs](#).
- 13.1.2. External advisors (such as technical experts and probity advisors) may also be asked to inform the assessment and evaluation process. All external advisors must comply with the [CGRPs](#).
- 13.1.3. You should be aware of your obligations under the National Anti-Corruption Commission Act⁶ 2022, noting that under the Act grantees will generally be considered ‘**contracted service providers**’.
- 13.1.4. The Government reserves the right to terminate or vary the Program, (including via variation of these Guidelines) as its discretion, at any time, for any reason, including without limitation, in light of changes to Government policy. Any alterations or addenda to the Program will be published on GrantConnect and by registering on this website, you will be automatically notified on any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.
- 13.1.5. If the Government determines that these Guidelines require amendment prior to the date for which funding applications are due to be submitted to the department, potential applicants will be advised of the revised or new Guidelines in a timely manner, including any resultant extension that may be applied to the application period.
- 13.1.6. If the Government determines that these Guidelines require amendment following the date for which funding applications are due to be submitted to the department (for example, if the applications received do not achieve the Program objectives), the revised or new Guidelines will set out details of the changes, and all existing applicants will be notified of arrangements impacting existing applications.

⁶ See www.legislation.gov.au/C2022A00088/latest/text or www.nacc.gov.au/resource-centre/nacc-fact-sheets

- 13.1.7. An organisation submitting an application acknowledges that neither these Guidelines, nor any application, give rise to a binding agreement or any other binding legal arrangement or legal relationship between the applicant and the Commonwealth. There is no binding agreement on any party until a Grant Agreement is executed by the Commonwealth and the Grantee.

13.2. Enquiries and feedback

- 13.2.1. The department's [Client Service Charter](#)⁷ applies to complaints about this Grant Opportunity. All complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing.
- 13.2.2. Any questions you have about grant decisions for this Grant Opportunity should be sent to MBSP@infrastructure.gov.au.
- 13.2.3. If an applicant does not agree with the way the department has handled its complaint, they may complain to the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman will not usually consider a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the department.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

13.3. Conflicts of interest

- 13.3.1. 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's staff, any member of a committee, advisor, and/or the applicant or any of applicant's 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 an external advisor;
 - relationship with or interest in, an organisation, that is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently; or
 - relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the Program.
- 13.3.2. Applicants will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.
- 13.3.3. If an applicant later identifies an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, they must inform the department in writing immediately.
- 13.3.4. Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled in accordance with the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999 \(Cth\)](#). Committee members, other officials including the Decision Maker, and any third parties involved in the assessment process as set out in section 8 must also declare any conflicts of interest. Any contractual arrangements between the department and third parties involved in the assessment process will have appropriate conflict of interest provisions.

⁷ See www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/about/charter.aspx

13.4. Privacy

- 13.4.1. We treat personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) (the Privacy Act) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) (the APPs). This includes letting applicants know:
- what personal information we collect;
 - why we collect your personal information; and
 - who we give your information to.
- 13.4.2. Applicants' 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 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.
- 13.4.3. 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.
- 13.4.4. As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the Grant Activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the Grant Activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything which if done by the department would breach an [Australian Privacy Principle](#) as defined in the Act.
- 13.4.5. For further information about our privacy obligations (including in relation how to access or correct personal information or make a complaint) and our contact details for privacy matters, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

13.5. Confidential Information

- 13.5.1. 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).
- 13.5.2. 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.
- 13.5.3. We will keep any information in connection with the Grant Agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the three conditions below:
- A. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential;
 - B. the information is commercially sensitive; and
 - C. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

- 13.5.4. We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:
- the assessment 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 or Territory governments;
 - local governments 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, and
 - 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.

- 13.5.5. The department may share with State or Territory governments (on a confidential basis) any or all information contained in applications and assessment details for Proposed Solution/s which it considers relevant to the respective jurisdiction based on the location of the Proposed Solution/s, including information for Proposed Solutions that are not successful in receiving funding through the Program.

13.6. Intellectual Property rights

- 13.6.1. By submitting an application under the Program, to the extent your application contains its Intellectual Property or a third party's Intellectual Property, you hereby grant (or will procure for) the Commonwealth a permanent, irrevocable, royalty-free, fully paid up, worldwide, non-exclusive licence (including a right of sublicense) to use, reproduce, adapt, and electronically communicate your (or third party's) Intellectual Property contained in your application, provided the use, reproduction, adaptation, or communication is in connection with the Program. Any licence granted to the Commonwealth in relation to Intellectual Property rights does not include a right to use or exploit the Intellectual Property for commercial purposes. Any licence granted to the Commonwealth in relation to Intellectual Property rights does not include a right to exploit the Intellectual Property for commercial purposes.

13.7. Freedom of Information

- 13.7.1. All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this Grant Opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982 \(Cth\)](#) (FOI Act).
- 13.7.2. 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.

13.7.3. All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the department's Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing at:

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.

14. Consultation

14.1.1. These Guidelines are informed by the submissions received as part of targeted consultation on the draft Guidelines.

15. Glossary

Term	Definition
4G	Fourth generation mobile telecommunications service.
5G	Fifth generation mobile telecommunications service.
Active Sharing	The sharing of electronic infrastructure of the network including the radio access network (consisting of antennas/transceivers, base station, backhaul networks and controllers) and in some cases core network elements (consisting of servers and core network functionalities) by two or more MNOs. Active sharing includes mobile roaming.
AEDT	Australian Eastern Daylight Time
Application Pack	Has the meaning given in section 7.4
Asset Capital Costs (CAPEX)	The costs to purchase, build or upgrade physical assets under the Program.
Assessment Criteria	The specified principles or standards (in section 6) against which applications will be assessed. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive Grant Opportunity, to determine application rankings.
Assessment Tool	The Excel spreadsheet that eligible applicants must use to make an application. Instructions on how to complete the Assessment Tool are in the Application Pack and in the spreadsheet itself. Has the meaning given in section 7.5.2.
Australian Business Number (ABN)	A unique 11 digit number that identifies a business to the government and community.
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.
Cluster Solution	A Proposed Solution comprising two or more (to a maximum of fifteen) base stations that the applicant is putting forward as a single proposal due to economic and/or network design benefits.

Term	Definition
Co-locating MNO	Has the meaning given in section 4.2 under Multi-MNO solutions – Active Sharing, Co-location and co-build.
Commonwealth Contribution	The financial contribution to be made by the Commonwealth for all Proposed Solutions as set out in section 5.3
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.
Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles (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.
Confidential Information	Confidential Information as defined in section 13.5.
Consumer Level Products or Equipment	Non-infrastructure telecommunication products purchased for the consumption by a limited number of users.
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.
Decision Maker	The person who makes a decision to award a grant, as set out in section 8.5.
Department	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.
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. These are set out at section 4.1 of these Guidelines.
Eligible Area	Has the meaning given in section 5.2.
Existing Coverage	Coverage able to be obtained with a handheld mobile device within any national MNO’s mobile network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that is currently available; or • that will be provided by any base station that will be delivered under other Commonwealth and/or State and Territory government programs, regardless of the status of construction.
FOI	Freedom of Information
Funded Solution	Solution selected for funding under the Program.

Term	Definition
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 money⁸ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁹ 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.
GST	Goods and Service Tax
Guidelines	These Guidelines for Round 8 of the Mobile Black Spot Program.
Integration	Direct incremental costs associated with the establishment of an active sharing network, where not already provided by the access seeker
Intellectual Property	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) all copyright (including rights in relation to phonograms and broadcasts); (b) all rights in relation to inventions, plant varieties, trademarks (including service marks), designs, circuit layouts; and (c) all other rights resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields.
Land-banked	A site that an MNIP has acquired or entered into an agreement with the landowner for potential future deployment of telecommunications infrastructure
Lead Applicant	The responsible entity for application, funding and reporting purposes.

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

⁹ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
Macrocell	The widest range of cell sizes used in a mobile phone network served by a mobile base station, often used in rural areas and along highways. Macrocells generally provide larger coverage than small cell base stations or microcells, with a typical power output of tens of watts.
MNIP	Mobile Network Infrastructure Provider (as described in section 4.1.3).
MNO	National Mobile Network Operator (as described in section 4.1.2).
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 <i>National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022</i> .
Natural Disaster	A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts (National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework). As predicated by a Natural Hazard . As per section 2.2.5 of these Guidelines, this includes naturally occurring events that can cause prolonged outages to in an Eligible Area.
Natural Hazard	A natural process or phenomenon that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. For example: geological hazards, such as (but not limited to) landslides and earthquakes; and extreme weather, and climate-driven hazards, such as (but not limited to) east coast lows, floods, bushfires and cyclones.
New Coverage Assessment Formula	The formula with which proposed solutions will be assessed, as described in section 6.1.2.
New Coverage	New and Improved Coverage from a Proposed Solution that will be able to be obtained with a handheld mobile device in areas that do not receive Existing Coverage from any National MNO's network at the signal levels specified in section 7.5.2.
Non-National Mobile Network Operator	For the purposes of the Program, a Non-National MNO means a company that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supplies a public mobile telecommunications service within the meaning of the <i>Telecommunications Act 1997</i> (Cth); ▪ Holds an apparatus or a spectrum licence (or both) for the supply of public mobile telecommunications services under the <i>Radiocommunications Act 1992</i> (Cth); and ▪ operates a mobile network that provides mobile coverage to less than 80% of the Australian population.
Operational Period	The length of time that an asset is required to provide services for which it was funded under the Program, specified in section 3.5.2.
Passive Sharing	The sharing of space or physical supporting infrastructure which does not require active operation co-ordination between network operators

Term	Definition
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 level, 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
Previous Grant Agreement	Has the meaning given in section 10.1.4.
Program	The Mobile Black Spot Program Round 8.
Proposed Solution	Infrastructure for which an applicant has sought funding under the Program.
Quality of Service	In mobile telecommunications, the description or measurement of the overall performance of a service, particularly the performance seen by the users of the network.
Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP)	The received signal power in a 4G or 5G network measured in decibels per milliwatt (dBm).
Roaming	Roaming allows a customer of one mobile network to use a mobile network managed by another operator while outside the coverage of the customer's mobile network.
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. Has the meaning described at section 8 of these Guidelines.
Small Cell	A 'small cell' in a mobile phone network, with a typical range less than two kilometres. Often used to add network capacity in areas of dense population or very remote locations, utilising power control to limit coverage area. These are also known as microcells.
Value with Relevant Money	<p>Achieving 'value with relevant money' 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. <p>As further set out in section 8.3.</p>
We/us	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and/or Commonwealth Officials administering the Program.