

Changes to Mobile Black Spot Programme criteria for Round 2

The Department of Communications and the Arts (DoCA) has released the [Guidelines for Round 2](#) of the Mobile Black Spot Programme (MBSP). This means that the competitive bidding process for the Federal subsidy of \$60 million by the three mobile network providers has now started.

ACCAN has compared the Round 1 and Round 2 Guidelines to identify what has changed. The Guidelines list all the criteria that the Federal Government will take into account when assessing whether to subsidise a particular site. Each criterion has a different weighting. Some of the weightings have changed this time round, and importantly there is a new ‘remoteness of location criterion.’ We are hopeful that this may encourage mobile coverage expanding into more remote areas where it is so badly needed. The main changes to note in the Assessment Criteria are:

- **New Coverage:** Round 1 was scored out of 10, whereas scores in Round 2 are uncapped and will be calculated differently.
- **Member of Parliament Priority:** in Round 2, locations that are endorsed by a Federal MP as “priority locations” will be awarded 10 points, rather than five as in Round 1.
- **Service offering:** the focus of scoring has shifted from 3G/4G technology provision in Round 1, to roaming capability by different networks and back-up power sources in Round 2.
- **Remoteness of location:** this was not part of the Assessment Criteria in Round 1 but can earn applications up to 20 points in Round 2.

Below is a table that summarises the changes in Assessment Criteria scoring between the two Rounds.

Updates to ACCAN’s Community Consultation Guide

ACCAN’s [Community Consultation Guide](#) provides tips for consumers improve mobile connectivity in their community by building a business case for investment. Over the last few weeks we have been meeting with Telstra, Vodafone and Optus to get their suggestions for updates to the Guide, based on the experience of Round 1. Their feedback has been very constructive in helping us target our information so that communities can best understand what they can do to encourage the network providers to invest in mobile towers in their area. We will be publishing the updated Guide shortly.

Table 1: MBSP Guidelines – Assessment Criteria Scoring – Round 1 vs. Round 2

Round 1	Round 2
<p>New Coverage (out of 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Area that will receive handheld coverage where there was no coverage (out of 6 – one point for every new 200kms²) b) Area of mobile coverage to receive new external antenna coverage (out of 3 – one point for every 400kms²) c) Area of mobile coverage footprint currently receiving external antenna coverage from any MNO which will receive new handheld coverage (1 point if area > 100kms²) 	<p>New Coverage (uncapped)</p> <p>Same three categories with uncapped scoring on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 1 point for every 20kms² new handheld coverage b) 1 point for every 50kms² new external antenna coverage c) 1 point for every 20kms² currently receiving antenna coverage that will receive handheld coverage.
<p>Coverage Benefit (uncapped) No change</p>	<p>Coverage Benefit (uncapped) No change</p>
<p>Member of Parliament Priority (out of 5)</p>	<p>Member of Parliament Priority (out of 10) More weight given to MP endorsement in round 2</p>
<p>Co-Contributions (uncapped) Split between govt. co-contribution (1 point for every \$10k) and govt. in-kind contribution (1 point for every \$10k up to \$50k).</p>	<p>Co-contributions (uncapped) Combined into govt. ‘financial contribution’ (one point for every \$10k).</p>
<p>Cost to the Commonwealth (out of 50) No change</p>	<p>Cost to the Commonwealth (out of 50) No change</p>
<p>Service Offering (out of 15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Service offered from base station in addition to mandatory 3G technology (2 points for commitment to upgrade to 4G within 4 years; 5 points for 3G and 4G from outset) b) 10 points for base stations offering all MNOs roaming services 	<p>Service Offering (out of 15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 10 points for base stations offering all MNOs’ customers roaming services b) 5 points for offering extended auxiliary power capacity enabling 8 hours’ operation without external power.
<p>Commitment of Use (out of 20) No change</p>	<p>Commitment of use (out of 20) No change</p>
	<p>Remoteness of Location (out of 20) New assessment category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The remoteness of each proposed base station will be assessed using the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ 2011 Remoteness Structure. 10 points for ‘Remote’ locations; 20 points for ‘Very Remote’ locations.