



## Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

# Call for Expressions of Interest Independent Grants Panel

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 About ACCAN

ACCAN is the peak body that represents all consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband and emerging new services. ACCAN provides a strong unified voice to industry and government as consumers work towards availability, accessibility and affordability of communications services for all Australians. Consumers need ACCAN to promote better consumer protection outcomes ensuring speedy responses to complaints and issues. ACCAN aims to empower consumers so that they are well informed and can make good choices about products and services. As a peak body, ACCAN will activate its broad and diverse membership base to campaign to get a better deal for all communications consumers.

### 1.2 About ACCAN's Independent Grants Panel

The Board of ACCAN:

- wishes to ensure the independent assessment of grant applications to the ACCAN Grants Scheme;
- further wishes to ensure that it receives the best possible recommendations for funding projects under the ACCAN Grants Scheme;
- continues the operation of an Independent Grants Panel ('the Panel') to make recommendations about the allocation of grants.

This document sets out the Terms of Reference for the Panel and the process for appointment to this body.

### 1.3 About the ACCAN Grants Scheme

ACCAN's Grants Scheme ('the Scheme') is administered as part of ACCAN's funding agreement with the Commonwealth Department Communications in accordance with section 593 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

The Program carries an annual budget of over \$250,000. Annual rounds run in the first quarter of each calendar year, with funded projects expected to commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July each year.

### 1.4 Grants Scheme Objectives

The ACCAN Grants Scheme funds projects that work towards our vision of **available, accessible and affordable communications that enhance the lives of consumers**. The focus is on creating versatile resources for consumers and a strong evidence base for communications consumer representation.

## ACCAN Independent Grants Panel - Terms of Reference

Further, we are seeking projects that assist ACCAN in achieving its strategic goals.

**ACCAN's strategic goals** are to:

1. Influence the government and industry so the communications market is fair and inclusive for all.
2. Influence government and industry to protect communications standards and consumers' privacy and security
3. Enable consumers to make informed choices.
4. Identify and engage on emerging communications consumer issues and technologies.
5. Ensure adequate and sustainable resources for effective operations.

For more details, see ACCAN's *Strategic Plan 2012-2015*, available from:

<http://accan.org.au/about/strategic-plan>

## **2. EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

### **2.1 Selection Process**

Panel members will be selected through a competitive process taking into consideration the following selection criteria. Members will be chosen based on their individual expertise. A sub-committee of the ACCAN Board will assess the applications and make a recommendation to the Board. The Board's decision will be final.

### **2.2 Selection Criteria**

The Panel will meet once a year face-to-face to discuss proposals, with teleconferences and reviewing of grants applications in addition to this. To be a member of the Panel, you will need to be available at various intervals between mid-April and May 2015. Reimbursement of travel expenses and a sitting fee is available for the face-to-face meeting. All applications must address the following selection criteria:

- a) Understanding of communications issues especially ACCAN's Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals;
- b) Expert knowledge about consumer issues (sectoral or general);
- c) Awareness of, or experience in, the community sector;
- d) Demonstrated knowledge of research methodology and/or project design;
- e) Proven ability to act independently and make impartial assessments;
- f) Commitment to good governance principles especially transparency and accountability; and
- g) Understanding of the diversity of ACCAN's membership base.

### **2.3 How to Submit an Expression of Interest**

If you would like to make an Expression of Interest please write a short statement (no longer than 3 pages) addressing the selection criteria and submit this with your curriculum vitae (CV) to

[nominations@accan.org.au](mailto:nominations@accan.org.au) by 5pm AEDT on 12 December 2014.

## ACCAN Independent Grants Panel - Terms of Reference

### 3. INDEPENDENT GRANTS PANEL - TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### 3.1 Panel Functions

The functions of the Independent Grants Panel are to ensure:

- Applications comply with the board-approved Guidelines of the ACCAN Grants Scheme
- The Selection Criteria are used to assess Grant applications on merit, and consensus is reached on recommendations for funding within budget
- Grant applications are assessed with consistency and fairness
- That funded projects are consistent with ACCAN's mission, values, vision, scope and strategic goals
- Successful applications are fit to scale and address any potential risks
- The recommendations of the Panel are impartial, appropriately documented and they are publicly defensible
- Deliberations of the Independent Grants Panel remain confidential.

#### 3.2 Panel Membership

The Panel will consist of three (3) members who will be selected and appointed by the ACCAN Board.

The Independent Grants Panel members cannot be Directors on the ACCAN Board (as per Constitution Clause 31.4.3). The Panel Members must also not be members of an ACCAN Standing Advisory Committee.

Independent Grants Panel members will serve in an individual capacity and will be appointed for their expertise. This is not a representational role and therefore there is no provision for an alternate to attend meetings.

#### 3.3 Term of Appointment

Appointment to the Independent Grants Panel is for the period **1 February 2015 until 30 June 2017**. Members will eligible for re-nomination at the discretion of the Board.

Members may resign at any time by written notice to the ACCAN Board. The Board will appoint a replacement in the event of any vacancy. Replacement appointments will serve out the remaining time of the above term of appointment.

Where, in the opinion of the ACCAN Board, an Independent Grants Panel member is unable to continue to contribute effectively to the functions of the Panel, the Board may terminate that member's appointment.

### 4. MEETINGS

It is expected that the Independent Grants Panel will maximise the use of virtual and online strategies including teleconferencing and web meetings on an as needs basis.

## ACCAN Independent Grants Panel - Terms of Reference

### **4.1 Quorum**

All members of the Independent Grants Panel must be present for a quorum unless by reason of a conflict of interest a member has stood aside for consideration of a specific application.

### **4.2 Board Report**

The Independent Grants Panel must reach a consensus that meets the reporting requirements of the ACCAN Board, at the conclusion of assessing all eligible applications for each Round of funding. The Report must prioritise the successful applicants and outline the cost and timeline of these projects.

The Report must also state if any Conflicts of Interest were identified and detail any action taken to ensure the Grants Application process remained impartial. Finally the Report will include sign off from the Panel that due process has been followed.

### **4.3 Conflicts of Interest**

Where there is a potential conflict of interest identified during the process it must be declared. There is a Conflict of Interest Policy in place for the Panel, which states that an appropriate ACCAN representative will decide on action taken once a potential conflict of interest is declared. If it is considered to be a remote connection that will not materially affect the recommendation it must be noted in the Panel Meeting minutes and the ACCAN Board Report along with the action taken to ensure the process remains impartial. If a conflict is identified then the Grant Panel member must not be a part of the deliberations or assessment of the relevant application.

### **4.4 Confidentiality**

Panel members will be required to respect the confidentiality of the Grant Application process. Members must take all reasonable measures to protect from unauthorised use or disclosure, information provided to them by the ACCAN Secretariat and indicated by ACCAN to be “confidential”, or information that members ought to have known to be “confidential”. This confidentiality clause shall survive the expiration or termination of members of the Independent Grants Panel.

### **4.5 Sitting Fees**

ACCAN will provide sitting fees for members of the Independent Grants Panel where they are not otherwise remunerated for their involvement or prevented from being remunerated elsewhere. The rate of sitting fees is set at \$300 per day and \$150 per half day. The full-day fee is payable only for meetings lasting not less than 3 hours, with pro-rata rates for meetings less than 3 hours.

### **4.6 Travel expenses**

ACCAN will arrange and pay for travel, accommodation and expenses incurred in attending any face-to-face meetings in accordance with the ACCAN Travel Policy.

## ACCAN Independent Grants Panel - Terms of Reference

### 5. ACCAN SECRETARIAT ROLE

ACCAN's role in relation to the Independent Grants Panel is to:

- Co-ordinate the application process, establish the eligibility of applications, and forward eligible applications to the Panel for assessment.
- Provide appropriate meeting resources and secretariat support including taking minutes so the Panel can conduct its work effectively.
- Set dates and at the relevant times book venues, teleconferences or open online meeting rooms as appropriate.
- Fulfil the reporting requirements to the ACCAN Board ensuring the report indicates (based on the Grant Guidelines) whether each application:
  - was eligible or not and why;
  - was successful or not and why; and
  - if any relevant comments or restrictions need to be noted
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel once they are approved by the Board.

The ACCAN Director of Operations will convene Panel meetings to provide input and support for the Panel.