

INDEPENDENT GRANTS PROGRAM 2021 GUIDELINES





Independent Grants Program
2021 Guidelines



Independent Grants Program 2021 Guidelines

Expressions of Interest close 25th February 2021

CONTACT US

Contact: ACCAN Grants Team
Email: grants@accan.org.au
Phone: (02) 9288 4000
Web: www.accan.org.au/grants
NRS: If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the
National Relay Service: <https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/services-people-disability/accesshub/national-relay-service>

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ABOUT ACCAN

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak body for consumer representation in communications. ACCAN's vision is for communications services that are trusted, inclusive and available for all. Our work covers emerging consumer and technology issues and aims to inspire, inform and enable consumers to act in their own interests.

ACCAN is a not-for-profit community organisation and has a broad range of individual and organisational members. We work on behalf of all consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

If you are considering applying for an ACCAN grant, we encourage you to get to know our current work via [our website](#) or by speaking with an ACCAN team member.

ABOUT THE ACCAN GRANTS PROGRAM

The ACCAN Grants Program (the Program) is administered as part of our funding agreement with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, and Communications (the Department), to fund projects that help achieve our aim.

Aim

The ACCAN Grants Program focuses on outcomes for **communications consumers**. Through the Program we seek to enable consumers to navigate the communications market, and to establish a sound body of evidence for representation on behalf of the communications consumer.

The Program is designed to:

- support ACCAN's ongoing consumer education objective;
- represent and maintain diverse consumer interests at the core of policy developments and industry initiatives; and
- support the provision of well researched, evidence based input into government and industry consultations.

Scope

The Program funds research, education or representation projects that address issues for **telecommunications consumers** in Australia. This means that projects focus on **telecommunications outcomes**. Applicants need to demonstrate how their project improves **telecommunications services** for Australians. The use of phone or internet services in your project is not enough to be eligible. We encourage all applicants to contact the ACCAN Grants team to discuss your project idea to ensure it is within scope. See examples of the projects we fund under [Completed Grants](#) on our website.

Communications can relate to telecommunications, the internet, broadcasting, electronic media and new or emerging communications technologies. See the [ACCAN website](#) to learn more about our scope.

A **consumer** is an individual or a small business that acquires goods or services intended for ordinary retail use. This is not limited to direct purchase but can cover situations where goods and/or services are donated or supplied through other means.

Projects can examine consumer behaviours, skills, digital literacy or familiarity with communications technology, products and services. Projects may seek to influence telecommunications practices, policy or regulation.



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Project Types

Projects may produce various outputs to address consumer needs and deliver outcomes. They may address the needs of large numbers of consumers, or significant needs of smaller numbers of consumers, or both.

The type of work you are doing will determine the **Streams** under which your application will be assessed. Depending on your approach, your project may be one, or more, of the following 3 types:

Research – applied research into the social, economic, environmental or technological effects, experiences and implications of communications for consumers. These projects should use appropriate methodologies to document a particular communications consumer issue or explore the experience of a group of communications consumers. Outputs can include, for example, baseline data sets, research reports that detail fieldwork and findings, and articles. Projects which are predominantly research-based will be assessed under the *Research Stream*.

Education – that empowers consumers and communities to act in their own interests in relation to communications issues. These projects might include developing consumer education tools, conducting workshops or peer education initiatives where systemic or emerging communications consumer issues exist. Education may be on topics such as billing issues, how to make a complaint about phone or internet services, consumer rights in relation to communications services, or digital literacy.

Representation – of the interests of consumers in relation to communications issues. These projects might involve action such as developing specific submissions, undertaking policy work, participating in regulatory reviews or knowledge sharing to develop your group's capacity to advocate on consumer issues. Projects that fall under this category can be directed, for example, towards regulatory bodies, industry or consumers themselves.

Projects which are predominantly for community education or representational work will be assessed under the *Education & Representation Stream*.

Who Can Apply

Any person or entity with an ABN is able to apply. This may include community organisations, businesses, universities, research agencies, local councils or individuals.

Partnerships

We encourage applications from individuals or groups that have formed partnerships. In these applications one party is nominated as the applicant (the entity with which ACCAN will enter into a contract), while the others are listed as partners. The contribution of partners could take several forms:

- Provide, or help with obtaining, financial support for the project. This may include providing in-kind support.
- Contribute to the organisation or execution of the project.
- Contribute expertise and guidance, e.g. through participation on a project advisory panel or forum.

Projects partnering with the telecommunications industry are encouraged.

If your EOI is successful and you are invited to the Full Application stage, you will be asked to provide details about your partner(s), including key contacts, the nature of co-contributions (cash or in-kind) and how your project will benefit from the partnership.

If you are interested in forming a partnership to strengthen your application but are unsure how to start, please contact the ACCAN grants team. We may be able to suggest organisations with a similar



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interest and focus to you. It will remain the applicant's responsibility to build and maintain these partnerships, and to ensure any contractual obligations between partners are met.

Applying for follow-on work

If you have previously been awarded an ACCAN grant and wish to build upon this project, you are able to apply for a second stage of funding.

This is NOT an extension of time for work contracted under an existing project. It is to allow those grantees who have demonstrated exceptional competency in delivering agreed outcomes, against agreed timelines, the chance to build upon and progress their work further.

Your application needs to demonstrate your successful completion of milestones in your existing ACCAN-funded project, the ongoing support of any partners, and the outcomes your project has achieved for telecommunications consumers. Grantees applying for follow-on work use the same application and assessment process as other applicants.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for assessment, applications must be completed and submitted prior to the advertised deadline and meet **all** eligibility criteria. Applications that are late, incomplete, or ineligible will **not** be assessed.

Applications **must**:

- Be for a project that seeks to explore **communications consumer** issues in Australia, and be consistent with ACCAN's scope (see [ACCAN's Strategic Plan](#)).
- Be able to provide a valid ABN in the Applicant's name.
- Declare that should they be successful they will provide evidence of Public Liability Insurance with coverage up to \$5 million.
- Have successfully acquitted any previous funding under the ACCAN Grants Program.
- If applying under the *Education and Representation Stream*, be from a community sector applicant, or demonstrate a strong community sector partnership.
- If applying under the *Research Stream*, addresses one or more of the **2021 Priority Themes**.
- Be for a project that begins after 1st July 2021 and that is completed before 30th May 2022
- Not request funding for any of the ineligible activities listed below:
 - Activities that contradict ACCAN's values.
 - Activities primarily related to commercial product or service development.
 - Activities of a partisan (party) political nature.
 - Projects that have already been completed (i.e. retroactive funding for work already undertaken).
 - Travel costs (unless directly necessary for the project).
 - Operational or ongoing activities normally funded through other arrangements.
 - University or other administration levies.
 - General operating costs not directly attributable to the project.



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Assessment

The ACCAN Grants Program assessment process is competitive, merit-based, and guided by the Assessment Criteria.

Eligible applications are assessed by an [Independent Panel](#) of external specialists, whose recommendations for funding must then be approved by the [ACCAN Board](#). The Independent Panel will endeavor to select a balance of projects that deliver the three desired outcomes of research, education and representation within the available funding. [Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#) are in place to ensure the process is fair and equitable. Strong projects:

- are **framed** in terms of a specific **telecommunications** consumer problem, and describe how the project addresses that problem
- best satisfy the Assessment Criteria, which are weighted to reflect the priorities of the Program
- investigate emerging and **highly topical issues**
- demonstrate a high degree of **originality**
- focus on issues which affect a **large number** of consumers, or, have a **high impact** on groups of consumers for whom the market is not working
- can **continue independently** after ACCAN funding
- have outputs which are demonstrably able to be used on an **ongoing basis**
- include cross-sector **collaboration**.

Assessment criteria are listed overleaf.



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Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria	Examples of considerations made by the Panel	Weighting
Benefit to consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project seek to fill a gap and is the project an effective response to the gap? Which groups of consumers will benefit from the project? How many consumers will benefit from the project? What will the impact of the benefit be? When will consumers benefit from the project? 	20%
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the motivation for the project? Have efforts been made to identify the key stakeholders in the issue? Does the project have concrete plans to consult and engage effectively with consumers, community groups, and/or research communities? Are there strengths or assets (tangible and intangible) within the communities involved that can be built upon to provide even greater benefit? 	20%
Addresses high priority consumer issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the project address ACCAN's Strategic Plan? For <i>Research Stream</i> projects, to what extent does the project address one or more of the 2021 Priority Themes (for Research Stream applicants only) 	30%
Technical strength of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project objectives, outputs, plan and timeline well considered and achievable? Does the project team have the appropriate skills and capacity to carry out the project? If a research project, is the chosen methodology valid and appropriate? Does the application demonstrate knowledge of previous and current work/research on the theme, including that by regulatory bodies? Have ethics in relation to researching and working with people and partners been properly considered and addressed? 	15%
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project budget appropriate in relation to the proposed project activities, outputs and outcomes? Would the project be able to proceed without this funding? If in-kind contributions are noted, are they well considered? 	15%



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ABOUT THE 2021 ROUND

Key Dates

Expressions of Interest OPEN	28 January 2021
Expressions of Interest CLOSE <i>(Please note any time differences for your region, as the system will automatically close at 5pm AEDT.)</i>	25 February 2021 5pm AEDT (Sydney)
All applicants notified	30 March 2021
Full Applications OPEN (Invited applicants only)	30 March 2021
Full Applications CLOSE <i>(Please note any time differences for your region, as the system will automatically close at 5pm AEDT.)</i>	20 April 2021 5pm AEST (Sydney)
All applicants notified	30 June 2021
Opportunity to seek feedback from ACCAN on unsuccessful applications	TWO weeks from the date of notification
Funded projects can begin	1 July 2021
Funded projects must be complete and acquitted	30 May 2022

Available Budget

The 2021 Grants Round is smaller and shorter than usual, due to this being the final Round within ACCAN's funding contract.

For the 2021 Round only, a total of **\$70,000** is available.

It is at the Panel's discretion how funds are allocated in any given Round, whether projects from both Streams are funded, and whether funding is spread across several smaller projects, or fewer larger projects. Given the smaller budget available this year, please note that it is possible that as few as one project may be funded.



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ACCAN funding may be used to partially fund projects where the applicant has, or intends to seek, funding from other sources.

Project duration

Projects can begin after **1 July 2021**. Projects must be complete and acquitted by **30 May 2022**.

This means the maximum duration for a project in this Round is 11 months. When planning your work, please note that successful applicants will be notified mid-late June, and that projects will need to have in place a signed [Funding Agreement](#) before commencing. See the [Key Dates](#) below.

All projects need to demonstrate they are appropriate in length to the activity proposed and may span any period within the above timeframe. Projects of shorter duration, for example of 6 months or less, are welcomed.

Streams

Depending on the type of project you are proposing, your application will be assessed under one of two Streams: ***Research Stream*** or the ***Education & Representation Stream***.

Applications under each Stream will be assessed only against other applications in the same Stream e.g. those projects that are research-focused will be assessed against other research projects.

a. ***Education & Representation Stream***

Education & Representation Stream applicants can apply for projects of any value **up to \$50,000**.

Your project qualifies under this Stream if:

- i. the bulk of your work is consumer education and/or representation; *and*
- ii. the lead applicant is from the community sector, or your application demonstrates strong and genuine community sector partnership; *and*
- iii. your project uses, or supplements, existing ACCAN resources where relevant

b. ***Research Stream***

Research Stream applications can apply for projects of any value **up to \$70,000**

Your project qualifies under this Stream if:

- i. the bulk of your work is consumer-focused research (qualitative and/or quantitative); and
- ii. it addresses one or more of the **2021 Priority Themes**.

2021 Priority Themes (for Research Stream applicants only)

Research Stream applicants need to demonstrate how their research directly addresses one of the priority topics below. These priorities are selected by ACCAN after consultation with key stakeholders and may change each Round.

- Telecommunications issues for **particular communities**
 - E.g. Small Business, aged care, remote Indigenous access issues, CALD communities
- Issues of limited **choice and competition**
 - ‘Embedded networks’ in buildings such as aged care facilities, apartment blocks and non-NBN fixed network areas



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- Telecommunications Consumer Data Right
- Suitability of existing broadband services for low income consumers
- **Emerging** communications technology
 - E.g. Working from home, video-conferencing, access for people with disability or rural, regional, remote consumers.
- Telecommunications consumer **privacy and security**
 - Cyber-security
 - Family violence
- **Other** topics which can demonstrate direct alignment with ACCAN's strategic plan

APPLICATION PROCESS

Before Applying

1. Check your **Eligibility**
2. Check your project is within **Scope**
3. Check your project aligns with ACCAN's [Strategic Plan](#), and if you are applying under the *Research Stream*, the **2021 Priority Themes** (for Research Stream applicants only)
4. Consider the **Assessment Criteria**
5. Consider your project's **accessibility requirements**:
 - a. It is ACCAN's expectation that all resources produced under the Grants Program will conform to basic accessibility principles. This means that all documents, images and webpages are accessible to screen readers; and that digital resources such as videos contain captions and audio description, or a transcript. ACCAN staff can provide guidance, however, you are strongly encouraged to build accessibility into the design and planning of your project. This might mean allowing some budget (and time) for professional services to assist you with this.
6. **CONTACT US** with your project idea
 - a. We strongly encourage you to contact us before applying. Applications are assessed independently, so the ACCAN Grants team is available to discuss your project idea and ensure it is relevant to the Program.
 - b. The [ACCAN website](#) has lots of advice and resources to help you apply, including tips on writing a budget, eligibility, etc.

Applying Online

All applications must be submitted online at: accan.smartygrants.com.au

If you don't already have a SmartyGrants account, you will be asked to create a username and password. You can save and edit your application as many times as you wish before submitting. The online application forms comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility standards.

A [Microsoft Word version](#) of the EOI and Full Application form are available on our website, or by contacting the ACCAN grants team, to help draft applications or share the form amongst a team. Submission, however, can only be made online via SmartyGrants.



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Expression of Interest stage

Applicants will first submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). The EOI will include a brief project description, a summary of how you plan to complete the project and details of any outputs to be produced. While noting the smaller Round this year, previous Rounds have attracted between 60-80 EOIs, with approximately 15-20 of these invited through to Full Application stage.

Full Application stage

Shortlisted EOIs will be invited to submit a full application. This invitation may include questions or comments from the Panel to be addressed.

Both the EOI and Full Application stages are competitive, merit based, and assessed by an [Independent Panel](#), not by ACCAN. We therefore encourage all applicants to speak with the Grants Team about their project idea before applying. Our data shows that eligibility rates are greatly improved for those applicants who seek ACCAN input before submission.

After Applying

You will receive confirmation from the SmartyGrants system when your application is submitted.

Your application will be kept confidential and will be accessed only by relevant ACCAN staff and members of the Independent Panel. The ACCAN Board will receive some information in their role as overseer of the assessment process.

ACCAN may seek further information from applicants at any stage in the assessment process.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive written feedback on their applications by email and are asked to contact ACCAN within two weeks from the date of notification if they would like to seek further feedback.

IF YOU ARE FUNDED

Funding Agreement

If your project is selected to receive a grant you will enter into a funding agreement (Deed and Schedule) with ACCAN. This will set out ACCAN's requirements as well as your obligations in the delivery of the project. ACCAN's Deed and Schedule are available to view at [our website](#). Please note that the Deed is as agreed with the Department, and not negotiable. Please review this, or send it to your legal team if you have one, to ensure you and/or your organisation are able to accept these conditions, should you be recommended for funding.

Awarded amounts are paid on delivery of agreed project milestones.

All materials created during the project will remain the intellectual property of you or your organisation. By entering into a funding agreement you agree to:

- Grant ACCAN a permanent license to all materials created during the project, including the right to sub-license, which ACCAN automatically grants to the Department
- Acknowledge ACCAN's support of the project in all public materials (and the Department in supporting ACCAN).

Projects selected for funding will be listed as a [Current Grant](#) on the ACCAN website.



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Project delivery

ACCAN takes a collaborative approach to project management and will provide regular communication and support throughout.

All grantees will be asked to consult with ACCAN early in their work to discuss the accessibility needs of the resources they are planning to produce.

Over the course of the project you will need to provide the following to ACCAN at a time specified in the funding agreement, or when requested:

- **Milestone deliverables**

Depending on your funding agreement, these might be reports, minutes from a reference group meeting, or other outputs at checkpoints in the progress of your project.

- **Records** clearly accounting for funding provided. Records must be kept in such a way that they could be inspected and audited if required.

- **A Project Acquittal Report**

When your project has finished, a form will be provided for you to evaluate the project and document all financial details.

ACCAN may also request:

- **A Project Progress Report** whereupon ACCAN will provide a form for you to complete approximately halfway through the project.