



# Independent Grants Panel

## Call for Expressions of Interest

### 1. BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 About ACCAN

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation representing individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit groups as consumers of communications products and services. ACCAN focuses on goods and services encompassed by the converged areas of telecommunications, broadcasting, the internet and online services, including both current and emerging technologies.

We aim to empower consumers to make good choices about products and services. As a peak body, ACCAN represents the views of the broad and diverse consumer base to policy makers, government and industry to get a better outcome for all communications consumers.

#### 1.2 About the ACCAN Grants Program

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

The Program carries a budget of approximately \$1,250,000 over five years. Generally, one round of the Program will run each calendar year, with funded projects expected to commence from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July each year. The 2020 Round holds a budget of approximately \$300,000. More information about the Program, including Guidelines, is available from the Grants section of the ACCAN website: <https://accan.org.au/grants>

#### 1.3 Grants Program Objectives

The ACCAN Grants Program funds projects that work towards our vision of **communications services that are trusted, inclusive and available for all**. The focus is on creating versatile resources for consumers and a strong evidence base for communications consumer representation. Further, we are seeking projects that assist ACCAN in achieving its strategic goals.

ACCAN's strategic goals are:

1. Providing sector leadership and expertise in the arena of communications policy, research and consumer information.

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)  
Australia's peak body representing communications consumers

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PO Box 639, Broadway NSW 2007

Tel: (02) 9288 4000 | Fax: (02) 9288 4019 | Contact us through the [National Relay Service](#)

[www.accan.org.au](http://www.accan.org.au) | [info@accan.org.au](mailto:info@accan.org.au) | [twitter: @ACCAN\\_AU](https://twitter.com/ACCAN_AU) | [www.facebook.com/accanau](https://www.facebook.com/accanau)

2. Influencing for impact representing consumers in communications policy forums.
3. Delivering consumer outcomes for more affordable, available and inclusive communications for all.
4. Ensuring organisational sustainability with consumer focused operations.

For more details, see ACCAN's *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, available from:

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

## **1.4 About ACCAN's Independent Grants Panel**

The ACCAN Board supports the continuing operation of an Independent Grants Panel ('the Panel') to make recommendations about allocations of grants. The Board wishes to ensure applications to the Grants Program are assessed independently, and that it receives the best possible recommendations for funding of projects.

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

## **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, and will be considered in terms of achieving a range of sectoral skills and experiences across the Panel membership. The ACCAN Board is particularly interested in receiving Expressions of Interest from candidates with strong technical and/or research expertise in the telecommunications sector.

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**

All Expressions of Interest must address the following selection criteria:

- a) Understanding of communications issues especially ACCAN's Strategic Plan;
- b) Expert knowledge of *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 Availability requirement**

To be a member of the Panel, you will need to be available at various intervals between November and July each year. In addition to reviewing grant applications, the Panel generally meets face-to-face once or twice a year (as decided by the Panel) to discuss proposals, and participates in teleconferences and email discussion as needed to ensure due process is followed. Face to face meeting/s are generally held around April – May at the ACCAN offices, Sydney. Reimbursement of travel expenses and a sitting fee is available for face-to-face meetings. The timeline for meetings is agreed with Panel members in advance.

### **2.4 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 Tuesday 8 October 2019.

# Independent Grants Panel

## Terms of Reference

### 1. OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 Panel Functions

The functions of the Independent Grants Panel are to ensure:

- Applications comply with the board-approved Guidelines of the ACCAN Grants Program
- 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 strategic plan
- 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.

#### 1.2 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.

Independent Grants Panel membership expertise will be reviewed in the light of the Priority Themes determined each year prior to the Program Guidelines being published. Should the Panel or ACCAN management consider there to be a shortfall in skills, the Panel may seek external input on a confidential basis for assistance.

### **1.3 Term of Appointment**

Appointment to the Independent Grants Panel is for the period **1 July 2019 until 30 June 2022**. This will generally involve serving on three Rounds of the Program. Members will be 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.

## **2. 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.

### **2.1 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.

### **2.2 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.

### **2.3 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.

## 2.4 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.

## 2.5 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. Sitting or other fees for external advisers are not planned and need prior approval from ACCAN.

## 2.6 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.

## 3. 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.
- Liaise for any external advice.
- 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 Secretariat will convene Panel meetings to provide input and support for the Panel.

Last updated

10 September 2019 4:12pm