



Australian Government

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

Mobile Network Hardening Program— Round 2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

September 2023

Opening date:	Thursday, 7 September 2023
Closing date and time:	17:00 AEDT on Friday, 17 November 2023 (10 weeks after opening)
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Administering entity	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, please contact MNHP@communications.gov.au . Questions should be sent no later than Friday, 3 November 2023
Date Guidelines released:	Thursday, 7 September 2023
Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted Competitive

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Mobile Network Hardening Program – Round 2 processes

The Mobile Network Hardening Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This 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 Guidelines](#).



The grant opportunity opens

We publish the Guidelines on [GrantConnect](#). At the same time the Guidelines are released, the Government will invite applications from Eligible Applicants.



You complete and submit a grant application

You complete the application form and address all of the Eligibility and Assessment Criteria to be considered for a grant. An Application Pack that includes instructions on how to complete the application and any other information required in applications will be released with these Guidelines.



We assess all grant applications

We assess the applications against the Eligibility Criteria. An Assessment Committee assesses your eligible application against the Assessment Criteria including an overall consideration of Value for Money and compares 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 successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature of the grant and will be proportionate to the risks involved.



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 Mobile Network Hardening Program

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

1 Introduction

These Guidelines contain information for Round 2 of the Mobile Network Hardening Program (the Program).

You must read these Guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of Round 2 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.

This grant opportunity will be administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department).

Consistent with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#) (CGRGs), 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.

We have defined key terms used in these Guidelines in the Glossary at section 15.

2 About the grant program

2.1 Mobile Network Hardening Program

The objective of the Program is to co-fund Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (MNIPs), or Network Management Providers (NMPs) that are contracted by an MNO to assist with the management and maintenance of its network, to upgrade mobile network telecommunications infrastructure (Resilience Upgrade) to:

- prevent outages in the event of a Natural Disaster;
- strengthen the resilience of telecommunications facilities to allow them to operate for longer during bushfires and other Natural Disasters; and/or
- enable the rapid restoration of services following an outage.

A Natural Disaster is defined in the Glossary. For the purposes of this 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 Site (defined at section 5.1).

The intended outcome of the Program is to help prevent, mitigate and manage mobile network outages during and/or after Natural Disasters, improving the reliability of mobile voice and data services, and supporting critical public safety communications and access to essential digital services for communities, businesses and emergency organisations.

The Program contributes to the department's 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.*

The Commonwealth has the power to make, vary or administer the Program under Item 420 of the table in Part 4 of Schedule 1AB to the [Financial Framework \(Supplementary Powers\) Regulations 1997](#) (Cth).

We administer the Program according to the CGRGs.

2.2 Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia

The Australian Government is committed to increasing connectivity, bridging the digital divide, improving mobile coverage and protecting communities against natural disasters. 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.

The Government's October 2022 Budget provided \$656 million for the Better Connectivity Plan to improve mobile and broadband connectivity and resilience in rural and regional Australia, including:

- \$400 million to expand regional mobile coverage and improve the resilience of communication systems;
- \$200 million for two further rounds of the Regional Connectivity Program to improve connectivity in regional, rural and First Nations communities;
- \$30 million for the On Farm Connectivity Program to expand connectivity in the agricultural sector;
- \$20 million for an independent audit of mobile coverage to establish an evidence baseline to guide future priorities; and
- \$6 million over three years to extend the Regional Tech Hub to support better consumer awareness and better information regarding digital services.

The \$1.1 billion also includes the \$480 million already delivered by the Government to support NBN Co to upgrade the NBN Fixed Wireless network, with associated benefits to NBN satellite services.

As part of the \$400 million mobile coverage and resilience funding, the Government has committed \$30 million (GST exclusive) for two new rounds of the Program (Rounds 2 and 3).

The Government's new funding commitment of \$30 million for the Program builds on previous investment of \$21.4 million (GST exclusive) in Round 1 (Stages 1 and 2) that is supporting 999 Resilience Upgrades in regional, rural and remote Australia.

3 Grant amount and grant period

3.1 Grants available

Up to \$15 million (GST exclusive) or \$16.5 million (GST inclusive) is available from 2023-24 to 2025-26 for Round 2 of the Program.

There is no minimum or maximum funding amount (up to the limit of available funds and the percentages indicated below) for each Resilience Upgrade under the Program, however funding will not exceed the reasonable capital expenditure costs of implementing each Resilience Upgrade.

Grant funding is available for up to 50% of the capital costs of each Resilience Upgrade.

For Resilience Upgrades that uplift the resilience of a mobile service in a Remote or a Very Remote area¹ or in a First Nations community, grant funding is available for up to 75% of the capital costs of each Resilience Upgrade.

Applicants proposing Resilience Upgrades for First Nations communities will need to demonstrate the benefits of its Resilience Upgrade to a First Nations community. Applicants may use the following definition of a First Nations community as a guide:

a geographic location, bounded by physical or legal boundaries, which is inhabited or intended to be inhabited predominantly (i.e. greater than 50% of usual residents) by First Nations peoples, with housing or infrastructure (power, water, sewerage) that is managed on a community basis. First Nations communities have populations of (but not limited to) 50 or more First Nations people².

¹ Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 - Significant Urban Areas, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State, July 2021

² This definition is based on ABS Release - 2901.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Census Dictionary, 2016 - Discrete Community.

You are encouraged to consult with the local First Nations community and provide evidence of support for the Resilience Upgrade from that community (for example, through letters of support from First Nations community leaders).

You should also consult with third parties that may be affected by, or would support, your proposal, such as emergency services organisations and regional and remote communities.

3.2 Grant period

All Funded Resilience Upgrades must be undertaken within the period and completed by the date specified in your Grant Agreement. Projects will commence from the date the Grant Agreement is executed.

Each Resilience Upgrade should be maintained and operated by you (as the funding recipient) for at least 10 years following the date on which the department confirms with you that we accept the upgrade works have been completed (the Operational Period), in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

The Decision Maker has the discretion to consider shortening the minimum 10-year Operational Period. Applications for Resilience Upgrades that seek a shorter Operational Period must outline the proposed Operational Period, and explain why a shorter period is proposed. The Operational Period will be specified in the Grant Agreement.

While the Government encourages the Grantee to continue to provide the Resilience Upgrade into the future, asset ownership and operation beyond the Operational Period is a matter for the Grantee.

3.3 Third Party funding co-contributions

To increase the reach of the Program, you 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.

If a Resilience Upgrade 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, you will cover the third party's funding.

Third party in-kind co-contributions are your responsibility. The amount of these contributions must be clearly identified in your application to reduce the risk of both third parties and the Commonwealth funding the same activity. These amounts can be reflected in a reduction in the amount of funding you seek for a proposed Resilience Upgrade.

You are responsible for forming relationships and negotiating contributions with any relevant parties, and for testing and/or verifying any advice received from these parties.

4 Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all the Eligibility Criteria.

4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible to apply for funding under Round 2 of the Program, you must have an Australian Business Number (ABN), and be an MNO, MNIP, or NMP.

For the purposes of the Program:

- an MNO means a company that supplies a public mobile telecommunications service within the meaning of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) and holds an apparatus or a spectrum licence (or both) for the supply of public mobile telecommunications services under the *Radiocommunications Act 1992* (Cth);
- an MNIP means a company that provides infrastructure or facilities in Australia that support the provision of public mobile telecommunications services in regional and remote Australia; and

- an NMP means a company that is contracted by an MNO to assist with the management and maintenance of its network. Applications from NMPs must be accompanied by written support from the MNO for the proposed Resilience Upgrade.

5 What the grant money can be used for

5.1 Eligible Grant Activities

To be eligible, each proposed Resilience Upgrade under the Program must:

- demonstrably increase the resilience of a mobile telecommunications service, or multiple mobile telecommunication services (multi-MNO outcomes), that directly provide mobile coverage to an Eligible Location (defined in section 5.2);
- enhance the resilience of a mobile telecommunications service or services against an identified risk that arises from a Natural Disaster that could reasonably expect to threaten the service; and
- not have started construction or be part of the participating telecommunications provider's forward build network or upgrade plans from the period commencing with the date the grant opportunity opens until 30 June 2027.

For example, the capital costs of a Resilience Upgrade may include:

- upgrading power capacity to a minimum of 12 hours;
- providing redundant Backhaul;
- elevating the infrastructure to protect it from floods;
- delivering emergency power solutions, including generators, to rapidly restore services during or after a Natural Disaster event;
- expanding or enhancing a protection zone around a site to increase its resilience to the threat of a Natural Disaster; or
- other hardening measures to increase the resilience of a site.

An Eligible Site is either:

- an existing mobile base station that directly provides mobile coverage to an Eligible Location; or
- an existing site that directly supports one or more mobile base stations that provide mobile coverage to an Eligible Location, for example a tower (providing multi-MNO outcomes), an exchange or a mobile backhaul link.

5.2 Eligible Locations

Eligible Locations are areas within Australia (and its territories) that are not classified in the Urban Centres and Localities geographical units by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2021 as 'Major Urban', that is with a population of 100,000 or more.³

5.3 Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on eligible grant activities related to the Resilience Upgrade. This may include purchasing equipment and supplies, project management, and payment of employees or contractors to carry out the works.

You must incur the expenditure on your Resilience Upgrade between the start and end date of your project, defined in the Grant Agreement, for it to be eligible.

We may exclude an application and/or proposed Resilience Upgrade where funding is for a regular business activity, or an activity that is reasonably expected to be carried out through supply or ongoing management of a mobile telecommunications service.

³ [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3: Significant Urban Areas, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State, July 2021](#)

You will be responsible for any actual capital costs that exceed estimated costs. All operating costs related to Resilience Upgrades will be your responsibility.

For Funded Resilience Upgrades which involve satellite Backhaul, 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 indefeasible right of use for this Backhaul may be included in the capital costs.

5.4 What the grant money cannot be used for

You cannot use the grant funding for the following activities:

- work that is not substantively related to increasing the resilience of the mobile telecommunications service against a Natural Disaster in an Eligible Location;
- operational and/or maintenance costs, other than those specified in section 5.3, incurred as a result of a Resilience Upgrade funded through this grant opportunity;
- any work that is a requirement of or under any federal, state or local government laws, such as the establishment, maintenance, certification or registration of asset protection zones, fire trails or access roads, or hazard reduction works, for example mandatory work required to comply with changes to planning requirements;
- business as usual operational and maintenance or remedial work. This includes maintaining existing clearings or controlling vegetation around a site, replacing existing batteries without significantly increasing the level of back-up power, and general repair or maintenance work to structures; and
- any cost for which an Eligible Applicant is already receiving funding from the Commonwealth, or which is to be covered by its own contributions or other third-party contributions, under a Commonwealth funding agreement.

The department will not meet any costs or expenses incurred by you in connection with your application. You must meet your costs and expenses associated with the application and assessment process, and the preparation, negotiation and execution of the Grant Agreement and other documentation.

6 The assessment criteria

You must address the following assessment criteria in your application. We will assess each proposed Resilience Upgrade based on the weighting given to each criteria.

The amount of detail in your application should be relative to the size, complexity and amount being requested. There is no word limit on your application.

Criterion 1 – Merit of the proposed Resilience Upgrade (60 points)

The merits of each proposed Resilience Upgrade will be assessed according to the following two factors, with up to 60 points awarded for this criterion:

1.a Level of resilience provided (30 points)

- The extent to which the proposed Resilience Upgrade will improve the resilience of a mobile telecommunications service or multiple mobile telecommunications services (multi-MNO outcomes) in an Eligible Location, including but not limited to:
 - the increased power capacity;
 - the demonstrated increase in redundancy of backhaul links; and
 - any other Resilience Upgrade measures and the extent to which they may mitigate risk from a Natural Disaster. For example:
 - hardening structures to protect against fire damage; or
 - elevating a site to protect it from floods.

1.b Benefits to the community (30 points)

- The demonstrated benefits of the proposed Resilience Upgrade to the community in an Eligible Location, including any 'subsidiary' sites also receiving benefits from the upgrade (for example, where the upgrade is at an exchange or feeder site that supports mobile coverage in other Eligible Locations). This may include:
 - the area in square kilometres (km²) of mobile coverage being provided by the site being upgraded;
 - the number of mobile telecommunications networks which will benefit from the upgrade (multi-MNO outcomes);
 - the benefits for Emergency Service Organisations, including provision of mobile services to coordination zones, emergency services premises, and evacuation and assembly points; and
 - the number of premises receiving coverage from the site being upgraded.
- Evidence of the support from:
 - Emergency Service Organisations or relevant organisations with emergency management responsibilities; and
 - the First Nations communities that will receive benefit from the solution.

Criterion 2 – Design and delivery (20 points)

The design and delivery of each proposed Resilience Upgrade will be assessed according to the following factors, with up to 20 points awarded for this criterion:

- how the applicant will maintain the infrastructure being upgraded;
- the applicant's track record delivering similar solutions and access to personnel and/or partners with the right skills and experience. This should include evidence of sound project planning to manage and monitor the project covering scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, budget and risk; and
- the applicant's ability to deliver the upgrade, including availability of key personnel, equipment and finance.

Criterion 3 – Cost of proposed Resilience Upgrade (20 points)

The cost to the Commonwealth of the proposed Resilience Upgrade to determine whether the benefit provided is comparable to the cost. This includes any additional funding provided by the applicant or a third-party co-contribution, above the required co-investment levels specified at section 3.1. Up to 20 points will be awarded for this criterion.

7 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these Guidelines, the Application Pack and the sample Grant Agreement. These documents can be found on [GrantConnect](#).

Any alterations and addenda⁴ will be published on [GrantConnect](#). By registering on GrantConnect, you will be automatically notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

To apply you must:

- complete the Application Pack, including details of each proposed Resilience Upgrade;
- provide all the information requested;
- address all Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Criteria;

⁴ 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

- include all necessary attachments, including letters of support and confirmation of third party contributions;
- ensure all electronic files, regardless of transmission method, are provided in an appropriate Microsoft compatible format (Microsoft Office 2007 or later or PDF files preferred): Geo-spatial information such as maps should be provided in either Mapinfo TAB or MID/MIF; ESRI Shape; GML; or KML format; and
- submit your application by the closing date in Section 7.2.

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

If you find an error in your application after submitting it, you should contact us immediately at MNHP@communications.gov.au. We do not have to accept any additional information, nor requests from you to correct your application after the closing date.

If we find an error or information that is missing, we may ask for clarification or additional information from you that will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your submission after the application closing date.

Applications can be lodged by email to MNHP@communications.gov.au. Application files lodged by email must not exceed a combined size of 10 megabytes per email. A number of emails can be provided, where needed.

Applications may also be lodged using GovTEAMS, the Australian Government's secure online document sharing and project management system. Information about lodging applications using GovTEAMS will be provided to potential applicants on request to the department. Potential applicants may also seek agreement from the department to use an alternative online secure document sharing system.

You should advise us if you intend to lodge your application using GovTEAMS, or if you need to use an alternative electronic lodgement platform at least two weeks before the closing date via email to MNHP@communications.gov.au. If you wish to change the electronic lodgement platform after notifying the department, you should advise us of the change and the reasons why. We may accept changes to the lodgement method.

Where physical electronic media is to be provided, such as a USB stick, the media must be PC-formatted. You should include an index of all electronic documents on the physical electronic media.

Applications provided in hard copy and physical electronic media formats should be delivered via registered post and received prior to the closing date in section 7.2. Applications via post are to be addressed and delivered to:

Director, Mobile Coverage – Roads Section
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The department will acknowledge all applications by email to the nominated contact person within five business days of receipt. Applicants who lodge an application and do not receive acknowledgement of their application should contact the department. If you need further guidance about the application process or if you are unable to submit an application online or via email, contact us at MNHP@communications.gov.au.

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

7.1 Attachments to the application

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided in the Application Pack. You should only attach the requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

7.2 Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates. We will only accept a late application in exceptional circumstances, and may not consider any application submitted after the closing date. Without limiting the department's discretion, exceptional circumstances may include natural disasters or unforeseen technical issues with application forms or lodgement systems.

If you believe there are circumstances which will affect the timely submission of your application, you must contact us via email at MNHP@communications.gov.au before the closing date to negotiate an alternative deadline for your submission.

The department's decision on accepting a late application is final.

Table 1: Expected timing for this grant opportunity

Activity	Timeframe
Guidelines released and applications open	Thursday, 7 September 2023
Applications close	17:00 AEDT Friday, 17 November 2023
Assessment of applications	10 weeks
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	From Quarter 1, 2024
Notification to unsuccessful applicants	From Quarter 1, 2024
Commencement date of Grant Activity	On Execution of Grant Agreement
End date of Grant Activity	As included in the Grant Agreement and by 30 June 2026

7.3 Questions during the application process

All requests for clarification to these Guidelines should be referred to the department by email at MNHP@communications.gov.au. We will respond to emailed questions within three business days. Answers to questions will be posted on [GrantConnect](#).

8 The grant selection process

8.1 Assessment of grant applications

The department will undertake an initial check to ensure each application is complete and that all necessary supporting documents have been submitted as part of the application.

The department will then review your application against the Eligibility Criteria and remove ineligible applications from further consideration.

The Assessment Committee (defined in section 8.2 and the Glossary) will consider eligible applications through a targeted competitive grants process by undertaking a detailed assessment of each application against the Assessment Criteria and other requirements of the Program.

The Assessment Committee will assess eligible proposed Resilience Upgrades included in the application against the Assessment Criteria and requirements of the CGRGs.

The Assessment Committee will consider each proposed Resilience Upgrade on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the Assessment Criteria;
- how it compares to other proposed Resilience Upgrades included in the application and other applications; and
- whether it provides value with relevant money (defined in the Glossary).

When assessing the extent to which the proposed Resilience Upgrade represents value with relevant money, the Assessment Committee will have regard to:

- the Government's objectives for Round 2 of the Program;

- each eligible Resilience Upgrade's ability to contribute to achieving the intended outcomes and objectives of the Program;
- the relative value of the grant being requested;
- the degree to which the proposed Resilience Upgrade will improve the resilience of other MNOs' services provided from the site (multi-MNO outcomes);
- any relevant risks; and
- the number of other mobile base stations/facilities, if any, that are reliant on the infrastructure proposed for upgrade.

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.

8.2 Who will assess applications?

A project team from the department will review the applications against the Eligibility Criteria.

We will establish and chair an Assessment Committee comprising appropriately skilled officials from the department. Committee members may also be drawn from other relevant Commonwealth agencies, such as the National Emergency Management Agency.

The Assessment Committee may seek additional information or advice about you, your application and/or proposed Resilience Upgrade to inform the assessment of merit, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. It may seek this information or advice from State and Territory Governments, other Australian Government Agencies and industry experts. The Assessment Committee may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business. Any third-party or expert providing advice, who is not a Commonwealth Official, will be expected to perform their duties in accordance with the CGRGs.

Based on the recommendations of the Assessment Committee, the department will provide advice to the Decision Maker on recommended eligible Resilience Upgrades and details of the assessment of each eligible Resilience Upgrade.

Recommendations to the Decision Maker will be ranked according to the outcomes of the assessment, from highest to lowest ranked, and annotated to identify when available funding has been exhausted.

8.3 Value with relevant money

Based on the overall value with relevant money assessment, the Assessment Committee may recommend funding one or more Resilience Upgrades which were lower ranked against the Assessment Criteria than other eligible solutions. Based on the overall value with relevant money assessment, the Assessment Committee may also recommend not funding one or more Resilience Upgrades which were highly ranked against the Assessment Criteria.

For example:

- a lower ranked Resilience Upgrade that has been designed to target a community at high risk or in a very remote location may offer better value with relevant money compared to higher ranked solution that predominantly achieves a higher score by providing improved resilience to regions with alternate sources;
- a lower ranked Resilience Upgrade due to cost that provides significantly longer power back-up, such as 24 to 48 hours, in very remote and/or high risk areas; or
- a Resilience Upgrade which is highly ranked may be of significantly higher risk to deliver relative to a lower ranked project.

We may also recommend increasing the level of Commonwealth funding for one or more Resilience Upgrades, should it be considered of higher value with relevant money.

8.4 Who will approve grants?

The Decision Maker is the Minister for Communications.

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 program.

In making their decision, the Decision Maker may seek further information from the Assessment Committee.

The Decision Maker's decision is final in all matters, including:

- approval of proposed Resilience Upgrades for funding; and
- the grant funding amount to be awarded.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions 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 13.1.

9 Notification of application outcomes

Following a decision by the Decision Maker, 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 Feedback on your application

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 you with an opportunity to discuss your application or give you written feedback within one month of your request.

You can submit a new application for the same grant (or a similar grant) in any future grant opportunities under the Program. You should include new or more information in any new application to address any weaknesses that may have prevented your previous application from being successful.

10 Successful grant applications

10.1 The grant agreement

You must enter into a legally binding Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth. Each Grant Agreement has general terms and conditions that cannot be changed.

Each Grant Agreement will set out your obligations and service terms for each Funded Resilience Upgrade. A sample Grant Agreement will be provided with the Application Pack.

You must confirm your compliance with the draft Grant Agreement at the time of submitting your application. You may request changes to the Grant Agreement. The proposed changes and reasons for the changes should be provided with your application.

If you have agreed a Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth in Round 1 of the Program or another similar communications or connectivity grants program that is administered by the department (for example, the Regional Connectivity Program) (Previous Grant Agreement), you may request the Previous Grant Agreement be used as the basis for the Grant Agreement under the Program. This request, with reasons, must be received by the department by Friday, 17 November 2023.

The department may, at its discretion, agree to a request to use the Previous Grant Agreement as the basis for the Grant Agreement.

Where we agree to use a Previous Grant Agreement as the basis for the Grant Agreement under the Program, we will provide you with details of the clauses from the Previous Grant Agreement that we consider need to be amended to reflect the requirements of the Program prior to the commencement of negotiations. These requirements may be drawn from the sample Grant Agreement provided in the Application Pack. You may also identify any terms in the previous Grant Agreement which you consider require adaptation for the Program.

We must execute a Grant Agreement with you before we can make any payments. You should not start any activities relating to the Funded Resilience Upgrade until a Grant Agreement has been executed.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the Grant Agreement.

10.2 Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

Whilst you are required to be compliant with all laws and regulations, you 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 applicable to the Funded Resilience Upgrade.

10.3 How we pay the grant

Payments will be made as set out in the Grant Agreement. The Grant Agreement will state:

- the maximum grant amount to be paid;
- the payment milestones and timeframes for the grant funding;
- the proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the grant (grant percentage);
- the process for reconciling actual costs against estimated costs, including in relation to balancing cost overspends and underspends;
- any financial contributions you must make;
- any in-kind contributions; and
- any financial contribution provided by a third party.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur any additional costs, you must meet them yourself.

We may make an initial payment on execution of the Grant Agreement. We will make subsequent payment on demonstration of achievement of milestones.

10.4 Grants Payments and GST

Payments will be GST inclusive, as set out in the Grant Agreement. If you are registered for the [Goods and Services Tax](#) (GST), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment.

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

Successful grants will be listed on GrantConnect, no later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](#).

12 How we monitor your grant activity

12.1 Keeping us informed

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; or
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the Grant Agreement, you must advise us immediately.

12.2 Reporting

You must submit reports in line with the Grant Agreement. The department may also remind you of your reporting obligations before a report is due. We will expect you to report on:

- progress against agreed milestones and outcomes;
- contributions of other parties, where relevant;
- expenditure of the grant; and
- operation of the Funded Resilience Upgrade over the Operational Period.

The amount of detail in your reports should be commensurate with the size, complexity and amount of the grant.

We will monitor progress by assessing the reports you 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. This may occur, for example, when there are unresolved discrepancies, insufficient documentation to evidence claims, or disagreement between the Grantee and the department about key matters, such as progress or expenditure.

When you complete the grant activity, you must submit a final report. Final reports must:

- identify if, when and how objectives have been achieved;
- include the agreed evidence of expenditure and completion of the activity as specified in the Grant Agreement;
- identify the total eligible expenditure incurred; and
- be submitted in the timeframe and format specified in the Grant Agreement.

The department will only make the final grant payment after we have received, and confirmed acceptance of, a satisfactory final report.

12.3 Grant agreement variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect your progress. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to your grant agreement. Applicants can request a variation by emailing MNHP@communications.gov.au with reasons for the variation and steps that could be taken to deliver the Funded Resilience Upgrade.

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.

12.4 Compliance Visits

We may visit you during or at the completion of your grant activity to review your compliance with the Grant Agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

12.5 Program Evaluation

We will evaluate the Program 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 you, or ask you for more information, for up to one year after finalisation of your Grant Agreement to help us understand how the grant impacted you and to evaluate how effective the Program was in achieving its outcomes.

12.6 Acknowledgement

When you make a public statement about the Funded Resilience Upgrade, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following wording:

“This project received funding from the Australian Government”.

13 Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published Guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct, and is consistent with the CGRGs.

These Guidelines may be changed from time to time by the department. When this happens, the revised Guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

13.1 Enquiries and feedback

The Department’s Client Service Charter applies to complaints about this grant opportunity, available at www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/about/charter.aspx. All complaints about a grant process must be provided in writing.

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this Grant Opportunity should be sent to MNHP@communications.gov.au.

If you do not agree with the way the department has handled your complaint, you may complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually look into 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

13.2 Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the Program. There may be an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest if the department’s staff, any member of the Assessment Committee or advisor and/or the eligible applicant or any of the eligible applicant’s personnel has a:

- professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the Selection Process, such as an Australian Government officer;
- relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which 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.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform the department in writing immediately.

Members of the Assessment Committee and other officials, including the Decision Maker, must declare any conflicts of interest in accordance with the probity requirements of the Program.

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](#) and applicable Australian Government policy and legal requirements.

13.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (the Act) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) (the Principles). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect;
- why we collect your personal information; and
- who we give your personal information to.

Your 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 under this Grant Opportunity. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

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.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the Act and Principles, and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors you engage to assist with the Funded Resilience Upgrade, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the Funded Resilience Upgrade. Accordingly, you must not do anything which, if done by the department, would breach a Principle as defined in the Act.

For further information about our privacy obligations (including how to access or correct personal information or make a complaint) and our contact details for privacy matters, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

13.4 Confidential Information

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).

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.

We will keep any information in connection with the Grant Agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the three conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential;
2. the information is commercially sensitive; and
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

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;
- 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 or Privacy Commissioner;

- 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 Intellectual Property rights

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.

13.6 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (FOI Act).

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.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

Freedom of Information Coordinator
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
 GPO Box 594
 CANBERRA ACT 2601

FOI@infrastructure.gov.au

14 Consultation

Public consultation was conducted prior to these Guidelines being finalised.

15 Glossary

Term	Definition
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDT	Australian Eastern Daylight Time
AEST	Australian Eastern Standard Time
Application Pack	The Application Pack mentioned in section 7 of these Guidelines.
Assessment Committee	A committee established by the Department to assess eligible applications, comprising appropriately skilled officials from the department and, potentially, other relevant Commonwealth agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency.

Term	Definition
Assessment Criteria	The specified principles or standards against which applications will be judged. 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 spreadsheet.
Asset Capital Costs (CAPEX)	The costs to purchase, build or upgrade physical assets under the Program.
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.
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. Defined in subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act.
<u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)</u>	Establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.
Decision Maker	The person who makes a decision to award a grant, as set out in section 8.4.
Department	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.
Eligible Applicant	The meaning given in section 4.1 of these Guidelines.
Eligibility Criteria	The mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant. Assessment Criteria apply in addition to Eligibility Criteria. Set out at section 4.1 of these Guidelines.
Eligible Location	The meaning given in section 5.2 of these Guidelines.
Eligible Site	The meaning given in section 5.1 of these Guidelines.
Emergency Service Organisation	A local Rural Fire Service or other state or territory agency with appropriate expertise to provide confirmation that a location is vulnerable to Natural Disasters.
FOI	Freedom of Information
Funded Resilience Upgrade	A proposed Resilience Upgrade selected for funding under this Round of the Program

Term	Definition
Grant	For the purposes of the CGRGs, 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 money⁵ or other Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) money⁶ 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 to achieve its objectives.
Grant Activity/Activities	Refers to the project/tasks/services that the Grantee is required to undertake.
Grant Agreement	The agreement which sets out the relationship between the Commonwealth and the Grantee, and specifies the details of the grant and responsibilities in relation to the grant.
GrantConnect	The Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
Grant Opportunity	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.
Grantee	The individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant for a Funded Resilience Upgrade project.
GST	Goods and Service Tax
Guidelines	These Guidelines for Round 2 of the Mobile Network Hardening Program.
MNO	Mobile Network Operator as described in section 4.1.
MNIP	Mobile Network Infrastructure Provider as described in section 4.1.
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. Per section 2 of these Guidelines, this includes naturally occurring events that can cause prolonged outages to an Eligible Site.
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 landslides and earthquakes, and extreme weather, and climate-driven hazards, such as east coast lows, floods, bushfires and cyclones.

⁵ Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act.

⁶ Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act.

Term	Definition
NMP	Network Management Providers (as described in section 4.1).
Operational Period	The length of time that a Grantee is required to maintain and operated a site that has been funded for a Resilience Upgrade under the Program (section 3.2).
Program	The Mobile Network Hardening Program
Resilience Upgrade	An upgrade to an existing site described in section 5.1 in an Eligible Location described in section 5.2.
Selection Criteria	Comprises the Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Criteria.
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. Described at section 8 of these Guidelines.
Value for Money	<p>'Value for Money' in these Guidelines refers to achieving 'value with relevant money' which 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.
We/us	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and/or Commonwealth Officials administering the Program