

Community Consultation Guide

2nd Edition

Tips to improve mobile connectivity in your community



ENCOURAGE
CO-INVESTMENT

DETERMINE
ROAD BLOCKS

DEVELOP
INITIATIVES

UTILISE TOOLS/
STRATEGIES

Contents

Introduction.....	3-4
Phase One: Is There a Problem?	
Stage One: Getting Started.....	6
Stage Two: Getting Established.....	7
Stage Three: Set up a Working Group or Committee.....	8
Phase Two: What is the Extent of the Problem?	
Developing a “Community Audit”	
Stage One: Coverage Audit.....	10-12
Stage Two: Usage and Benefits Audit.....	13
Stage Three: Community Awareness Campaign.....	14-16
Phase Three: Getting it Together and Getting in Touch	
Stage One: Community Business Case.....	18-19
Stage Two: Contacts.....	19-20
Acknowledgements.....	21

Improving Your Mobile Connectivity

Introduction: why your community might want to partner with industry and where this guide comes in

Telecommunications services across Australia are provided through a mixture of fixed, wireless and satellite based networks operated by various licensed carriers, notably Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. While agreements exist to ensure Australians have access to fixed line telephones, this agreement does not extend to mobile phones.

Mobile phones are particularly important in rural and remote areas. Distance between towns and properties makes it neither safe nor practical to rely on a fixed line phone, so evidence shows mobile phones are becoming the preferred technology. Mobile coverage services are constantly being upgraded, refurbished or expanded into new locations, but the standard and capability depends on several defining factors, including:

- The scale, demand and nature of the local market.
- The complexity and challenges created by the local landscape and environment.
- The remoteness of the market and its distance from main roads or public transport.
- The level of corporate and government operations within or near the location.

These factors must be taken into account in any business case for future investment in upgrading telecommunications infrastructure, and for sustainable mobile service delivery. However, it is often a challenge for communities to persuade industry and government of the benefits of improving and increasing remote and regional services.

This guide sets out steps to help local communities develop the case for improving mobile network coverage by helping to identify opportunities for industry investment through partnerships with mobile network operators or corporate special interests (e.g. mining companies). While establishing contacts and a community business case is necessary, it is not guaranteed to secure investment. Having a strong idea of need and benefits may tip the balance in your favour and help secure valuable industry and government contacts useful to the future of infrastructure in your community.

What is co-investment? What does it mean here?

Co-investment is an agreement between parties, in this case community groups and industry and often government, to contribute to the 'cost' of an investment. This 'cost' is not limited to dollar amounts – it could be in-kind contributions such as access to land, or agreements on road and resource use.

Principles for co-investment

The principles of any co-investment exercise are:

1. Evidence of a need: many requests for investment start with anecdotal concerns which need proper exploration. Evidence of the scope of the problem, and an assessment of demand should be mapped out to build a case for future co-investment.
2. Government intervention: while there may be several government infrastructure programs available, reliance on government intervention as the only source of investment in mobile network development may not always result in the best outcomes for communities as there may not be enough funding available or priorities may be directed towards specific cases. Local communities should explore alternative ways of improving investment in local digital infrastructure.
3. Cost benefit: each option for co-investment should be supported by a sustainable business case showing that benefits outweigh costs. There should also be clear evidence of community support and consultation.

What could your community do?

Use this guide to develop a community co-investment plan. A community co-investment plan is a road map to increasing the viability of investment in communities. It has three major functions:

- 1) It provides communities with a guide to developing a needs assessment.
- 2) It is a useful tool to help communities develop a business case for investment.
- 3) It can be used to establish contacts with industry and government.

You can begin using this guide at any of the steps. The order given is a suggested flow for those who are at the earliest stages of the partnership seeking process.

What is co-investment? What does it mean here?

Co-investment is an agreement between parties, in this case community groups and industry and often government, to contribute to the 'cost' of an investment. This 'cost' is not limited to dollar amounts – it could be in-kind contributions such as access to land, or agreements on road and resource use.

Principles for co-investment

The principles of any co-investment exercise are:

1. Evidence of a need: many requests for investment start with anecdotal concerns which need proper exploration. Evidence of the scope of the problem, and an assessment of demand should be mapped out to build a case for future co-investment.
2. Government intervention: while there may be several government infrastructure programs available, reliance on government intervention as the only source of investment in mobile network development may not always result in the best outcomes for communities as there may not be enough funding available or priorities may be directed towards specific cases. Local communities should explore alternative ways of improving investment in local digital infrastructure.
3. Cost benefit: each option for co-investment should be supported by a sustainable business case showing that benefits outweigh costs. There should also be clear evidence of community support and consultation.

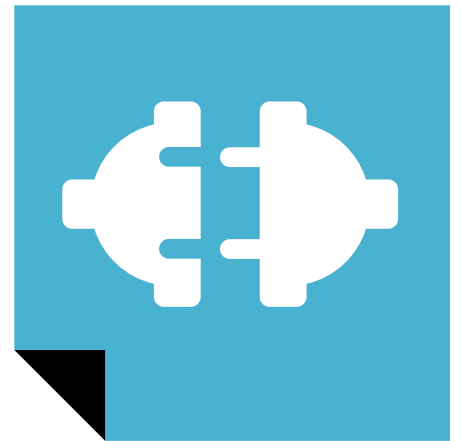
What could your community do?

Use this guide to develop a community co-investment plan. A community co-investment plan is a road map to increasing the viability of investment in communities. It has three major functions:

- 1) It provides communities with a guide to developing a needs assessment.
- 2) It is a useful tool to help communities develop a business case for investment.
- 3) It can be used to establish contacts with industry and government.

You can begin using this guide at any of the steps. The order given is a suggested flow for those who are at the earliest stages of the partnership seeking process.

Phase One: Is There a Problem?





Get together to identify if the need exists and encourage involvement

Stage One: Getting Started

A community should undertake a needs assessment to determine and address "gaps" between where it is at, and where it wants to get to. This first stage contains a needs assessment check list for use as a first step for communities wishing to identify and define local mobile service coverage issues.

Establishing if there is a large scale problem is step one in any needs assessment. To build a business case, mobile reception problems must be identified for a reasonable percentage of the community. There is no set scale as to what level of need will tip the balance in favour of future mobile network investment, but following this process allows a community to judge if further action should be taken.

Rally interested parties:

You will need to build up a network of people in your area who are having similar mobile coverage problems. Use all your contacts to do this, and get them to call other locals they know who are sharing the same frustrations to enlist their support. One option to consider is a call out on social media. It's important to try and gain widespread community support early on to avoid any setbacks or conflicts later on.

Stage Two: Getting Established

Once you have formed a group of interested people, you need hard information to get a clear idea of how far the problem goes. You will need more information and involvement from the wider community to get the ball rolling. Get the group together and agree on a time and place for a consultation meeting about mobile reception, open to all locals. Consider lining the first meeting up with a local event to help attract attention, and advertise the meeting through the local council, paper or community hub. The meeting doesn't need to be official. Hold it at home, in a community.

Consider involving the following key people/organisations:

Local emergency services:

Your local emergency services will benefit from improved mobile coverage in critical situations.

Local government officials:

Your local council will likely have communications or local business managers. Contact them and see if they could become involved or offer you information on getting started. It's important to get your Federal MP behind you as this will make success more likely.

Regional Development Australia:

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a national network of 55 committees made up of local leaders who work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the development of their regions (rda.gov.au)

As the regional development voice of their communities, RDA committees:

- consult and engage with communities
- promote and participate in regional programs and initiatives
- provide information and advice on their region to all levels of government, and support informed regional planning

Prominent local business and community groups or leaders:

The Country Women's Association, local farmers/growers/small business interest groups, schools and Parents and Citizens associations are all groups that routinely involve themselves in community advocacy and action. Would they be interested in helping? Do they have a member or volunteer who works on communications issues? Do they have a space available for meetings?

Local experts:

Establish who local experts are. These might be former or current technicians, radio engineers, tech experts or just tech savvy community members. Are they interested in the issue and would they like to help? Use your connections! Does a friend's son work for Telstra? Does your neighbour know a lot about mobile phone technology?

Stage Three: Set up a Working Group or Committee

After your first meeting you might find the whole community is interested in taking part, or you may have a group of interested people. Either way, to progress you will need a core working group to organise materials and undertake actions on behalf of the community. At the start, a few logistical matters need to be taken care of by the working group to run effective public consultation meetings. During these public consultation meetings you can get a better understanding of how big the problem is and who could help.

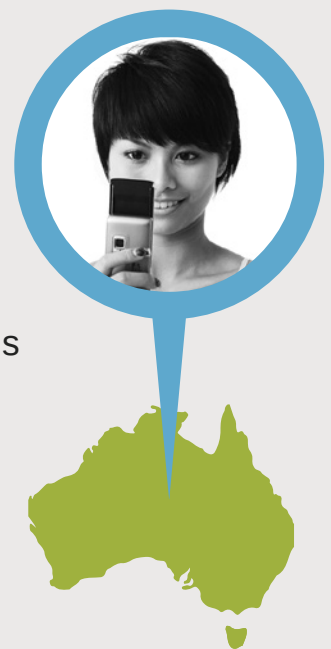
Regular meetings will be needed to keep this work on track and focused. You may discover after one or two meetings that service issues appear to only be affecting a handful of local consumers. This does not reduce the importance of their concerns, but their specific issues may be dealt with in a more appropriate manner.

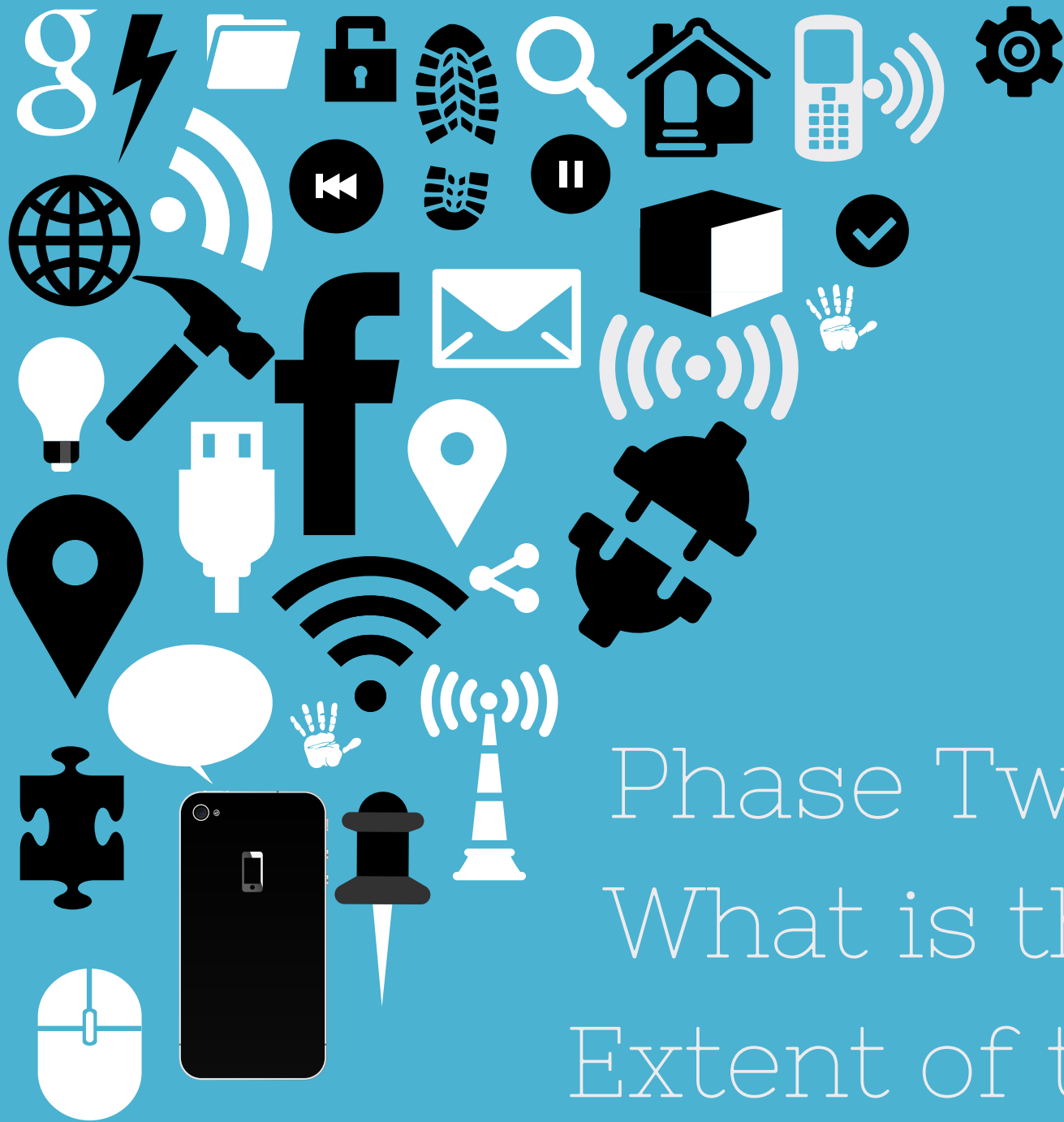
For example, solutions may be available on a more individual level. The ACCAN tip sheet 'Poor mobile reception: what can you do?' (accan.org.au/tipsheets) is a useful guide. It contains information on contacting your provider for help and making a complaint about poor coverage. Information on approved mobile repeaters, which may be enough to fix a small scale mobile coverage problem, can be found on the Australian Communications and Media Authority's website (acma.gov.au).

You'll need to consider:

- 1) Planning for the meeting (who writes the agenda and goals?).
- 2) Setting up the meeting (logistics - where and when).
- 3) Running the meeting (who will be chairing/facilitating/taking minutes and recording action to follow up?).
- 4) Following up (after the meeting - who looks after the minutes and follows up on the action items?).

It's important to have these details hammered out before pursuing the next phase, which will include a bigger push for data on the extent of coverage issues.





Phase Two:
What is the
Extent of the
Problem?
Developing a
“Community
Audit”

A Community Audit identifies and collects information on the current connectivity, use and benefit of improved local mobile services. It helps examine and measure the extent of the problem, and identifies the benefits of resolution for a community. It's important to undertake this audit early so your community has all the relevant information when approaching potential investors.



Stage One: Coverage Audit

Once you know the problem exists and the need to co-invest has been recognised, you can begin building a complete profile of the problem. You must be able to clearly identify local coverage deficiencies. Often the first sign of deficiency is regular complaints of poor or patchy services, so you would already be aware of anecdotal evidence of the issue. Another sign is existing services provided through a technology that is reaching its capacity and performing badly.

This is often the case for the following:

1. Mobile network wireless coverage in hilly areas, or where properties are located in and around dense foliage.
2. Communities where recent expansion extends away from existing mobile tower sites.
3. New subdivisions that develop outside town limits, particularly in undulating landscapes or near forests.

Assessing the deficiency in mobile networks can be particularly difficult. The following helpful steps are recommended before deciding to pursue further improvements to mobile coverage:

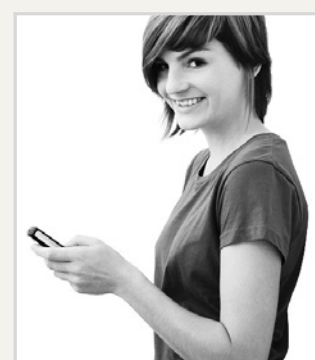
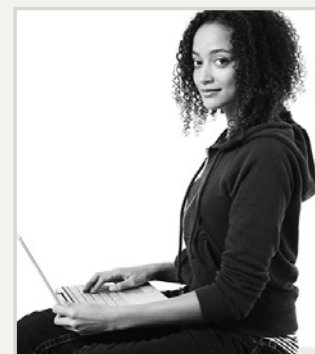
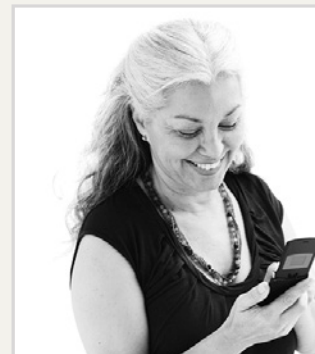
1. Consult existing mobile network operators (generally Telstra, Optus or Vodafone) to ascertain what they believe to be the standards of coverage in the area.
2. Review published coverage maps and compare these to “on the ground” circumstances to identify prospective barriers to coverage. Don't restrict yourself to coverage maps supplied by the mobile networks.

3. Look for areas prone to issues where there has been recent growth in population or phone users. Increased usage without upgraded transmission capacity can cause service deficiencies.

4. Survey the population (home owners and businesses) to gauge trouble spots.

Suggested questions for a consumer coverage survey

- Who is your provider?
- What brand of phone do you have?
- What model is it?
- Is it a 4G, 3G or 2G phone?
- The location you are providing feedback on (for example your home, farm, office, or a road or highway).
- How many signal bars do you get inside?
- How many signal bars do you get outside?
- Do your calls drop out at this location?
- Do you use an external antenna?
- Is this an ongoing problem? How long has it been as issue?
- Have you tried other providers?
- Is your issue with:
 - Coverage – bars on phone? OR
 - Performance – speed or consistency of speed when using a device to access Internet.
- Have you contacted your provider?
- An additional comments section should be included to capture any extra information.



Your community can also get a carrier-independent assessment of network performance in your area. For example, Digital Economy Group (digitaleconomygroup.com.au) - provides cost effective independent network performance testing for all three carriers at the same time. Detailed reports based on the testing are then used as the business case for new sites, upgrades and increasing local demand.



Stage Two: Usage and Benefits Audit

A usage and benefits audit maps out community participation in existing mobile technology, and measures the extent it might be limited by the poor or limited mobile coverage footprint identified by the coverage audit. There are various areas where you might gather data to help your community demonstrate a need. Many are listed below, but this is not an exhaustive list. Consider how mobile services are used, or could be used, in your community and what might improve with better services.

Uptake

- Number of devices in the community
- Where there is public WiFi access
- Use of social media

Social Benefits

- Health
- Education
- Local Government
- Culture and arts
- Population

Economic Benefits

- Business use
- New developments
- Retail investment
- Tourism & hospitality
- Primary production
- Resource investment

Suggested Questions

You might choose to identify a number of points from case studies or testimonies from local experts to use in community surveys. This is a list of suggested questions that can provide insight into how coverage issues have affected your community's lifestyle:

- What are services like in the region?
- How have mobile coverage issues affected local business?
- How have coverage issues affected education?
- Are there sufficient Government and health services locally or are they a long way off?
- Would better mobile coverage attract people to your area?
- Have service professionals or visitors left or shortened their stay due to poor coverage?
- Are there existing services that would benefit from increased coverage? If so how?
- Is there new investment lined up for the area? If so what and when?
- Does the community host any major events?
- What does population growth look like for the region?
- Are there any business opportunities that could exist in your locality with better coverage that don't exist now?

Stage Three: Community Awareness Campaign

As part of the final stage of Phase Two you may wish to undertake a community awareness campaign to seek further information, or update your community on the project's progress. Some form of continued public education or consultation would be useful to communicate the benefits of the project and to get the ongoing support of your local community for investment and participation in associated activities to ensure the best chance of success. Make sure your community is aware of the infrastructure and space required to build a new mobile tower, and what a new tower will look like. This will limit potential conflicts if your site is chosen.

What can we offer?

Developing a Value Proposition

A value proposition highlights and explains how improved mobile coverage will deliver specific quantifiable value to your community. A value proposition for expanding mobile coverage in your area will be based on the Community Audit and usage and benefits audit. The value proposition can be used as part of a business case to attract the investment of mobile network operators, and is the companion to your needs assessment.

Understanding Industry Needs

It is important to identify and understand the interests of mobile network operators in order to gauge what will attract them to invest in your community and how their needs could line up with yours. This might be a good stage to organise or invite a guest speaker to meetings with experience in working with the industry, such as a local technician, Council person or a representative from a mobile network operator. Examples of potential triggers for mobile network operator investment that are useful to bear in mind are:

- Communities with significant populations and/or expected high population growth.
- Communities adjacent to a major industrial or resources based project.
- Communities with a concentration of public facilities (schools, hospitals, libraries, police stations, fire stations) not currently serviced by high capacity networks.
- A community aligned with a significant Federal/State Government development policy such as the Regional Centres Development Plan, known as the "Super Towns" project in Western Australia.
- Communities close to proposed new infrastructure corridors, highways and transport routes.
- A community served by an existing digital community hub or resource centre.



Identifying Co-investment Sources in Your Community

Once your community and working group understands more about how industry investment priorities line up with community needs and features, you can begin to identify co-investment options for negotiation. Co-investment goes two ways and any benefits you can offer investors to help lower costs and streamline processes can help increase your chances of improving services. Co-investment in support of mobile infrastructure development takes various forms:

In-Kind Support:

Some communities may have funds, through local government, business associations or fund raising that they might wish to contribute toward the cost of building a base station in an area where the business case does not stack up, owing to the cost of construction or the ongoing costs. Other in-kind support can be offered such as access to land.

Cost Mitigation:

Direct cash contributions to the developer to pay for extra infrastructure, including financial contributions from Local Government, private businesses and not-for-profit bodies. Other assistance could involve the removal or amendment of physical or regulatory barriers to the deployment of digital infrastructure. Refer to Case Study One [on page 16].

What can you do to smooth the process and make success more likely?

- Local communities can help identify appropriate sites for mobile base stations that meet community needs in advance of them being required. Local Councils can ensure that the planning process is as easy as possible and sites are identified that meet requirements.
- Your community can also organise an assessment of appropriate sites for mobile towers with a consultant radio engineer or through Telstra.
- Ensure your community supports the chosen locations for a new mobile base station to avoid conflict further down the track.
- Gaining resource consents and sign-offs from local government can speed-up the process by as much as six months if your site is chosen for a new mobile base station.
- Granting access to services or facilities through shared resources or infrastructure co-location. For example allowing a developer to co-locate new digital infrastructure with existing infrastructure. Access to power is an important service. Base stations need access to power sources, and local communities and councils will have information about sites which have easy and ready access to power. Local communities can also lobby for reduced power concessions for base stations in regional areas where there is a social need to expand mobile coverage.
- Agreeing to the co-location of assets with other construction projects by State Governments, utilities, private companies and Local Councils such as underground power, street scape work, new bridges, roads, rail corridors, pipe lines and land developments. For an example, refer to Case Study Two [on page 16].

Case Study One:

Jemalong Irrigation Company and Lachlan Shire community

Jemalong Irrigation Limited employed two consultants to assist their advocacy efforts for two new mobile base station sites in the area near Forbes NSW. The consultants scoped out the best potential sites for the new base stations, and Jemalong worked with the Forbes and Lachlan Shire Councils to secure financial and in-kind support. Vodafone is building stations at the two selected sites under Round One of the Mobile Black Spot Programme.

Things to think about:

Even if you are unable to work with professional consultants like Jemalong, you can still work with your local council to identify the best spots for a new base station. Consider things like whether adequate and reliable power supply and backhaul are available to the site, and make sure you have community support for the locations you choose.



Case Study Two:

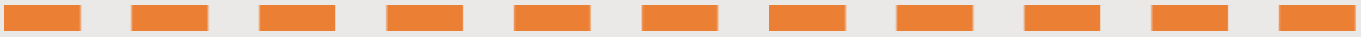
Co-location in Glen Innes

Under Round One of the Mobile Black Spot Programme, Vodafone committed to building a mobile base station near Glen Innes, NSW, with the support of the Inverell and Glen Innes Severn Shire Councils. An international wind power company offered to host the mobile antennas on one of its 90 metre tall wind turbines, meaning coverage was greatly improved and the base station now covers nine former mobile black spots.

Phase Three:
Getting it Together
and Getting in
Touch



Once the research stages are finished, your data needs to be analysed and edited. Not all information will be relevant, so it is important to review what has been gathered. From this information, your working group must decide on the community's most relevant needs, benefits and value points. It is also important to ensure your community agrees with what is decided, and that the research outcomes accurately reflect its needs.



Stage One: Community Business Case

What does the big picture look like?

A community business case is a summary outlining all the information your needs assessment and value proposition have collected. It is a simplified profile of the eventual document that can be presented to potential investors. In addition to defining the purpose and ownership of the co-investment project so far, it helps sell the project to the wider community and encourages further commitment and involvement.

What is the purpose of the community business case?

- To confirm priorities and objectives:

You must have a clear idea of the priority needs expressed by your community and how they are reinforced by your data. What areas are most in need of coverage improvement? Who will benefit most from increased coverage and how? Are there priority services or issues that would be enhanced with improved coverage?

Now that your working group has evidence of the issue and specific community needs, it can define a clear set of desired outcomes based on those needs. Having a clear set of objectives when approaching mobile network operators will help them understand how you can work together. It is also good to have some idea of how flexible those objectives are (i.e. what is or is not negotiable).

- To define your community value:

The community business case needs to determine the investment gap. This is where your value proposition will be most relevant. It is important to determine where your value is strongest. What can you offer and how do those features overlap to line up with industry concerns? How does your community plan help offset the costs of industry investment?

- To confirm and inform stakeholders:

The participation of community members and relevant stakeholders in the preparation and assessment of the completed business case is an important stage in the ownership process for the project. It also increases the confidence of the participants in their ability to identify and develop real solutions to their mobile coverage problems (or responses to opportunities). At this stage you should confirm and finalise any agreements with parties who might be facilitating or providing any of the services, funding or access outlined in your value proposition.

- To confirm the timetable:

Can you establish a time line for the tasks you have left? How long do you want to take attracting investors, compiling your data and when do you hope to achieve some of your outcomes?

Stage Two: The Contacts



Now that you have all your information together you will need to look into making some industry contacts. This process is very fluid and hopefully by now you have been able to get the help of local council members, RDA committees or expert parties to get your proposal started.

Here we will provide some information on the three major mobile network providers and the best ways to get in touch with them. It's important to note that this will be most effective as the last step in your process. You want to maximise your chances by putting forward as detailed description of your needs as possible. Similarly these contacts should not be used in the case of an individual's service or billing issues. Details of customer care lines for these problems can be found on each provider's websites.



Telstra

Telstra's Area General Managers (AGMs) are senior members of Telstra's regional management team and are the company's key contact in their regional area. They are accountable for customer experience, business and network performance, and community engagement, and are Telstra's contact point for network infrastructure and mobile phone coverage queries. Area General Managers report to Telstra Regional Directors, who are key members of Telstra Country Wide's senior leadership team.

Contact details for Telstra's AGMs can be found here:

<http://www.telstra.com.au/telstracountrywide/contact-us/index.htm>



Optus

Optus has indicated that they are happy to accept and discuss submissions by communities for increasing mobile coverage in their local area in two ways:

- 1) If you're interested in the Australian Government Mobile Blacks Spots Programme and/or partnering with Optus as a community, please email: **mobileblackspotprogramme@optus.com.au** with details of your submissions or proposals.
- 2) For all other matters, please call the customer switch board on 02 8082 7800 and ask to be put through to our community relations team.



Vodafone

Vodafone has indicated community groups may contact the Head of Public Policy directly with their proposals via the following:

Tim McPhail
tim.mcphail@vodafone.com.au
 0487 323 333



Acknowledgements



ACCAN wishes to thank Mr Jim Wyatt of Optimi Digital for allowing ACCAN to adapt information from his organisation's co-investment tool kit and consultation service guidelines. You can read more about Optimi Digital's consultation services by following the link <http://www.optimidigital.com.au/>

We would also like to acknowledge the involvement and information provided by Michael Whereat, President of the Australian Smart Communities Association and representatives of Telstra, Optus and Vodafone.

Community Consultation Guide

2nd Edition

accan

