



Response to Backing Indigenous Ability
Discussion Paper



Australian Government

**Department of Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts**

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Beam Communications :Written response for BIA Questions.

- **Q1 What did TAPRIC and previous initiatives do well? Where did TAPRIC and previous initiatives fall short?**

No Comment as we were not part of the previous TAPRIC initiative.

- **Q2 How can the design and delivery of Backing Indigenous Ability be optimised to achieve long term sustainable quality telecommunications solutions for Indigenous communities?**

To create an equal and easy to use process for all communities to ensure a level playing field. To involve each individual community in the process and delivery of their specific communication needs.

To allow each community via a standard evaluation sheet to determine what communication solutions are needed to enhance their community rather than have someone from "Government" tell them what they need. The more each community can be involved and play a real role in setting their requirements' the more long term ownership and usage that will follow from this.

- **Q3 Should the installation of community phones into Indigenous communities be regarded as a priority under Backing Indigenous Ability?**

Yes, the ability to have access to basic communications for all indigenous people must be the top priority of this initiative. A phone for the community should be a minimum that each and every community must have.

- **Q4 Is it appropriate to use regional agents and ICCs to identify communities in need of community phones and to assist them in an application process? How else could priority communities in need of community phones be identified?**

A community phone should be available to each and every community, so a process to identify them is not required as all communities should have a community phone available to them as a minimum; obviously there are some boundaries under the provision of the service that defines a community.



- **Q5 Is it appropriate to use an application process to identify a need for a community phone? If so, what should be the key elements of the application process? What are the alternatives to using an application process?**

No, as stated above, a community phone should be a 'given' to all Indigenous communities as a minimum communication platform for all remote Indigenous communities.

- **Q6 Once priority communities requiring a community phone are identified, what is the best way to facilitate provision of the phone? For example, should there be a tender process or some other approach?**

Based on the comments above and making a community phone available to every community, the fulfilment / selection of the best type that suits an individual community should be decided by that specific community. A 'preferred' supplier / solution list should be made available from the BIA and the community selects the best option from that list to meet their needs.

- **Q7 Are hub communities the appropriate location for implementing public access Internet facilities? If so, how best can hub communities be prioritised as appropriate locations for new Internet access?**

We don't have a description of what a 'hub' community is. Whilst this would seem like a logical cost saving mechanism, it is worth investigating further the use of intelligent technologies that can provide a greater level of service down to a wider reach than just a hub.

- **Q8 Should ICCs, regional agents or other assistance be used to identify communities with a need for Internet facilities and assist them in an application process? How else could priority sites for Internet facilities be identified?**

Yes, these resources should be used to identify and facilitate the application process. Priority communities could be identified by:

- Numbers of school aged children living in that community
- Any business that is conducted in that community that could be enhanced with online access
- Any special needs of that community that could be fulfilled by internet access like for example, special diet requirements or on line medical advice.



- **Q9 Is it appropriate to use an application process for communities to identify a need for Internet facilities? If so, what should be the key elements of the application process? What alternative process could be used?**

Yes, an application process should be used so communities can apply where they require access to the internet. The key elements should be around real examples as to what the internet access is required for etc. This is to get each community to put some thought in why they want it as apposed to just getting because they can. There should be no other limiting criteria, just a good example of why they want it proving the application is justified.

- **Q10 Once implemented in a community, how best can the use of the facilities be encouraged? What arrangements such as Shared Responsibility Agreements or other local or regional agreements should be used for communities to support the installation and maintenance of Internet services?**

The establishment of local "Internet Champions" (IC's) from within the community should be established. These people will be selected from he community who have a keen interest in learning about the internet and who would be excited and have the skills to assist fellow members of their community to use the Internet. Initially training sessions should be run for all community members incl the IC's. Once these courses have completed, then the IC's will be responsible for keeping the profile and interest of internet in the community and identify / report on any additional resources etc. Each community should have their own website which forms part of a total Indigenous Internet where by the history / stories / members etc of every community could be stored. The IC's could be responsible for collecting and gathering the relevant information for their community and assist in keeping the content current in regards to births and deaths etc. This way, the entire community can be involved and contribute to their website. For Installation and maintenance support, a tender should be done to identify a company who can provide these services.



- **Q11 Are there more innovative models of delivering Internet access to Indigenous communities?**

Look at the opportunity to deliver internet for the community and the public / tourist market. To have a shared facility to help manage costs where by 1 room would belong to the community to use whenever required and 1 room c\ould be used by the general public / tourist market. These facilities could be promoted as destinations to stop and catch up with friends etc over the internet. This would bring additional traffic to the community that could then promote and sell additional goods and services ranging from cold drinks to local Indigenous art etc. This would provide the internet access for the community that the ongoing costs would be subsidised by the public use and the community would also generate additional revenue and jobs by the passing trade.

- **Q12 Are PC-based webcam videoconferencing facilities appropriate for Indigenous community needs? What parameters should be set for deciding when dedicated videoconferencing facilities need to be implemented into sites? What size of community is appropriate to receive videoconferencing facilities in the context of sustainability?**

Yes, PC passed video conferencing via small and easy to use webcams can be easily deployed and managed across all communities that have internet access. Any community that has internet access should also be given videoconferencing facilities due to the low additional cost to supply this enhancement.

- **Q13 What factors are contributing to the low use of videoconferencing facilities in many communities?**

Lack of understanding and 'technology fear' is the major cause to low use of this product. The IC's could be used very well to help encourage and promote the use of video conferencing in their community. Education session highlighting benefits that would enhance the needs of that specific community. The IC's would be responsible in investing what these topics / examples are before the sessions to ensure everyone see's real practical examples of how they use video conferencing to enhance their lives. Previously limited availability to a lower cost alternative to expensive satellite airtime.



- **Q14 Should ICCs, regional agents or other assistance be used to identify communities with a need for videoconferencing facilities? How else could priority locations for videoconferencing facilities be identified?**

As per question 12, all communities with Internet access should be given the option to have video conferencing if they want to.

- **Q15 What can be done to ensure that videoconferencing facilities introduced into a community are widely used? For example, how should the appropriate location of videoconferencing sites be decided?**

For usage as per question 13, and ensure that real tangible examples are used to educate and excite the community on video conferencing applications. The location of the site should be the most central locations for the community and also the most convenient location where the public could also access the system if this is promoted. It should also be located near any existing infrastructure like utilities and community areas etc.

- **Q16 Is it appropriate to use an application process for communities to identify a need for videoconferencing facilities? If so, what should be the key elements of the application process? Should communities need to establish a certain level of demand for the facilities as part of the application process?**

As per question 12, all communities with internet access should be given the choice of also obtaining video conferencing.

- **Q17 What arrangements such as Shared Responsibility Agreements or other local or regional agreements should be used for communities to support the installation and maintenance of videoconferencing facilities? What form should these take?**

For Installation and maintenance support, a tender should be done to identify a company who can provide these services.



- **Q18 How best can skill gaps be identified? Is it appropriate to use the ICCs, community champions and regional agents to identify priority areas for training and skills development in the area of telecommunications? How else could training and skills development needs of communities be identified?**

Yes, with emphasis on the IC's to identify and escalate any skill gaps with a vendor who would have a range of tools for the IC to select from depending on that communities needs.

- **Q19 What types of training and skills development sessions on telecommunications are appropriate and how should these be implemented? Are different approaches required for different age groups? What flexible or innovative approaches could be undertaken to identify and deliver training and development sessions?**

A catalogue of tools should be made available to support / train a range of items for video conferencing. The IC's would identify the specific skill gap and select the most appropriate tool to fill that gap. The catalogue would have tools for different age groups and knowledge levels. It should also range from a "instructor" type of learning module to a self paced learning modules, with simple and easy to use learning checks that the IC's could view and assist in any areas of difficulty for that specific user.

- **Q20 Is a grants program an appropriate way to fund communities to deliver training and skills development sessions within accountability guidelines?**

A tender should be done for a company to build and support library of internet and video conferencing applications that each community would have access to. The company would also be responsible to update and monitor the effectiveness of each learning module and where required change and update the modules as the program continues to ensure its effectiveness.

- **Q21 How could communities support appropriate training and skills development programs?**

Via the IC's who would be responsible to identify skill gaps, select the appropriate learning module to address that gap with assist from the vender and follow up to see if the gap has been filled once the module had been completed. The IC's could also identify set tasks that could be solely done via video conferencing and ensure that this is implemented to keep regular exposure for as many community members as possible.



• **Q22 What obstacles exist for the successful delivery of training and skills development?**

Having a community member in every community who would take on the role of IC. It requires a community member to help ensure its success as purely having "outsiders" tell them what and when to do it will have little to no success.
Physical access to communities due to their remoteness is also an obstacle.

• **Q23 Are community champions an appropriate way to engage the community and assist them in using telecommunications technology? For what size of community would a community champion be appropriate? Would every Indigenous community with a phone, Internet or videoconferencing facility need access to a local champion?**

Yes, every community should have a Champion to promote the range of communication and internet tools available to enhance their lives.

• **Q24 What roles could community champions play within communities?**

As listed in the answers above, they would play a vital role in ensuring that the communication / internet tools made available were the right ones to meet their needs and that they were utilised effectively. They would also identify and worked with individuals to fill any skill gaps.

• **Q25 How could community champions be identified within regions and communities?**

An application interview process due to the importance of the role. Existing Internet communication technology skills should not be a prerequisite as someone with the excitement and motivation would be the key behaviours to select from. The knowledge can be easily taught to all champions.



- **Q26 What would be the best way to engage and compensate community champions for their role and how could their performance be monitored and assessed?**

A flexible reward programme should be established that a champion could select from a range of rewards for 1 that best suited them. Not all champions for example would want a monetary reward and may want additional access to additional technology. The reward structure should be directly tied to usage of devices located in their community and the amount of available time to encourage that systems are looked after and serviced correctly. A knowledge survey could be completed by community members prior to establish a bench mark that could then be revisited and increases in knowledge would be attributed directly to the champion and rewarded.

- **Q27 What models of delivering increased culturally appropriate content to the Internet could be introduced under Backing Indigenous Ability?**

Funding specific development of content in conjunction with individual communities and for each community to have their own content creating greater ownership. This could be aggregated in a Indigenous Intranet where by all communities would be able to learn about other communities and sections of the site could also be made available to the public so they too can learn more about Indigenous communities, but the communities can also keep sections private.

- **Q28 How could a grant or funding model to encourage development of culturally appropriate content be structured? What are the benefits and risks of the models?**

A Tender process for a vender would be done and they would then work with community champions who would collect the information and the vender would then arrange for the uploading of that content.

- **Q29 Will the ability to digitally record and archive culturally significant material encourage usage of Internet services?**

Yes, because its specific to them and their communities and they get to have areal say in what is said and how that is displayed.



- **Q30 What funding approaches could be adopted to encourage the recording and archiving of culturally significant material under Backing Indigenous Ability?**

As above tender process would be required.

- **Q31 Who should facilitate demand aggregation within communities and regions? Is it appropriate that ICCs, regional agents and community champions assist with demand aggregation or should alternative models be implemented (for example using a demand aggregation broker)?**

Yes, the community champion should be the key person who collects and forwards the content from individuals and the community for uploading and also ensuring that all content for their community is up to date, for example births , deaths etc.

- **Q32 What other initiatives could assist in demand aggregation?**

Online indigenous community development.

- **Q33 What innovative and/or flexible approaches are being used elsewhere that could be used to deliver elements of Backing Indigenous Ability?**

No comment

- **Q34 What technologies offer greater flexibility and why?**

Satellite, due to being able to be deployed anywhere in Australia and can be built to suit each communities specific needs, It also allows 1 platform to be used across all communities creating an equal playing field. Satellite can also be integrated with existing communication platforms like the PSTN network and the 2 way radio network.

- **Q35 What are some innovative means of service delivery to provide telecommunications improvements to Indigenous communities?**

Commitment by the government to long term support and development of specific product developments focussed on the community.



- **Q36** What are some innovative approaches that could be used to fund communities in need under the Backing Indigenous Ability program?

Reselling access to "Grey Nomads" and tourists or companies working near a specific community.

- **Q37** How should funding be provided under Backing Indigenous Ability?

On a grant type basis

- **Q38** What type(s) of funding provision best suit each program element?

As above.

- **Q39** Should a mix of funding approaches be used?

Yes

- **Q40** How can communities be assisted to develop grants applications so as to compete on a more equal basis for funding?

The application process should be based on set requirements for each application and if the community meets that specific requirement then they should be given access to that application. So it should be an easy to fill out application form of fairly straight forward yes / no answers rather than large written applications that would penalise any community that wasn't good at writing skills or add additional support costs by providing assistance in writing large application documents.

- **Q41** In delivering Backing Indigenous Ability in a culturally appropriate manner, what should be done to enable acceptance and ownership of telecommunications technology to aid sustainability within Indigenous communities?

Reselling of access and working with existing key suppliers to help fund ongoing supply due to cheaper support costs eg: Centrelink.



- **Q42** What are some best practices in engaging communities in the planning, development and implementation stages of introducing or improving telecommunications technology?

The community champion would play a vital role through these processes.

- **Q43** How can telecommunications services delivered to Indigenous communities become operationally and financially sustainable and remain sustainable beyond the life of the package?

By allowing access to the public – tourists –and companies who would pay to access these services.

- **Q44** What innovative and flexible approaches could be used by communities to aid in the sustainability of telecommunications technology?

As per question 43

- **Q45** How could telecommunications industry participants be encouraged to form partnerships with Indigenous communities? What form might these arrangements take?

Without direct funding to the industry this would be very difficult to achieve.

- **Q46** In what ways can local Indigenous Australians assist in service delivery of telecommunications in Indigenous communities?

Getting involved by each person having a role to play and having specific content for that community.

- **Q47** How should Backing Indigenous Ability use arrangements such as Shared Responsibility Agreements to facilitate arrangements with communities?

As per previous answers.

- **Q48** What elements of Backing Indigenous Ability should or should not be formalised through agreements with communities to share responsibilities and ensure appropriate service delivery?

Need further information



- **Q49** Would the use of Regional Partnership Agreements work within the Backing Indigenous Ability program and the wider *Connect Australia* package? If so, what form should these agreements take?

Need further information

- **Q50** How can existing infrastructure and services in communities be used to provide access to a wider range of uses and users from the community?

Need further information

- **Q51** Are there any other key stakeholders that should be consulted (other than through this discussion paper and the consultation sessions planned for March and April identified at Section 8 below) in the design and implementation of Backing Indigenous Ability?

Not sure

- **Q52** How best can Backing Indigenous Ability link in with the other elements of *Connect Australia* to ensure an efficient and effective delivery of telecommunications into Indigenous communities?

Utilisation of existing available technologies.

- **Q53** How best can the progress of Backing Indigenous Ability be monitored and assessed? How often should a formal assessment of Backing Indigenous Ability be undertaken?

The success would be measured by:

- Equipment utilisation / usage
- Feedback from communities
- A knowledge evaluation done prior to any roll out and then re measured every 6 months to see any improvements.
- Feedback from vendors
- Feedback from key Indigenous customers
- Available time of communication equipment, to show how well the equipment is looked after.
- Feedback and paid usage from visitors to communities.