Call for participation – 4G data services

Background

LTE-based mobile data connectivity, familiar as '4G', is set to become increasingly available in the UK market. Various staff roles within the academic sector have a well-established need for "mobile broadband", taken here to mean relatively high bandwidth (>2Mb/s), low latency, ubiquitous IP service. Janet wishes to provide 4G mobile broadband to a variety of academic users and obtain structured feedback of their experiences with the technology across a broad range of use cases. The knowledge obtained will feed into the development of the case for any future Janet service in this area.

The trial

The proposed trial is a lightweight and agile investigation of this area, and will run from January to July 2013. Janet will provide a number of 4G-enabled devices (dongles or MiFi units as appropriate) and associated data contracts valid for 6 months, each with a 4 GB/month data allowance. We will also provide a small amount of funding (£5k per organisation) to cover the administration of the trial, collation of user feedback etc.

Participant organisations will select a panel of users (~20 per organisation) representing a range of academic roles (e.g. students, management, research (science and arts), administration, technical etc). They will support their use of the pilot hardware, and gather and structure user feedback in an agreed format. Individual organisations will also agree to be financially responsible for 'overage' charges (i.e. for data usage and/or international roaming charges over and above the monthly allowance) incurred by their participating staff[1]. Janet is particularly interested in exploring uses of 4G to support VLE interaction, use of videoconferencing, and VoIP. Participating organisations and users must agree to Janet having access to statistics relating to pattern and volume of usage over the course of the trial.

Who should apply

We are seeking expressions of interest from organisations willing to partner with us to explore 4G usage levels and patterns by a cross-section of their staff. We are open not only to applications from organisations currently within 4G coverage (services operated by EE[2]) but also organisations outside current or near future coverage; in the latter category, we will provide fewer devices/accounts, and ask you to concentrate on user types who spend a lot of time travelling in areas which are covered. We would be particularly keen to work with organisations planning specific projects within our trial period that involve engagement with mobile technologies (such as planned use of a VLE in field work, or adoption of a VoIP/SIP infrastructure, for example) but such activities are not required.

Next steps

Any questions relating to this Call should be addressed to Mark.O'Leary@ja.net.

Please indicate your interest in taking part in the first instance by email to David.Richardson@ja.net (by Friday January 11th, please), giving very brief description of any particular value your participation may bring to the trial. Depending on the response, we plan to hold a kick-off event in January with participants to discuss our goals and the detail of how the trial will operate.

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[1] Monitoring and capping capabilities for participant organisations will be made available.

[2] EE will have 4G in place in 16 towns and cities by year's end. See https://explore.ee.co.uk/coverage-checker