

**Policy Guidelines
for
Bulk SMS and
Other Value-Added Services**

**Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India
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Background

- 1.1. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) is responsible for disseminating information on government policies, schemes and programmes through multiple media of mass communication including radio, television, press, social media, internet websites, printed literature, outdoor media and traditional modes of communication such as dance, drama, folk recitals, etc.
- 1.2. The MIB is also the focal point for policy matters related to the broadcasting sector, as well as for administering the public service broadcasting (Prasar Bharati), multi-media advertising and publicity of government policies and programmes, film promotion and certification and regulation of print media. It is also the administrative line ministry for Indian Information Services officers who work with other Ministries/ Departments to coordinate Information and Communication activities.
- 1.3. The MIB, therefore, has a mission and vision to create an enabling environment for the facilitation and dissemination of knowledge, entertainment and information. It does this by effective outreach of flagship schemes of government, strengthening public service broadcasting (TV and radio), facilitating development of the broadcasting sector and promoting value-based cinema for healthy entertainment.
- 1.4. Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC) was set up on 8th December, 2017 by integration of erstwhile Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP) and Song & Drama Division (S&DD). The Bureau aims at providing 360 degrees communication solutions to the Ministries/ Departments/ Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)/ Autonomous Bodies. It acts as an advisory body to Government on media strategy. With 23 Regional Outreach Bureaus (ROBs) and 148 Field Outreach Bureaus (FOBs), BOC is engaged in educating people, both rural and urban, about the Government's policies and programmes to evoke their participation in developmental activities.
- 1.5. BOC is the nodal organization for paid outreach campaigns through Print Media, Electronic Media, Outdoor Media, Social Media, Internet Websites, Bulk Short Messaging Service (SMS) and other value added services on behalf of client Ministries/ Departments and organizations of Government of India in pursuance of para VI (23) of Allocation of Business Rules, 1961 on "Production and release of advertisements on behalf of the Government of India."

2. Need for the Policy Guidelines

- 2.1. BOC disseminates information and undertakes promotional campaigns through advertisements, to create awareness among masses about Government schemes, programmes and policies through various forms of media i.e. Print Media, Electronic Media, Outdoor Media, Social Media, Internet Websites, Bulk Short Messaging Service (SMS) and other value added services on behalf of various Ministries/ Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous organizations, Central Universities and educational institutions administered and funded by the Government of India.
- 2.2. In order to enable BOC to carry out these activities, there has to be clear guidelines that provide the procedure for empanelment and rate fixation of agencies/ operators for Bulk Short Messaging Service (SMS) and other value added services as well as for release of such campaigns on behalf of Ministries/ Departments and organizations of Government of India, media planning, processing of bills, etc.

3. Objectives of the Policy Guidelines

- 3.1. These policy guidelines will cover such services which require the use of cellular network and *are not routed through Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)*. The policy guidelines will cover the following:
 - (i) Bulk SMS
 - (ii) Out Bound Dialer (OBD)
 - (iii) Any other service which BOC may deem fit from the perspective of dissemination of information.
- 3.2. These guidelines will cover campaigns through Bulk SMS and other value-added services mentioned above which are executed by BOC from time to time on behalf of the Ministries/ Departments and organizations of Government of India. Such messages are disseminated to raise public awareness.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Bulk SMS:** Bulk SMS is a process of sending large number of text from a software application to a predetermined group of mobile users within a short span of time.
- 4.2. **Out Bound Dialer (OBD):** Outbound Dialer is a system that automatically calls pre-defined lists of customers and play promotional messages, reminders, or One Time Passwords (OTP). It utilizes the Interactive Voice

Response (IVR) calling system where the receiver first listens to the pre-recorded audio.

- 4.3. **Telecom Circle:** A telecom circle is a cellular mobile service area in India. The four types of telecom circles are Metro, A, B and C. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has divided the country into Twenty two (22) Telecom Circles.
- 4.4. **Throughput Per Second (TPS):** TPS is the number of messages that can be sent per second.
- 4.5. **Unicode:** Unicode is a character encoding system which stores letters and other characters by assigning a number for each. All SMS texts are sent in the form of Unicode. The *character limit* of one SMS message in English is 160 characters (including "space") whereas for text in Hindi and other regional languages the character limit is 70 characters (including "space").
- 4.6. **Wireless Application Protocol (WAP):** It is a set of rules governing the transmission and reception of data (for use of the internet) by computer applications on or via wireless devices like mobile phones.

5. **Empanelment**

5.1. **Eligibility Criteria for Empanelment:**

The agency/operator seeking empanelment for any of the services should meet the following eligibility requirements:

- 5.1.1 **Common Eligibility Criteria for Bulk SMS, Out Bound Dialer and Other Value Added Services:**
 - I. It should have a valid registration with TRAI as a telemarketer or should be a telemarketer as per procedure established by TRAI.
 - II. It should be an entity incorporated in India.
 - III. It should have experience of two (2) years in at least Five (5) of Twenty-two (22) Telecom circles in the category of service for which it is seeking BOC empanelment.
 - IV. It must have handled the category of service for which it is seeking empanelment for Central Government Ministry/ Public Sector Institution/ Public sector Banks/ reputed private companies in the past two (2) years.
 - V. It should have the database of mobile numbers of its own for dissemination of information.

- VI. It should not be involved in a criminal act for which the proprietor or Director or promoter of the agency has been implicated by a Court of law or for which the proceedings are pending in a court of law.
- VII. It should comply with all laws of the land.
- VIII. It should not have been temporarily suspended or permanently de-empanelled or blacklisted by any Ministry/ Department under the Government of India or Central Public Sector Undertaking.

5.1.2 Eligibility Criteria for Bulk SMS:

- I. It should be able to provide Throughput Per Second (TPS) of at least Five Thousand (5000) SMS per second for empanelment under Bulk SMS service.
- II. The agency/ operator must have the commercial experience of delivering at least Ten (10) crore Bulk SMS in a single month for bulk SMS category.
- III. Agency/ operator should be able to provide support for all Indian regional languages with fully UNICODE compliant messaging.

5.1.3 Eligibility Criteria for Out Bound Dialer:

- I. It should have the capacity to send at least ten (10) lakh calls per day for empanelment under the OBD service and should be able to scale up the capacity on demand.
- II. It should have commercial experience of making at least fifty (50) lakh calls in a month for empanelment under the OBD service.

5.1.4 Eligibility Criteria for other value added services will be determined by BOC as and when needed.

5.2 Process of Empanelment: The empanelment of the agencies will be according to the following parameters:

5.2.1 BOC will empanel agencies/ operators for Bulk SMS and other value-added services on the basis of Two Bid process following the norms prescribed under General Finance Rules.

5.2.2 The participating agencies/ operators shall be required to submit documentary evidence for meeting the eligibility criteria through the Technical Bid. They will also be required to quote rate (all inclusive, excluding GST) for the bulk SMS and other value-added services mentioned in the Financial Bid.

5.2.3 The Seventy Five (75) percent of the technically qualified agencies in terms of their quoted rates (starting from the agency/ operator that has quoted the lowest rates) will be eligible for empanelment in a particular category of service. All the agencies/ operators eligible for empanelment will be offered the lowest (i.e. the L-1) rate of a particular category. If any agency/ operator does not accept the L-1 rate of a particular category, the L-1 rate will be offered to the agency/operator that has quoted the next higher rate and so on and so forth.

- 5.2.4 Since BOC is exempted by TRAI from termination fee, the rate should be quoted keeping the same in mind.
- 5.2.5 Empanelment of agencies will be valid for a period of two years from the date of notification by BOC under a particular cycle of empanelment. A cycle of two years will be counted from date of empanelment of first set of agencies in response to the tender process initiated by BOC.
- 5.2.6 BOC will start the process of next round of empanelment well in advance so that process is complete by the time last cycle gets completed.
- 5.2.7 **It may be noted that empanelment does not entitle or confer any right to any agency for award of job which will depend upon the campaign specific criteria.**

5.3 Documents to be submitted with Technical Bids

- 5.3.1 Non-refundable fee of Rs. 10,000/- in the form of Demand Draft
- 5.3.2 The copy of TRAI Registration certificate or documentary proof in support of claim as telemarketer as per procedure established by TRAI.
- 5.3.3 Copies of job orders/ purchase orders, testimonials, certificates from authorized signatory (client) for handling bulk SMS campaigns, OBD campaigns or other value added services campaign for any Central Government Ministry/ Public Sector Institution/ Public sector Banks/ reputed private companies in the past two (2) years.
- 5.3.4 The documentary proof for having commercial experience of delivering at least ten (10) crore Bulk SMS in a single month for empanelment under Bulk SMS category.
- 5.3.5 The documentary proof for Throughput per second for empanelment under Bulk SMS service.
- 5.3.6 The document issued by the operator/ service provider for the capacity of ten (10) lakh calls per day for empanelment under OBD service.
- 5.3.7 The documentary proof for having commercial experience of making fifty (50) lakh calls in a month for empanelment under OBD service.
- 5.3.8 An affidavit to the effect that the agency/ operator has not been temporarily suspended or permanently de-empanelled or blacklisted by any Ministry/ Department under the Government of India or any Central Public Sector Undertaking.
- 5.3.9 An affidavit that the proprietor or Director or promoter of the agency has not been implicated by a Court of law and no proceedings are pending in a court of law and that the agency/ operator will comply with all laws of the land.
- 5.3.10 It should have the database of mobile numbers of their own for dissemination of information. It should provide the necessary proof in this regard.
- 5.3.11 Certificate of incorporation in India

6 Media Planning and Processing of Bills

- 6.1 BOC will ensure fair distribution of business to all the empanelled agencies/operators, as far as possible.
- 6.2 The empanelled agencies/operators will be required to share their Telecom circle wise database along with the available demographic details with BOC from time to time.
- 6.3 The payment will be made only for successful delivery of SMS or successful execution of OBD or other campaigns, as the case may be, and not for failed execution.
- 6.4 GST will be paid by BOC, at applicable rate.
- 6.5 The empanelled agency/operator must provide access to BOC for system generated report of the gateway from which they are pushing messages on the same day of the campaign. The report should have details of all the mobile numbers to which the SMS or other services were pushed and/or delivered.

7 De-empanelment and Blacklisting

The empanelment of agency/ operator may be cancelled and agency/ operator debarred for the release of Government advertisements from BOC, for the remaining period of its empanelment, if it refuses to accept and carry advertisements issued by BOC on behalf of the Ministries/ Departments of Government of India, PSUs and Autonomous Bodies or fails to achieve the desired output for the advertisements.

8 Powers to Relax

Any relaxation to any of the provisions of the guidelines will be as per the approval of the M/o Information and Broadcasting, Govt of India.

9 Implementation of policy guidelines

These guidelines will come into effect from the date of notification by BOC.