UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

CALL FOR PROJECT CONSULTANCY PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "E- BOOSTER PROGRAMME"

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

1.0   Introduction

The Government of Uganda recognizes that Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are potent instruments that are critical to Uganda's socio-economic growth and transformation. Over the years, Uganda has witnessed positive contributions that have accrued by adopting ICT as an enabler for service delivery and business, thus its continued consideration at national development planning level as a priority sector for social economic development. To enhance this, Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap 2023/24 – 2027/28 identified pillars aligned to Uganda's overall Vision 2040, among which is fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. This is further aligned to by the Uganda Communications Universal Service and Access Fund (UCUSAF) strategic plan 2023/24 – 2027/28 with two key strategic objectives of promoting the development of ICT applications and services and increasing the usage of digital devices and services by the undeserved and unserved.

Uganda Communications Commission (The Commission) through UCUSAF has launched a call for proposals to establish a collaboration with a suitable partner in the implementation of key activities to implement the second round of the E-Booster programme, an initiative aimed at supporting ICT solutions that address the needs of unserved and underserved sectors/communities of the Ugandan economy.

The Commission has set aside resources to be utilized under a collaborative grant framework between the Commission and a suitable partner that will implement the project through identification, capacitation, and selection of companies as well as monitoring and evaluation during the implementation by the successful companies. These funds are available within the operational budget for the Financial Year 2024/2025.

2.0   Background

Uganda is ranked as one of the world's most entrepreneurial countries. Yet for all its entrepreneurial vibrancy, many sectors of the Ugandan economy remain unserved or underserved by ICT innovations. The country is also faced with the challenge of low levels of innovation and limited deployment of ICT tools and applications by businesses, particularly in the rural areas, yet, while just over 25 % of Uganda's population live in urban centres, over 75% live in rural areas (UBOS, 2021). Notwithstanding these challenges, Uganda has initiated projects aimed at bridging this digital divide, though there is still need for enhanced uptake and demand for ICT-enabled solutions and applications, particularly in the countryside and amongst the poor and elderly sections of the population.

There is still a significant proportion of the rural community population that remains unserved or underserved by government and the private sector. While there's not a universally agreeable definition, unserved communities are generally defined as sizable groups of people that have been ignored or overlooked by profit-oriented business enterprises, while underserved markets are those where there are few providers who are delivering solutions to those markets' set of known and unknown needs. Besides solving unmet needs, these unserved and underserved markets present new business growth opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses that are people-minded and profit-minded. Ignoring these markets leaves many citizens economically inactive and unemployed which greatly negatively impacts the country's tax base. It also leads to a high level of economic exclusion because the communities are disadvantaged with regards to access to knowledge, information, and economic opportunities.

Uganda's SMEs continue to be the backbone of the economy, contributing about 90% of private sector production, and providing employment and income opportunities for over 2.5million people (UBOS, 2022). In a world characterised by competition and technological change, Innovation and ICTs are essential for any business that wants to thrive, let alone survive. ICTs impact business competitiveness in terms of customer satisfaction, volume of sales, speed, and time to market. Digitisation offers numerous benefits to government, including easy monitoring and backstopping of government initiatives, both at national and local levels. It is therefore critical that businesses are supported to

adopt ICT solutions and digital inclusiveness championed in the general population to narrow the digital divide.

According to the OECD (2020), there is a positive link between the dissemination of digital technologies at sectoral level and productivity growth. Yet, for millions of people who are unable to connect to the internet, they continue to be unserved or underserved by these innovations.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures implemented to curb the spread of the disease, resulted in hundreds of businesses having to adopt their operations to include a digital element, with some ceasing the opportunity to innovate and come up with new products and services targeting hitherto "unconnected" communities in rural areas.

As part of the Government's efforts to bridge the digital-divide, the Commission has in the past through UCUSAF has since inception in 2003 implemented a number of infrastructure, content, and digital literacy training programmes, which have greatly contributed to the reduction of the digital-divide in the country. To build on the past initiatives and contribute towards addressing some of the country's ICT bottlenecks, the Commission through UCUSAF initiated and launched the first round of the *E-Booster programme* in the year 2023 in which 5 organisations benefitted from the UCUSAF funding support. The project is moving on to its second round of running.

3.0   Programme Objective

The general objective of the E-Booster programme is to identify and support brilliant ICT solutions that could innovatively deploy ICT applications to solve societal challenges in the unserved and or underserved sectors of the economy.

4.0   Target Areas

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are the main enablers that will accelerate the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 agenda for sustainable development recognises the great potential of universal access to spur human progress. The project will target to support ICT solutions that are pursuing one of the tenets of the SDGs, NDP3, and the Parish Development Model, but require modest funding to gain traction and scale.

5.0   Project Key Actions

a) UCC will provide financial support in form of grants to facilitate successful proposals with potential to impact socio-economically with high value yet still with inclusive ICT solutions that actualize the participating businesses' growth plans within 24 months.

b) Grant payments will be milestone or performance based to ensure commitment and adherence to the growth plans, as agreed with the businesses from the onset.

c) With the help of the partnering institution, the grants will be coupled with a Growth Accelerator[1] programme to help steer the participating businesses thorough the non-traditional fast-paced transitional challenges.

d) As well as the deployment of ICT solutions by the successful businesses, the project will create a learning opportunity for the Commission staff in supporting the implementation of similar initiatives in the future.

5.1   Roles of the implementing partner (IP) institution

The IP institution shall be responsible for;

e) Delivery and providing overall coordination and advisory services for the entire project.

f) Stakeholder engagement and management

g) Designing a Nationwide search and identification of the participating businesses

h) Judging and overall vetting of the businesses and their ICT solutions

i) Advising on grant disbursement, and ensuring successful deployment of ICT solutions by the successful businesses, post grant disbursement

j) Knowledge transfer - create a learning opportunity for UCC staff in supporting the implementation of similar initiatives in the future.

k) Financial or material support towards the grant

5.2   Roles Of UCC

a) Provide project support staff.

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[1] a support programme that guides to understand components of a business and identifying growth challenges to develop clear goals and a comprehensive strategic implementation-ready growth plan.

b) Provide financial support in form of grants to facilitate successful proposals with ambitious and inclusive ICT solutions.

c) Leverage its internal processes to manage the disbursement of grants.

d) Support a Growth Accelerator programme to help steer the participating businesses thorough the non-traditional fast-paced transitional challenges.

e) Create a learning opportunity for the Commission project staff in supporting the implementation of similar initiatives in the future.

f) Use its internal Monitoring and Evaluation team to keep track of the project deliverables and immediate outcomes.

g) Provide the Project Support role, including administration, overall management, and technical support to the implementing partner as required by the needs of this project.

h) Support the successful enterprises in rolling out to the targeted communities/markets and facilitating the registration and protection of Intellectual Property.

i) Knowledge management for sustainability of the intervention.

6.0   Eligibility of Applicants

The consultancy may be delivered by a single applicant entity or consortia of providers under a joint venture (JV) arrangement.

6.1   General Criteria

a) Applicant should be a legally established and registered entity in Uganda.

b) Applicant should have a track record of supporting high growth ICT innovations, so as to tap into its experience, networks and reservoir of knowledge.

c) The applicant or lead applicant in case of a JV should have a functional Innovation Hub or Business Incubation Centre

d) The Team leader of the team MUST hold a PhD in Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, ICT or its equivalent.

e) The applicant has documented experience in mobilizing, coordinating, and delivering similar initiatives at a national scale, especially working in rural areas.

f) Operational experience in working across the country.

g) A deep understanding of the Uganda entrepreneurship ecosystem, and its challenges.

h) Membership of bodies supporting the entrepreneurship ecosystem of Uganda and the East African Region
i) Demonstrable knowledge in entrepreneurship research around business innovations.
j) Demonstrate linkages with the international communities including but not limited to inter-institutional collaborations and global grant partnerships.
k) The applicant organization (both lead and Co-applicant organization in case of a JV) will assume overall responsibility and sign a memorandum of understanding with the Commission to enforce joint accountability of action.
l) The applicant (both lead and co-applicant in case of a JV) must be in satisfactory financial health and have adequate financial structures and systems to report to the Commission as shall be required.
m) The applicant or lead applicant in case of a JV has a clear strategic plan incorporating such Projects.
n) The applicant has capacity to network and mobilize complimentary resources to sustain the initiative.
o) The applicant and co-applicant in case of a JV must have an established working relationship spanning at least 1 year.
p) Co-applicants must demonstrate complimentary competencies to the applicant.

6.2   Preference

The Fund will give preference to applicants whose proposals highlight the following: -

a) Demonstrate clear understanding and experience in supporting innovative start-ups and SMEs.
b) Demonstrate clear understanding and experience of SDGs, NDP3, and the Parish Development Model,
c) Demonstrate clear understanding of challenges experienced by businesses working in the unserved and or underserved sectors of the economy.
d) Experience of running similar competitions that identify and support ICT solutions.
e) Entities that have qualified human resources in house or working in an established and proven consortium to implement the proposed project within the proposed timeframe.
f) Proposals that provide for greater innovations in addressing digital inclusiveness in a sustainable manner

g) Clear Financial and material contribution from the applicants over and above the grant amount

h) Proposals that demonstrate higher value for money.

6.3 Technical Criteria

The bids shall be evaluated on the basis of the Bidder's responsiveness to the Terms of Reference, applying the evaluation criteria and point system specified below. Each responsive bid will be given a technical score (St). A bid shall be rejected at this stage if it does not achieve the minimum technical score below.

a) Specific experience of the Provider related to the assignment (Experience of a bidder in provision of consultancy services related to sensitisation at national level, and experience of the bidder in undertaking customer engagement campaigns) (50)

b) Adequacy of the proposed work plan and methodology in responding to the Terms of Reference (To include Proposed methodology, approach, sequencing of activities, suitability of work plan, organisational and key staff proposed, as well as innovative suggestions and comments to TOR) (30)

c) Qualifications and competence of the key staff for the Assignment to include general academic qualifications, experience of key staff and comparable technical assignments of key staff) (20)

d) Experience of running national innovation competitions both in Uganda and internationally

e) Evidence of mentoring start-ups and SMEs

f) Experience in management of high growth start-ups and high growth SMEs in Uganda

g) Experience of designing and running innovation bootcamps for startups and high growth SMEs

h) Experience of grant disbursement and management

7.0 Assessment Criteria

The grant applications will be assessed based on a 3-stage process (Administrative, Technical and Financial) process but also incorporating the four equally weighted, all-encompassing criteria: -

a) Administrative- will focus on assessment of the eligibility and possession of all the required administrative and legal documents.

b) Technical: This will focus on the following;

- Specific experience of the applicant related to the assignment.
- Adequacy of the proposed work plan and methodology in responding to the Statement of Requirements (SOR). To include Proposed methodology, approach, sequencing of activities, suitability of work plan, organisational and key staff proposed, innovative suggestions and comments to SOR, addressing of crosscutting issues and project sustainability capacity to deliver.
- Qualifications and competence of the key staff for the Assignment to include general academic qualifications, experience of key staff and comparable technical assignments of key staff)
- Applicant experience in running national innovation competitions both in Uganda and internationally; mentoring start-ups and SMEs; management of high growth start-ups and high growth SMEs in Uganda; designing and running innovation bootcamps for startups and high growth SMEs and grant disbursement and management.

c) Financial – will focus on Value for money, sustainability, and ability to mobilize more resources to scale the initiative.

7.1 Required Applicant's Legal Documents

a) Certificate of incorporation or registration for the applicant (both Lead applicant co-applicant in case of a JV).
b) Memorandum and Articles of Association for lead applicant (*This only applies to non-public applicants*).
c) Applicant address (physical, postal, email, and web site)
d) Contact person details – the name, position, phone, and email contact for an authorized representative of the Applicant and co-applicants (if any)
e) Letters of support from affiliated entities or proposed implementing partners if any (co-applicants)
f) Lead Applicant's Audited Financial statements for last 2 years *(Both applicants in case of a JV)*.
g) Signed Code of Ethical Conduct by Grant applicants - Template attached in Annex 1

7.2 Technical proposal requirements

a) Project motivation, objectives, and outcomes

b) Project linkage to national and international policy, regulatory and legal framework
c) Tean and Firm Experience managing similar projects.
d) Project implementation methodology
e) Project management framework
f) Project work plans and associated milestones, with clear description of responsibilities for each partner
g) Project implementation budget with clear allocation of resources to implementing partners.
h) Sustainability approach
i) Monitoring and evaluation approach
j) Risk management framework.
k) Integration of cross-cutting issues of; gender, youth, and digital divide, among others.

8.0   Application Timeline

The grant application is open from **26th July to 13th August 2024.**

A pre–grant application meeting will be held on-line on 5th August 2024 at 9.00 am. Meeting registration and Login details are as below; https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/007eda9e-7925-4b68-a940-b536d0460741@f7ffcd5e-44c0-4686-8452-78ea57432de7

For any required clarification or guidance on the grant application process, please contact telephone +256414339099 or email ucusaf@ucc.co.ug.

Final Applications should be submitted in triplicate hard copies (3 Copies) by 4.00 pm on 13th August 2024 to:

The Executive Director
Uganda Communications Commission
Plot 42-44, Spring Road Bugolobi
P.O. Box 7376, Kampala
Uganda

By email to registry@ucc.co.ug and ucusaf@ucc.co.ug

Disclaimer
Personal information supplied in an application will be used by UCC in accordance with the Laws of Uganda.

ANNEX 1

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN BUSINESS FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

1. Ethical Principles
Applicants shall always-

(a) maintain integrity and independence in their professional judgment and conduct.

(b) comply with both the letter and the spirit of-
      i.   the laws of Uganda; and
      ii. any contract awarded.

(c) avoid associations with businesses and organisations which conflict with this code.

2. Standards
Applicants shall-
   (a) strive to provide works, services, and supplies of high quality and accept full responsibility for all works, services, or supplies provided.

   (b) comply with the professional standards of their industry or of any professional body of which they are members.

3. Conflict of Interest
   (a) Applicants shall not accept contracts that would constitute a conflict of interest with any prior or current contract with the Uganda Communications Commission.

   (b) Applicants shall disclose to all concerned parties those conflicts of interest that cannot reasonably be avoided or escaped.

4. Confidentiality and Accuracy of Information
   (a) Information given by Applicants during the grant processes, or the performance of contracts shall be true, fair, and not designed to mislead.

   (b) Providers shall respect the confidentiality of information received during the performance of a contract and shall not use such information for personal gain.

5. Gifts and Hospitality
Applicants shall not offer gifts or hospitality directly or indirectly, to staff of the Uganda Communications Commission that might be viewed by others as influencing a grant decision.

6. Inducements
(a) Applicants shall not offer or give anything of value to influence the action of a public official in the grant process or in contract execution.

(b) Applicants shall not ask a public official to do anything inconsistent with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Business.

7. Fraudulent Practices

Applicants shall not:

(a) collude with other businesses and organisations to deprive the Uganda Communications Commission of the benefits of free and open competition.

(b) enter business arrangements that might prevent the effective operation of fair competition.

(c) engage in deceptive financial practices, such as bribery, double billing, or other improper financial practices.

(d) misrepresent facts to influence a grant process or the execution of a contract to the detriment of the Uganda Communications Commission, or utter false documents.

(e) unlawfully obtain information relating to a grant process to influence the process or execution of a contract to the detriment of the Uganda Communications Commission.

(f) Withhold information from the Uganda Communications Commission during contract execution to the detriment of the Uganda Communications Commission.

I -------------------------------------- agree to comply with the above code of ethical conduct in business.

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AUTHORISED SIGNATORY   **NAME OF APPLICANT**