



CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE UCC/UCUSAF GRANT FOR THE UCUSAF SUBSIDY DEVICE FINANCING INITIATIVE FOR THE UNDERSERVED AND UNSERVED COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

1.0 Introduction

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) through the Uganda Communications Universal Service Access Fund (UCUSAF) has launched a call for proposals to establish a collaboration to support the acquisition of smart phone devices through a device financing mechanism for underserved and unserved communities while prioritizing community members that have previously attended and participated in the UCC/UCUSAF digital skilling programs.

The project aims to promote equitable access to ICTs and to support ongoing digital literacy and skilling campaigns in Uganda by providing innovative, scalable, and sustainable models for the acquisition and distribution of ICT devices enabling individuals in marginalized or low-income communities to gain access to essential digital tools and services. This is in line with Uganda's ICT sector Digital transformation roadmap and National Development Plan IV aspirations for digital transformation.

UCUSAF, in line with its 5-year Strategic Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28, set aside financial resources to be utilized under a collaborative grant framework between UCC/UCUSAF and a suitable partner to implement this project.

2.0 Background

Access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices is a crucial enabler of economic and social development. However, access to ICT facilities varies globally, across Africa, East Africa, and specifically within Uganda. According to the Uganda Communications Commission market performance report, smartphone penetration in the market is around 40%, which is a key tool for digital participation. While this figure is notable within Uganda's context,

under-served communities face significant barriers to ICT adoption due to high device costs, limited financial inclusion, and inadequate digital literacy.

To support ICT adoption, UCC, through the Uganda Communications Universal Service Access Fund (UCUSAF), has allocated financial resources over the past three years under collaborative grant frameworks with suitable partners. These initiatives aim to enhance ICT adoption among farmers, youth, the elderly, and other rural unserved and underserved communities, equipping them with technology skills and literacy to harness the benefits of the digital economy. More than 20,000 youth, elderly individuals, women, farmers, and rural communities have benefitted from these initiatives. However, the lack of affordable ICT devices remains a barrier to fully realizing these digital opportunities.

To bridge this gap, there is need for innovative financial models that align with the economic realities of underserved communities. By integrating sustainable financing mechanisms, these models can facilitate affordable access to ICT devices, thereby accelerating digital inclusion and contributing to Uganda's broader socio-economic development objectives.

UCC/UCUSAF invites suitably qualified applicants (individual organizations, firms, or consortia) to partner in implementing a subsidy device financing scheme project.

The project adopts a cost-sharing model where UCC contributes 50% of the device cost, while the target beneficiaries pay the remaining 50% in manageable installments through a collaborating partner. Interested parties must demonstrate the necessary qualifications, resources, expertise, and experience, in line with the eligibility criteria and requirements outlined in this call for proposals.

3.0 Objectives of the grant

The key objective of the subsidy device financing scheme is to enhance digital inclusion by improving access to ICT smartphone gadgets by youth, women, the elderly, farmers, rural unserved and underserved communities with priority to those that have previously undertaken the UCC/UCUSAF Digital Literacy and Skilling trainings. This will in turn facilitate their active participation in the digital economy, enabling access to information, improving productivity, fostering economic opportunities, and enhancing communication for social and economic development.

The specific objectives are:

1. Enable affordable access to ICT devices for a minimum of 5,000 individuals in under-served and unserved communities that previously benefitted from digital literacy programs.
2. Create awareness for smartphone devices and subsequently a multiplier effect for their demand amongst the unserved and underserved communities.
3. Develop sustainable financing mechanisms to support digital device acquisition.
4. Enhance digital literacy and encourage ICT adoption for socio-economic development.
5. Partner with an institution/organization or consortia of organizations to implement a scalable model.

4.0 Project Implementation and Key Actions

The financial model proposed for this project is a Cost-Sharing Model where the cost of acquiring the ICT smartphone devices is shared between beneficiary individuals in underserved and unserved communities, UCC/UCUSAF and the applicant organization.

- a) UCC Contribution: UCC will contribute 50% of the cost of the smartphone device of their choice, enabling the underserved community to access devices at a significantly reduced price.
- b) Beneficiary Contribution: Beneficiary will contribute the remaining 50% of the cost of the smartphone. This could be done through upfront payments, installments, or contributions via microfinance schemes and mobile money platforms.
- c) Applicant Contribution: The applicant will provide ICT devices at discounted rates through bulk procurement, making them both accessible and affordable to beneficiaries. Additionally, the applicant will support the onboarding of beneficiaries, manage installment repayments, provide transaction support and provide after-sales support.
- d) Payment Flexibility: Payment plans will be designed to suit the financial capacity of the target community, potentially integrating mobile money or savings groups to enhance affordability and accessibility.

Project Activities

1. Device Procurement: Acquiring type-approved smartphone devices.

2. Beneficiary mapping: identification and verification of eligible beneficiaries while prioritizing those that have previously benefited from UCC digital skilling.
3. Distribution and orientation. Distribute devices and provide device-use induction.
4. Manage payment collection, credit risk mitigation, and beneficiary financial onboarding
5. Post distribution support; Provide follow-up support and basic device maintenance training.
6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Sustainability.

5.0 Target group

The project targets Youth, Women, Elderly and Farmers in rural unserved and underserved communities across the rural unserved and underserved parts of the country while prioritizing those that have previously benefited from UCC digital skilling program.

6.0 Eligibility of Applicants

6.1 General Criteria

1. The applicant (individual organization or consortium of organizations) must be each a legally established entity in Uganda.
2. The applicant organization (in the case of consortium - all partners) will assume responsibility and sign a memorandum of understanding with UCC to enforce joint accountability of action.
3. The applicant organization (in the case of consortium - all partners) must be in satisfactory financial health and have adequate financial systems to report to the commission as shall be required.
4. In the case of a consortium, partners must demonstrate a working relationship through a legally binding agreement.
5. The applicant must demonstrate experience (minimum 3 years) in supplying ICT devices, digital services, financial services, or community-based technology solutions.
6. Proven track record in working with underserved or rural communities is an added advantage.
7. The applicant must demonstrate the capacity to facilitate digital onboarding of beneficiaries, provide after-sales support, and ensure basic device maintenance.

8. The applicant must demonstrate ownership of, or access to, a digital platform capable of managing beneficiary registration, processing transactions, and tracking installment payments.
9. The applicant has documented experience in mobilizing, coordinating and delivering similar initiatives at national level, especially working in rural areas.
10. The applicant has demonstrated capacity to network and mobilize complimentary resources to sustain the initiative.

6.2 Preference

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

1. Well presented, clear, logical, well-conceived and reflect on a good understanding of the relevant issues in the subject matter.
2. Make linkages between UCUSAF and UCC strategic objectives with the national and international development agenda.
3. Show evidence of being innovative, possessing the capacity for effective implementation to achieve program objectives, and present a practical approach to attaining the stated goals.
4. Demonstrate ability to establish baselines, indicators, and methodologies for measuring progress.
5. Recognize potential project risks and present corresponding strong mitigation strategies.
6. Clear financial and/or material contribution towards the implementation of the project.
7. Proposals that demonstrate higher value for money.

7.0 Assessment Criteria

The grant applications will be assessed based on a 3-stage process (Administrative, Technical and Financial):

1. Administrative- focus on assessment of eligibility.
2. Technical –focus on clarity of the motivation, smartness of goals, appropriateness of methodology and project management, feasibility of workplans, impact of the project, ability to meet project priorities, addressing of crosscutting issues and project sustainability capacity to deliver.
3. Financial –focus on value for money, sustainability and ability to mobilize more resources to scale the initiative.

A proposal pitching exercise will also be arranged as part of the assessment process for all administratively compliant applicants. The scheduled dates for this will be communicated to the applicants.

7.1 Required Applicant's Legal Documents

1. Applicants' (both applicants in the case of a consortium) certificate of incorporation or registration providing a legal name – the name that identifies the applicant for legal, administrative, and other official purposes.
2. Applicants' (both applicants in the case of a consortium) memorandum and articles of association.
3. Applicants' address (physical, postal, email, and web site where applicable).
4. Applicants' contact details –name, position, phone, and email contact for an authorized representative.
5. Applicant's affiliated entities.
6. Applicants' (both applicants in the case of a consortium) audited financial account statements for the last 3 years.
7. Applicants' signed Code of Ethical Conduct in Business for Grant applicants and Providers (Annex 1).

7.2 Proposal Requirements

1. Project understanding
2. Project linkage to UCC/UCUSAF strategy, national and international development agenda
3. Experience managing similar projects (organization and staff)
4. Project implementation methodology
5. Project management framework
6. Project sustainability approach
7. Risk management framework
8. Integration of cross-cutting issues
9. Monitoring and evaluation approach.
10. Project Implementation Budget

Note

A due diligence may be conducted on the applicant organization(s) at any point of the process to ascertain demonstrated capability to execute the assignment.

8.0 Risk Assessment

The Assessment Team will carry out a risk assessment of the indicated and non-indicated risks. The assessment based on the risks assessed will consider the totality of an applicant's submission in evaluating whether a potential engagement would involve low, medium, high, or extreme risk to UCC/UCUSAF.

9.0 Application Timeline

The grant application is open from 22nd May 2025 to 6th June 2025.

A pre-grant application meeting will be held online on Thursday 29th May 2025 at 10.00am. Participants should access the online meeting through the link below:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NjVmYzZlNzQtNGZiYi00ZGRmLWIwYzgtOWQ3ZGM4YTQ5N2Uw%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f7ffcd5e-44c0-4686-8452-78ea57432de7%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f4f92091-537a-45fe-b0ee-00c6d011dfe4%22%7d.

For further clarification or guidance on the grant application process, please contact +256 412 339000; or +256 312 339000 or email ucusaf@ucc.co.ug.

Applications should be submitted in triplicate hard copies (3 copies) by 4.00 pm on to the address below and a soft copy of the same sent to ucusafgrants@ucc.co.ug

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

A soft copy of the proposal should also be sent to the following email addresses by the deadline: registry@ucc.co.ug; ucusaf@ucc.co.ug

Disclaimer

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