UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE UCC/UCUSAF GRANT FOR SCALING AND STRENGTHENING THE ICT4FARMERS PROGRAMME UNDER THE UCUSAF ICT INTEGRATION INTO AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

1.0   Introduction

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), established under the Uganda Communications Act of 2013, is mandated to regulate and promote the development of a modern communication sector in Uganda. Section 3(g) of the Act tasks UCC with administering a fund to support rural communications and ICT development countrywide. Accordingly, the Uganda Communications Universal Service and Access Fund (UCUSAF), formerly RCDF, was launched in 2001 to fulfill this mandate.

UCUSAF has since guided its activities through successive strategic frameworks (UCUSAF I–IV), implementing diverse ICT projects—especially in rural connectivity, agriculture, and health. One flagship program is the **Integration of ICT into Agriculture**, which aims to digitally transform smallholder farming communities.

2.0   Background

Uganda has witnessed the emergence of several ICT4Agric innovations, but adoption remains limited. Barriers include: low digital literacy, weak infrastructure, limited smartphone penetration, and a lack of farmer-centered content. According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), only 25% of rural farmers have ever used a digital tool for agriculture, and less than 10% have access to agriculture-specific digital content in local languages.

To address these challenges, UCUSAF partnered with Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) and Eight Tech Consults Ltd to implement the ICT4Farmers Program—a digital initiative designed to improve service delivery, content access, and digital skills for smallholder farmers.

Implemented across 60+ districts over three years, the program has produced measurable results and catalyzed momentum for scale-up.

Key Outputs & Achievements

Over the past three years, the ICT4Farmers project has delivered several key outputs:

i. Digital Platforms: A robust ICT4Farmers ecosystem was developed, including a mobile app and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) call center (0800209003) supporting 5 local languages - English, Luganda, Runyakitara, Swahili, Luo. The tool includes 10 virtual agents (agriculturalists and veterinary officers) providing expert support, and a web portal. The app has over 1,000 downloads and 456 active users.

ii. E-Academy: An online training hub hosts 35+ agriculture and digital skills courses. Some 398 farmers are enrolled.

iii. Digital Skilling: More than 10,000 farmers trained directly; more than 100,000 reached through TOTs. Training covered Microsoft Office, mobile tools, digital recordkeeping, and market access platforms.

iv. Farmer Profiling: Data on more than 10,000 farmers captured and integrated into the platform using Open Data Kit (ODK) tools.

v. Awareness: Over 1 million farmers sensitized via radio, TV, social media, and workshops.

vi. Content Development: 22 multimedia e-courses created in 4 local languages, covering priority agricultural themes.

vii. Sustainability: Institutional capacity building for UNFFE and DFAs in grant writing, platform management, and resource mobilization.

Rationale for Scale-Up

While Phase I–III of ICT4Farmers achieved substantial success, significant gaps remain. Approximately 70% of Uganda's 10 million smallholder farmers still lack access to relevant digital services. With minimal smartphone penetration in rural Uganda, the need for low-bandwidth, language-accessible solutions is critical.

It is against this backdrop that UCC, with continued support from UCUSAF, seeks to commission the next phase of the ICT4Farmers project. The focus of the next phase is to consolidate the outcomes of the programme, upgrade the platforms, and scale up the uptake of the programme results. The scaling up will be on expanding to more districts, upgrading the existing digital infrastructure and content, enhancing the usage and adoption of

services, and aggregating additional digital agriculture tools into the ecosystem. A parallel objective is to ensure that these efforts remain sustainable, scalable, and aligned with Uganda's broader digital transformation goals in agriculture.

3.0 Objectives of the Grant

The main objective of this grant is to contribute to the effective scaling up of the ICT4Farmers Programme by building on previous successes and scaling digital agriculture transformation in Uganda. The grant focuses on four strategic objectives:

i) Platform Upgrade: Enhance UI/UX, performance, and AI integration of the ICT4Farmers app, IVR system, and web portal.
ii) Innovation Mapping: Identify, evaluate, and federate existing ICT4Ag tools into the platform to maximize reach and functionality.
iii) Digital Skilling Expansion: Train 2,000 farmers and 200 TOTs in 20 underserved districts with localized digital content.
iv) Service Uptake & Awareness: Deploy campaigns to increase platform usage and farmer engagement.
v) Program and Knowledge Management & Sustainability: Strengthen coordination systems and embed long-term sustainability models.

4.0 Project Key Actions

In the execution of this grant, the implementing partner(s) will be expected to undertake, but not limited to, the following core actions:
a) Usability and technical audit of the ICT4Farmers ecosystem.
b) Integration of weather alerts, smart analytics, and APIs for external agri-tools.
c) Mapping and profiling of more than 100 ICT4Ag innovations operational in Uganda.
d) Content adaptation for low-literate farmers using visuals and audio.
e) District-level sensitization using multimedia, digital champions, and community radio.
f) Monitoring via analytics, user logs, and farmer feedback.

5.0 Target Group

The program targets smallholder farmers (crop, livestock, aquaculture, poultry, apiary), extension officers, and rural value chain actors.

6.0 Eligibility of Applicants

6.1 General Criteria

a) The applicant (Individual Organisation or consortium of organizations) must be each a legally established entity in Uganda.

b) The applicant organization (in case of consortium all partners) will assume responsibility and sign a memorandum of understanding with UCC to enforce joint accountability of action.

c) The applicant must be in satisfactory financial health and have adequate financial systems to report to the commission as shall be required.

d) The applicant has operational presence in at least 70 districts spread in major regions of the country for effective execution of the action.

e) In case of consortium partners must demonstrate working together for a minimum of 5 years.

f) The applicant must demonstrate experience of over 10 years' experience working with farmers in Uganda (both crop and livestock) and on similar initiatives.

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

h) The applicant must demonstrate experience in development and deployment of ICT solutions and capacity building for over 10 years.

i) The applicant has capacity to network and mobilize complimentary resources to sustain the initiative.

j) A minimum of five (5) years of operational experience in conducting research, programme evaluations, or impact assessments.

k) Proven experience evaluating ICT4D, agriculture, rural development, or universal access programmes.

l) A history of engagement with government agencies, donor-funded projects, or universal access funds, particularly in the African context.

m) Demonstrated understanding of universal service/access frameworks and their application in rural connectivity and agricultural innovation.

n) Submission of three (3) references or case studies of recent, similar assignments will be required.

6.2 Preference

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

i. Demonstrate clear understanding and experience in dealing with capacity enhancement of smallholder farmers and associated value chain actors.

ii. Entities that have qualified human resources in house or working in an established and proven consortium to implement the proposed project initiatives within the proposed timeframe.

iii. Proposals that provide for greater innovations in execution of the project actions in the remote and challenging environments (e.g. lack of access or remoteness to the power grid, among others).

iv. Clear financial and material contribution from the applicants over and above the grant amount.

v. Proposals that demonstrate higher value for money.

7.0   Assessment Criterion

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

i. Administrative- will focus on assessment of the eligibility.

ii. Technical – will focus on clarity of the motivation, smartness of goals, appropriateness of methodology and project management, feasibility of work plans, impact of the project, ability to meet project priorities, addressing of crosscutting issues and project sustainability capacity to deliver.

iii. Financial – will focus on value for money, sustainability and ability to mobilize more resources to scale the initiative.

8.0   Risk Assessment

The UCUSAF 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   Required Applicant's Legal Documents

i. Applicant's certificate of incorporation or registration providing a legal name – the name that identifies the applicant for legal, administrative, and other official purposes.

ii. Applicant's memorandum and articles of association.

iii.   Applicant's address (physical, postal, email, and web site where applicable).
iv.   Applicant's contact details –name, position, phone, and email contact for an authorized representative.
v.   Applicant's affiliated entities.
vi.   Applicant's audited financial account statements for the last 2 years.
vii.   Applicant's signed Code of Ethical Conduct in Business for Grant applicants and Providers (Template provided by UCC/UCUSAF).
viii.   Applicant proof of experience in conducting similar capacity building initiatives.

10.0 Business Plan Requirements

i.   Project motivation, objectives, and outcomes
ii.   Project linkage to UCC/UCUSAF strategy and the national development agenda
iii.   Experience managing similar projects
iv.   Project implementation methodology
v.   Project management framework
vi.   Project work plans and associated milestones (targeted number of trainees, training duration, etc)
vii.   Project implementation budget
viii.   Sustainability approach
ix.   Monitoring and evaluation approach
x.   Risk management framework
xi.   Integration of cross-cutting issues around gender, youth and digital divide, among others.

11.0 Application Timeline

The grant application is open effective 14th July 2025 till 25th July 2025.

A pre–grant application meeting will be held online on Tuesday, 22nd July 2025, at 2:30 pm. The online details below will be used to access the meeting:

https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/8d4417fb-18ef-4099-a94f-054f101f3db1@f7ffcd5e-44c0-4686-8452-78ea57432de7

For further clarification or guidance on the grant application process, get in touch through telephone numbers +256414339000; +256312339000 or emails registry@ucc.co.ug/ucusaf@ucc.co.ug

Final applications should be submitted in triplicate hard copies (3 copies) by 4.00 pm of 25th July 2025 to:

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

Or by email using the following email addresses:
registry@ucc.co.ug and ucusafgrants@ucc.co.ug

Disclaimer

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