



CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE UCC/UCUSAF GRANT FOR DIGITIZING THE EXISTING UGANDA SIGN LANGUAGE, PROPOSING A FORMAL NATIONAL STANDARD FOR UGANDA SIGN LANGUAGE AND BUILDING CAPACITY TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND USE OF DIGITAL SERVICES FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY IN UGANDA

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), through the Uganda Communications Universal Service and Access Fund (UCUSAF), has issued a Call for Proposals to digitize Uganda Sign Language (UGSL), propose a formal national UGSL standard, and build capacity to enhance access to and use of digital services. The initiative aims to advance digital inclusion by improving access to information and communication for the Deaf community.

This initiative aims to promote awareness, advance digital inclusion and strengthen institutional capacity for the Deaf community in Uganda. It will empower Deaf individuals through targeted digital-literacy programmes, support development of a functional prototype for Uganda Sign Language (UGSL) mobile and web applications and catalyse strategic partnerships with Deaf-led organisations, government ministries and agencies, academic institutions and development partners. By tackling persistent gaps such as limited digital skills, weak institutional capacity and the lack of scalable, digitised UGSL resources, the project directly supports Uganda's inclusive digital-transformation agenda and aligns with national and international obligations, including the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

UCC, through UCUSAF, has earmarked resources to be deployed under a collaborative grant framework with a suitable implementing partner to deliver a nationwide initiative in FY 2025/2026. The initiative will focus on capacity building, proposing a formal national standard for Uganda Sign Language (UGSL), and digitising UGSL. The selected partner will work closely with UCC/UCUSAF to implement the project in line with the UCUSAF Five-Year Strategic Plan (2023/24–2027/28) and national digital-inclusion priorities,

ensuring equitable access to digital services for underserved and unserved communities, particularly the Deaf community in Uganda.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Persons with Disabilities constitute roughly 15% of the world's population, over one billion people, making them the world's largest minority group. This proportion is expected to rise due to population growth and ageing. An estimated 80% of Persons with Disabilities live in developing countries, where access to inclusive services remains a persistent challenge.

Uganda Sign Language (UGSL) is the primary language of the Deaf community in Uganda. It has evolved since the establishment of schools for the Deaf in 1959 and was officially recognised in the 1995 Constitution, positioning Uganda among the early adopters of constitutional recognition for a national sign language. UGSL is central to advancing national and global inclusion goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by enabling equitable access to learning, information, and public services.

The 2024 UBOS Disability Thematic Report places disability prevalence at approximately 14% of Uganda's population, while the 2017 Uganda Functional Difficulties Survey estimates around 16.5%, suggesting undercounting in some datasets. Studies by the Uganda National Association for the Deaf (UNAD) further project about 1,979,613 people aged 2+ with hearing difficulties, roughly 4.7% of the national population. Taken together, these figures indicate that the number of Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may be higher than conventional census counts.

Uganda has a progressive framework, the 1995 Constitution, the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020), and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Yet Deaf persons remain among the most marginalised, constrained by limited UGSL resources, a shortage of qualified interpreters and minimal integration of assistive technologies across education, employment and public services.

Digitalisation UGSL presents a practical path to close these gaps. The proposed intervention will digitise UGSL content, strengthen digital skills among Deaf individuals and affiliated stakeholders and deploy inclusive, user-centred assistive technology (AT) such as captioning tools, sign-language interfaces and accessible platforms. These measures target the core barriers to communication, learning and access to information.

The project aligns with Uganda Vision 2040, the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), the Digital Transformation Roadmap and Uganda's obligations under the UNCRPD. By promoting inclusive, equitable access to information and services for the Deaf community, it contributes directly to SDG 4 and SDG 10.

Through the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) and the Uganda Communications Universal Service and Access Fund (UCUSAF), the initiative will demonstrate the power of ICT to bridge access gaps and foster an inclusive digital society, ensuring that Deaf Ugandans can participate fully in education, the economy and civic life.

3.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Uganda Sign Language (UGSL) is constitutionally recognized but it remains underdeveloped and under-supported, with limited, mostly manual and outdated learning tools that are costly to produce, difficult to distribute and largely non-standardized. There is no centralized digital repository to support learning or service delivery; assistive technologies are expensive and ill-suited to local needs; and digital-skills literacy among the Deaf community is low. These gaps hinder effective communication, constrain inclusion in education, health care, employment opportunities and public services, and limit participation in national development. UNAD estimates that up to 87% of Deaf individuals lack access to essential social services due to persistent communication barriers.

The proposed project will address these constraints by digitizing UGSL, establishing a national learning and reference repository, proposing a formal national standard, building user and institutional capacity and deploying context-appropriate assistive technology integrated into education, health, civic and service-delivery systems, advancing Uganda's digital-inclusion commitments.

4.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

4.1. General Objective

To advance inclusive communication and the socio-economic empowerment of Deaf individuals in Uganda by enhancing accessibility and digital literacy, accelerating the adoption of Uganda Sign Language (UGSL) through innovative digital solutions and targeted capacity-building interventions.

4.2. Specific Objectives

The project aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- 1) Conduct a national baseline to assess UGSL access and use, digital-literacy levels, availability and affordability of assistive technologies, and priority support needs within the Deaf community.
- 2) Propose a formal national standard for Uganda Sign Language (UGSL), including a standardized manual alphabet and reference descriptions of UGSL phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- 3) Design and develop UGSL mobile and web applications, built on the existing UGSL corpus with an interactive dictionary, video tutorials, structured learning modules, and mobile-first tools to promote learning and use nationwide.

- 4) Establish a centralized, publicly accessible UGSL digital repository as the national learning and reference hub.
- 5) Deploy context-appropriate assistive technologies (e.g., captioning tools, UGSL-enabled apps, compatible devices) and integrate digital sign-language tools into public service delivery in education, health, and justice.
- 6) Build individual and institutional capacity to use UGSL in accessing, delivering, and managing services, including Training-of-Trainers programmes.
- 7) Promote uptake of the national PWD Observatory among Deaf-led organisations (including UNAD members) and strengthen data use for planning and accountability.
- 8) Drive awareness and adoption of digital UGSL and assistive technologies through targeted outreach, public campaigns, and inter-agency coordination.
- 9) Establish a sustainable ecosystem for assistive-technology deployment and support partnering with ICT innovators, embedding solutions in national digital and disability-inclusive policies and frameworks, and ensuring ongoing maintenance and governance.

5.0 PROJECT TARGET

The project aims to:

- 1) Raise awareness of inclusive communication among at least 20,000 Deaf people and frontline service providers nationwide.
- 2) Identify and train 500 Deaf regional champions across all regions of Uganda to drive digital literacy and UGSL adoption.
- 3) Train a minimum of 50 frontline service providers (health, education, community services) in basic Uganda Sign Language (UGSL) to improve accessibility.
- 4) Strengthen the digital-transformation capacity of 10 Deaf-led organisations and provide priority assistive digital devices.
- 5) Propose a formal national standard for UGSL.
- 6) Establish a centralized, publicly accessible UGSL digital repository serving as the national learning and reference hub.
- 7) Develop and deploy a UGSL digital platform (mobile and web) with interactive learning and reference tools.

These beneficiaries will serve as catalysts within their communities, advancing digital inclusion and accelerating the uptake of UGSL through practical, community-based interventions.

6.0 PROJECT KEY ACTIONS

1) Assessment and Standards

- i) Conduct a national baseline on UGSL teaching, usage, and digital-accessibility gaps.

- ii) Map stakeholders (e.g., UNAD, MGLSD, MoES, universities, Deaf led organizations, disability-rights organizations).
- iii) Hold inception and co-creation workshops to align roles and agree a roadmap.
- iv) Review existing UGSL materials against regional/international benchmarks.
- v) Propose and validate a national UGSL standard, including the manual alphabet, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, with Deaf experts, linguists, and relevant institutions.
- vi) Publish an official UGSL reference guide to anchor digital content development.

2) Platform and Content

- i) Design and develop an interactive, mobile-friendly UGSL learning platform and digital dictionary (web and mobile).
- ii) Include video tutorials, powerful search, offline access and adaptive interfaces.
- iii) Establish secure hosting, data-protection controls and a maintenance plan.
- iv) Develop scripts, film, edit, and quality-assure UGSL tutorials, modules, and dictionary entries, produce accessible e-books and learning assets.
- v) Implement a continuous update workflow to keep the repository current and living.

3) Infrastructure and Assistive Technology

- i) Procure laptops/tablets and essential software for Deaf learners, partner institutions, content developers and trainers.
- ii) Provide accessibility and production tools (captioning, assistive technologies, video-editing suites).
- iii) Set up ICT infrastructure at partner institutions to support training and content workflows.

4) Capacity Building

- i) Train partner-institution staff, Deaf youth and Trainers-of-Trainers in digital literacy, content production, assistive-technology use and platform management.
- ii) Run instructional-design workshops for UGSL e-learning.
- iii) Establish a certified cadre of Deaf digital trainers for sustained community outreach.

5) Adoption and Partnerships

- i) Drive awareness campaigns across radio, TV, social media and community events.
- ii) Convene stakeholder dialogues to showcase progress and mobilise support.
- iii) Support schools, training institutions, and local governments to integrate UGSL digital resources into teaching and community programmes.

- 6) Governance, Monitoring, and Evaluation
 - i) Establish a Project Management Unit for coordination, quality assurance, and reporting.
 - ii) Implement an M&E framework with indicators on access, usage, quality, and impact.
 - iii) Cover essential administrative and logistics costs for effective delivery.
 - iv) Conduct quarterly reviews and a final evaluation to document lessons learned and best practices.

7.0 ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS

The grant may be awarded to a single applicant entity or a consortium of partners under a partnership.

7.1. General Criteria

- 1) The Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) is a legally established entity in Uganda. To address the diverse needs of the program, it is likely that a solution will be delivered through consortia of providers. The applicant organization (in case of consortia both lead and co-applicant organization) will assume overall responsibility and sign a Grant Agreement with UCC to enforce joint accountability of action.
- 2) The Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) must be in satisfactory financial health and have adequate structures and systems to manage the project and report to the UCUSAF as shall be required.
- 3) The Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) must be willing to implement activities in unserved and underserved communities across Uganda.
- 4) The Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) must provide documented evidence of at least three (3) years' experience delivering assistive technologies, support and training for persons with disabilities, including the deaf and hard-of-hearing, or implementing comparable projects.
- 5) The Applicant (Lead or co-applicant in case of a consortium) must demonstrate documented experience in mobilizing, coordinating and delivering similar initiatives at a national scale, especially working in rural areas.
- 6) The Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) must show a clear plan and capacity to mobilize additional resources or partnerships to support project sustainability beyond initial funding.
- 7) The Lead Applicant and co-applicant must have an existing working relationship spanning at least two years, supported by an agreement.
- 8) Co-applicants must demonstrate complementary competencies to the applicant.

7.2. Preference

In evaluating proposals, the Commission will accord priority to applicants whose submissions clearly demonstrate:

- 1) Proven experience in Deaf-inclusive training and AT delivery: A strong track record in delivering assistive technologies and providing support and training for Persons with Disabilities, with specific, verifiable experience engaging the Deaf community (e.g., UGSL-based content, interpreter-led sessions, captioned/dubbed materials).
- 2) Contextual awareness and community-rooted practice: Deep insight into the lived realities of Deaf people and hard-of-hearing, particularly in unserved and underserved areas, plus practical, culturally sensitive approaches to address barriers (language access, cost, connectivity, stigma), co-designed with Deaf-led organisations where possible.
- 3) Qualified, accessible implementation team: An experienced, multidisciplinary team with in-house capacity to execute within timelines, including (or with formal access to) certified UGSL interpreters, Deaf trainers/peer mentors, accessibility specialists and safeguarding focal persons.
- 4) Innovative, adaptive and scalable approaches: Creative, evidence-led solutions suited to low-resource settings, such as offline-first tools, visual-first curricula, captioning and sign-language interfaces, leveraging local infrastructure and networks and resilient delivery models (e.g., solar/back-up power, community hubs).
- 5) Co-funding, partnerships and in-kind support: Clear commitments that complement the grant (financial or in-kind), including partnerships with Deaf-led organisations, service providers and local institutions to strengthen reach, quality and sustainability.
- 6) Value for money and measurable impact: A cost-effective budget that maximises outcomes for Deaf beneficiaries, with clear indicators (e.g., UGSL adoption, digital literacy gains, service-access improvements), robust MEL plans and safeguards for data protection and participant well-being.

8.0 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Grant applications will be evaluated through a structured three-stage assessment process comprising: Administrative, Technical and Financial evaluations.

8.1. Administrative Evaluation

This stage focuses on verifying the eligibility of the applicant. Key areas assessed include:

- i) Legal registration and status of the organization in Uganda.
- ii) Submission of all required administrative and legal documentation.
- iii) Compliance with minimum eligibility requirements as outlined in the call.

8.2. Technical Evaluation

The technical assessment will evaluate the overall quality, relevance and feasibility of the proposed project. This includes:

- i) Clarity and rationale of the project motivation.
- ii) Alignment of project objectives with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) principles.
- iii) Applicant's relevant experience and track record in similar ICT and multimedia training programs.
- iv) Appropriateness and innovation of the proposed methodology and project management approach.
- v) Feasibility and practicality of the work plan and timelines.
- vi) Anticipated project outcomes, impact and alignment with UCC/UCUSAF priorities.
- vii) Integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender inclusion, disability mainstreaming, and environmental considerations.
- viii) Demonstrated strategy for sustainability beyond the project period.

8.3. Financial Evaluation

This stage will assess the proposal's financial soundness and cost-effectiveness, including:

- i) Clear and realistic budgeting with a strong value-for-money proposition.
- ii) Sustainability of project funding post-grant.
- iii) Ability to leverage additional resources (financial or in-kind) to scale and sustain the initiative.

9.0 LEGAL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

All applicants are required to submit the following legal and administrative documents to support their eligibility and capacity. In the case of partnerships or consortia, these requirements apply to both the lead applicant and co-applicants.

- 1) Certificate of Incorporation or Registration: A valid certificate showing the legal name and registration status of the organization in Uganda.
- 2) Beneficial owner form in case of a company.
- 3) Memorandum and Articles of Association: Foundational documents outlining the organization's governance, objectives and operational mandate.
- 4) Official Address Details: Current physical address, postal address, email and website (where applicable).

- 5) Authorized Contact Person Information with Powers of Attorney: Full name, title/position, phone number, and email of the designated representative authorized to act on behalf of the organization.
- 6) Letters of Support (if applicable): Endorsement letters from affiliated entities, proposed implementing partners, or supporting institutions if any (co-applicants).
- 7) Audited Financial Statements: Certified financial statements for the last two (2) financial years, demonstrating sound financial health and reporting systems.
- 8) Signed Code of Ethical Conduct: A duly signed copy of the “Code of Ethical Conduct for Grant Applicants and Providers” (refer to Annex 1 of the Call for Proposals).
- 9) Proof of Relevant Experience: Provide evidence of the organisation’s experience implementing projects for Persons with Disabilities, such as project completion reports, client testimonials, and/or records of previous grant awards.

10.0 PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Project motivation, objectives and outcomes
2. Project linkage to UCC/UCUSAF strategy and the National Development Agenda
3. Experience managing similar projects
4. Project implementation methodology
5. Project management framework
6. Project work plans and associated milestones, with clear description of responsibilities for each partner
7. Project implementation budget with clear allocation of resources to implementing partners
8. Sustainability approach
9. Monitoring and evaluation approach
10. Risk management framework
11. Integration of cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, and digital divide, among others.

NOTE:

The Commission reserves the right to conduct due diligence at any stage of the evaluation process to verify the authenticity and accuracy of the information and documentation submitted by applicants.

11.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

The Commission's assessment team will conduct a comprehensive risk evaluation, including both stated and unstated risks. This assessment will holistically review the applicant's submission to determine the overall level of risk classified as low, medium, high, or extreme that the proposed engagement may pose to UCC/UCUSAF operations, resources, and objectives.

12.0 APPLICATION TIMELINE

The grant application is open effective **16th October 2025 to 29th October 2025**.

A pre-grant application meeting will be held online on **23rd October 2025 at 10.00 am**. Participants should register in advance for this meeting:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ODQ3MTlhYTAtMmNmMy00MWM5LThjNTAtNDE2Nzg3YTBiOTI4%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f7ffcd5e-44c0-4686-8452-78ea57432de7%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%225d9c1dbd-d7cd-408f-aa0b-9f99572c8f3c%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 29th October 2025** to:

**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

1. Personal information supplied in an application will be used by UCC in accordance with the Laws of Uganda.
2. The Commission reserves the right to carry out any form of due diligence at any time of the application process once an application is received.

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-
 - 1) the laws of Uganda; and
 - 2) any contract awarded.
- (c) avoid associations with businesses and organisations that 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.

AUTHORISED SIGNATORY

NAME OF APPLICANT