



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN IMPLEMENTING TECHNICAL PARTNER TO ORGANISE THE UCC TESTBED HACKATHON 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) is the regulatory body for the communications sector in Uganda, established under the Uganda Communications Act, 2013.

In accordance with Section 5(1)(l) of the Act, the Commission is mandated to promote research into the development and use of new communications techniques and technologies, including those that enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities and other members of society to communications services.

This statutory mandate underscores UCC's commitment to fostering innovation, supporting initiatives that advance the growth and modernisation of the communications sector, and driving socio-economic transformation through Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

To operationalise this mandate, UCC established the National Communications Testbed for Emerging and Future Technologies (the Testbed) at the Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology (UICT), Nakawa. The Testbed became fully operational in November 2024.

The Testbed serves as a national research and innovation facility designed to validate telecommunications technologies, simulate network environments, and support technical experimentation. It provides researchers, innovators, academia, startups, and industry players with access to advanced infrastructure for testing, validating, and demonstrating new ideas under real-world network conditions.

To increase utilisation of the Testbed, stimulate innovation, and support development of practical sector solutions, UCC intends to organise the UCC Testbed Hackathon 2026. The two-day Hackathon shall be conducted at the UCC test bed facility in Nakawa. The Hackathon shall be open to university students, graduates and technologists with one to three years of post-

graduation experience. Selection may consider prior utilisation of the UCC Communications Testbed.

UCC therefore seeks to engage a qualified Implementing Technical Partner to undertake the end-to-end organisation, management, and execution of the Hackathon. The Implementing Partner shall ensure professional and quality delivery of the hackathon while enabling participants to utilise the advanced infrastructure available at the Testbed to develop and demonstrate operational prototypes.

1.2 The Context of the Hackathon

This assignment is guided by the [UCC Collaboration Framework \(2022–2025\)](#), which provides principles and implementation guidelines for UCC research support and collaborative programmes as drivers of its strategic direction.

Under Section 7.2 of the Framework, the UCC Special Projects Category includes **Lot 6: Support to Innovative Techniques**. This category provides technical and/or financial support for initiatives that facilitate access to physical facilities, capabilities, and services required for the development, testing, and scaling of a modern communications sector.

Eligible support areas include prototyping, adaptation, installation and calibration, testing equipment, support to testbed users, and design and development of prototypes.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Hackathon aims to leverage the Testbed facility to catalyse practical digital solutions addressing priority communications sector challenges. The specific objectives are to :

- (i) Facilitate development and demonstration of prototype solutions by enabling innovators to design, test and validate ideas using the UCC Communications Testbed infrastructure.
- (ii) Demonstrate technical capabilities of the Testbed through showcasing the functionality of its APIs and infrastructure to the developer community, thereby encouraging future research and development.
- (iii) Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration between UCC, telecommunications operators, academia, and industry stakeholders to support the development of commercially viable solutions.
- (iv) Identify promising prototype solutions emerging from the Hackathon that may be considered for further development through incubation or other UCC innovation support initiatives.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The Implementing Technical Partner shall be responsible for the cost-effective end-to-end organisation and execution of the inaugural UCC Communications Testbed Hackathon 2026. The assignment shall focus on professional delivery, participant experience, practical innovation outcomes, and effective utilisation of the UCC Communications Testbed.

The scope of work shall include the following tasks, together with any related activities reasonably necessary for the successful delivery of the two day Hackathon.

3.1 Pre-event Planning and Coordination

1. Prepare an inception report detailing the implementation methodology, workplan, timelines, staffing arrangements, and risk mitigation measures
2. Design and manage the participant application, screening, selection, and confirmation process for approximately forty (40) participants, comprising university students, recent graduates, and technologists with one to three years of post-graduation experience. The process shall use transparent selection criteria approved by UCC and may consider applicants' prior use of the UCC Communications Testbed.
3. Conduct at least one pre-event participant orientation session to brief selected participants on the Hackathon programme, rules, judging criteria, and Testbed environment.
4. Develop and implement a targeted communications and mobilisation strategy to attract qualified participants and relevant stakeholders, in line with the UCC Communications Policy.
5. Coordinate with UCC, Telecom Operators, and other partners to secure necessary technical resources, including internet connectivity, API access, and pre-configured development environments.
6. Recruit, brief, and coordinate mentors and an independent judging panel comprising representatives from UCC, academia, and industry.
7. Develop the Hackathon programme, judging framework, score sheets, and participant guidelines.
8. Arrange all logistical requirements, including venue setup at the Innovation Hub and the Testbed, catering, security, branding, and participant welfare.

3.2 Hackathon Execution

1. Manage the two-day Hackathon schedule and programme, ensuring smooth coordination and a conducive environment for innovation, collaboration, and prototype development.
2. Provide on-site first-level technical support to assist participants in accessing and using the Testbed infrastructure and APIs, and coordinate with the UCC/Testbed technical team where necessary.
3. Facilitate mentoring sessions, progress check-ins, and pitch coaching to support participants in developing and presenting their solutions.
4. Coordinate the final demonstration and judging session at the Communications Testbed, enabling participants to demonstrate solutions using the available Testbed infrastructure.
5. Manage the awards ceremony, closing session, and stakeholder recognition in accordance with the approved programme.
6. Capture photographs and other approved media content during the event.

3.3 Post-Hackathon Activities

1. Prepare and submit a comprehensive final report covering implementation progress, participant statistics, prototype concepts developed, judging outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations.
2. Provide participant attendance lists, photographs, media materials, judging summaries, and other supporting documentation.
3. Submit financial accountability documentation and acquittals as required.
4. Administer a participant feedback survey and include findings in the final report.
5. Support dissemination of event outcomes and prototype demonstrations through UCC-approved media and stakeholder communication channels.

6. KEY DELIVERABLES

The Implementing Technical Partner shall deliver the following outputs in accordance with the approved workplan and timelines:

(1) Inception Report

To be submitted within seven (7) working days of contract signing and shall include:

- (i) Understanding of the assignment
- (ii) Implementation methodology
- (iii) Detailed workplan and timelines
- (iv) Staffing arrangements and responsibilities

- (v) Risk mitigation measures
- (vi) Coordination approach with UCC and key stakeholders

(2) Participant Mobilisation and Selection Deliverables

To be submitted prior to the Hackathon and shall include:

- (i) Communications and mobilisation plan aligned to the UCC Communications Policy
- (ii) Call for applications and outreach materials
- (iii) Participant application, screening, and selection process
- (iv) Final list of approximately forty (40) selected participants
- (v) Records of participant confirmations
- (vi) At least one pre-Hackathon orientation session conducted

(3) Hackathon Readiness Deliverables

To be completed prior to commencement of the Hackathon and shall include:

- (i) Approved selection criteria
- (ii) Approved Hackathon programme and schedule
- (iii) Judging framework and score sheets
- (iv) Participant guidelines and rules
- (v) Confirmed mentors and judging panel
- (vi) Venue readiness at the Innovation Hub and Testbed
- (vii) Confirmation of logistics, branding, catering, security, and technical setup

(4) Successful Delivery of the Hackathon

The Implementing Partner shall successfully organise and manage the two-day Hackathon, including:

- (i) Registration and participant onboarding
- (ii) On-site coordination and programme management
- (iii) First-level technical support and mentor engagement
- (iv) Progress check-ins and pitch coaching
- (v) Final demonstrations and judging sessions
- (vi) Awards ceremony and closing session
- (vii) Capture of photographs and approved media content

(5) Final Technical and Administrative Report

To be submitted within ten (10) working days after completion of the Hackathon and shall include:

- (i) Summary of implementation activities
- (ii) Participant statistics and attendance records
- (iii) Prototype concepts or solutions developed
- (iv) Judging outcomes and rankings
- (v) Participant feedback survey findings

- (vi) Lessons learned and recommendations
- (vii) Photographs, media materials, and supporting documentation

(6) Financial Accountability Report

To be submitted together with the final report and shall include:

- (i) Detailed expenditure statement
- (ii) Budget versus actual expenditure analysis
- (iii) Receipts, invoices, and supporting documents as required
- (iv) Financial accountability documentation and acquittals

7. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The Implementing Partner may be an organisation, consortium, or group of individuals. Applicants must demonstrate the following:

5.1 Mandatory Requirements

- i. Must be a legally registered entity in Uganda or a consortium with a lead entity registered in Uganda.
- ii. Must have successfully organised and delivered at least **two (2)** hackathons, or similar technology-focused competitive events related to ICT, software development, or digital innovation.
- iii. Must provide any relevant awards, recognitions, certifications, partnerships, or other credentials demonstrating experience, contribution, or leadership in organising and delivering hackathons, technology competitions, innovation challenges, or similar digital innovation initiatives.
- iv. Demonstrated experience with implementing hackathons in the technology and innovation ecosystem
- v. Applicants must provide verifiable proof, such as:
 - a. Copies of contracts or letters of engagement from previous clients.
 - b. Links to published reports, media coverage, or participant testimonials from past events.
 - c. Contact details of previous clients for reference verification.
 - d. Demonstrable ability to manage events requiring technical infrastructure, including coordination with network operators, API integration support, and provision of development environments.
 - e. Evidence of robust project management methodologies, including planning, budgeting, risk mitigation, and reporting.
 - f. Awards, certifications, recognitions for experience in technology and innovation-focused hackathons.

5.2 Desirable Qualifications

- i. Experience working with government agencies, regulators, or public sector innovation initiatives in Uganda or the East African region.
- ii. Existing networks within Uganda's developer community, academia, and technology startup ecosystem.
- iii. Familiarity with child online protection, cybersecurity, or digital safety themes.
- iv. Capacity to provide mentorship resources and access to a network of technical and domain experts.
- v. Evidence of prior collaborations, partnerships, or joint ventures with other organisations in the delivery of hackathons will be an added advantage

5.3 Team Composition

The proposed team should include, at a minimum:

1. Team Lead
 - a. A master's degree in engineering (Computer/Telecom/Electrical), ICT, Innovation, Business Administration and related technology fields.
 - b. Senior manager with 5+ years ICT innovation with project management experience, preferably in innovation eco system
 - c. Overall leadership, strategy, stakeholder management, budget oversight, and decision-making.
 - d. Additional relevant certifications will be an added advantage
2. Technical Lead
 - a. A bachelor's degree in engineering (Computer/Telecom/Electrical), ICT, Innovation and related fields
 - b. Strong technical background (Telecom/ICT Engineer, Software Developer or Testbed Manager) with at least 5 years' experience in organisation of ICT related innovation competitions and hackathons. (At least 2 hackathons/competitions organised)
 - c. Manage infrastructure, technical setup, tool availability, troubleshooting, and participant technical support.
 - d. Responsible for tools management both software and hardware, participant platforms, and data sources.
 - e. Additional relevant certifications will be an added advantage
3. Programme /Theme Lead
 - a. Domain expert in the hackathon theme i.e., Child Online Protection, and how it relates with AI, Cybersecurity. Should also have a strong understanding of national priorities

- b. Define problem statements, challenges, judging criteria, and ensure relevance to national goals
- 4. Operations Lead
 - a. 3-5 years' experience in management or operations of innovation events and competitions.
 - b. Role: With overall responsibility for delivery and client liaison. Responsible for venue setup, participant management, catering, materials, transportation, on-ground coordination, catering, security, and participant welfare.
- 5. Communications Expert
 - a. At least 3 years' experience in PR, marketing or communications background with digital media experience
 - b. Experience in stakeholder engagement, corporate partnerships or fundraising
 - c. Promotion, social media campaign, media invitations, branding, call for applications, and post-event publicity

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

8.1 Understanding of the Assignment and Proposed Methodology

Assessment of the applicant's understanding of the Hackathon objectives, specifically regarding the utilisation of the UCC Communications Testbed and the development of operational prototypes. Evaluators will review the clarity and coherence of the proposed event methodology, including strategies for technical integration (APIs, network access), participant support mechanisms, and the approach to ensuring solutions are validated.

8.2 Relevant Organisational Experience

Demonstrated experience in organising and delivering similar technology-focused events, such as hackathons, innovation sprints, or developer challenges within the ICT sector. Applicants must provide verifiable proof of having successfully organised at least two (2) similar events, including evidence of quality delivery, participant engagement, and post-event outcomes.

8.3 Qualifications and Experience of the Proposed Team

Qualifications, expertise, and complementarity of the proposed team required to deliver a high-fidelity innovation event. CVs of key personnel should highlight relevant experience in event management and technical facilitation.

8.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Participant Mobilisation Capacity

Demonstrated ability to engage effectively with the innovation ecosystem, including developers, startups, academia, telecommunications operators, and industry mentors. Evaluators will assess the applicant's strategy for

recruiting high-quality participants, securing technical partners and managing relationships with judges and mentors.

8.5 Workplan, Delivery Approach, and Risk Management

Feasibility, realism, and sequencing of the proposed work plan, including the timeline for pre-event activities, participant selection, event execution, and post-event reporting. The proposal must include a risk management strategy addressing technical failures, physical safety, and data privacy. The approach should align with the required deliverables (Inception Report, Event Execution, Post-Event Report) and demonstrate a clear path to achieving the target of operational prototypes.

8.6 Financial Proposal and Value for Money

Assessment of the proposed budget to ensure realistic costing, efficient resource use, and value for money for the successful delivery of the inaugural Hackathon.

9. DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT

The assignment shall commence upon contract signing and is expected to be completed within **two (2) months**, including planning, implementation, and reporting.

10. PAYMENT TERMS

A consolidated budget envelope will be provided to the successful Implementing Partner upon contract signing to cater for end-to-end organisation and execution.

Payment shall be made in accordance with the agreed milestones outlined in the contract, subject to the submission and approval of deliverables and financial acquittals.

The Implementing Partner shall be responsible for financial management, procurement, and expenditure reporting for resources managed under the assignment, in accordance with the contract and applicable UCC requirements.

11. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested and qualified applicants are invited to submit a proposal comprising:

Technical Proposal:

- a. Understanding of the assignment and proposed methodology.
- b. Detailed work plan and timeline.
- c. Profiles and CVs of key team members, highlighting relevant experience.
- d. Evidence of past experience (as specified in Section 5.3).
- e. Proposed approach to risk management, technical support, and stakeholder engagement.

Financial Proposal:

- a. A detailed budget breakdown for the end-to-end execution of the Hackathon

12. REPORTING AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Collaborating Partner shall report to UCC through a designated Contract Manager. Overall oversight shall be provided by the Director responsible for ICT and Research to ensure alignment with UCC’s strategic and regulatory priorities.

Progress review meetings shall be scheduled during implementation.

13. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, DISCLOSURE, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

1. All reports, attendance records, documentation, and materials developed specifically under this assignment shall become the property of UCC.
2. Ownership of participant-developed prototypes shall remain with the respective participants unless otherwise agreed in writing.
3. UCC reserves the right to showcase outputs developed during the Hackathon for non-commercial promotional purposes.
4. The Implementing Partner shall maintain confidentiality of all non-public information accessed during the assignment.
5. The Implementing Partner may be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.