



CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE UCC/UCUSAF GRANT FOR INCLUSIVITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH ICT INNOVATION, ADOPTION AND DIGITAL LITERACY

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

1.0 Introduction

Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) through the Uganda Communications Universal Service and Access Fund (UCUSAF), which is a Universal Service Fund (USF) to communications in Uganda has launched a call for proposals to establish a collaboration on the implementation of key activities under a general thematic area of addressing digital inclusiveness of Personal with Disabilities (PWD).

Therefore, the UCUSAF IV program set aside resources to be utilized under a collaborative grant framework between UCC/UCUSAF and a suitable partner. Some of these funds are available within the operational budget of financial year 2024/2025 to implement activities related to addressing digital inclusiveness of Persons with Disabilities, building on the success of previous pilot initiatives. UCC/UCUSAF seeks to scale up efforts across Uganda to ensure that PWDs can fully participate in the growing knowledge-based digital economy.

2.0 Background

The Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) defines disability as “a substantial functional limitation of daily life activities caused by physical, mental, or sensory impairments and environmental barriers that result in limited participation.” This definition underscores the fact that disability is not merely a medical condition but a dynamic interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) include all individuals who experience long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These impairments, when combined with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, significantly hinder full and equal participation in society. It is important to emphasize that barriers exist both within society’s structures

and in the attitudes of individuals and institutions towards those with disabilities, often exacerbating the challenges faced by PWDs.

Section 5 (L) of the Uganda Communications Act 2013 mandates the Commission to “promote research into the development and use of new communications techniques and technologies, including those which promote accessibility of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and other members of society to communications services”. At a national level, article 21(1) of Uganda’s Constitution upholds Uganda’s commitment in safeguarding equality and freedom from discrimination for all, including PWDs. Under the article, discrimination was defined in clause (3) to mean giving different treatment to different persons attributable only or mainly to their respective descriptions by sex, race, color, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, or social or economic standings, political opinion or disability.

The 2014 National Housing and Population Census estimated that around 12.4% of the population (7 million people) live with disabilities. Despite these significant numbers, the PWD demographic remains one of the most underserved groups in terms of access to education, employment, and ICT services.

PWDs face significant challenges in accessing quality education and formal employment, as well as healthcare services. These challenges limit their ability to achieve their full potential, especially in the context of a rapidly growing knowledge based global economy.

Key challenges faced by PWDs in Uganda include:

- a) Low access to formal education- Many PWDs are unable to attend school due to both physical barriers (lack of accessible infrastructure) and social barriers (stigma and discrimination).
- b) Limited Employment Opportunities- PWDs are significantly underrepresented in the formal workforce, particularly in the knowledge-based economy. Less than 1% of the formal workforce comprises PWDs.
- c) Limited Access to ICT Services- Many PWDs face financial and educational barriers to accessing digital services, limiting their ability to participate in the digital economy. The high cost of ICT devices, coupled with limited digital literacy, further restricts PWDs from reaping the benefits of the digital transformation.

- d) Social Stigma and Marginalization- PWDs often face social exclusion, making it difficult for them to fully integrate into society and participate in community activities.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential to play a transformative role in the lives of PWDs. Digital technologies can serve as equalizers, enabling PWDs to overcome barriers in communication, education, and employment. Specifically, digital assistive technologies offer solutions that empower PWDs to perform tasks they otherwise might not be able to, allowing them to live more independent and productive lives. For example, assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice recognition software, and specialized learning tools can dramatically enhance the quality of life for PWDs by making it easier for them to engage in the workforce, access educational opportunities, and participate in social activities.

In response to the challenges faced by PWDs, the Commission through UCUSAF has in the past implemented various programs to promote digital inclusion in partnership with various key stakeholders. These programs have, among others, achieved the following:

- a) Development of the online National PWD Digital Observatory with over 80,000 PWDs profiled and connected to more than 200 service providers.
- b) Digital literacy training for over 20,000 PWDs from various district unions across the country.
- c) Development of a PWD digital literacy curriculum with the content translated into 8 local languages.
- d) Development of local Assistive Technologies that have helped to bridge the gap between available technology and the specific requirements of PWDs in Uganda.
- e) Development of 50 websites for PWD organizations across the country.

Further to the above achievements, UCC/UCUSAF is seeking to collaborate with a suitably qualified applicant (partner or consortium of partners) to build on and enhance the achievements above so as to drive digital inclusiveness for PWDs.

3.0 Problem Statement

Despite the progress and achievements highlighted above, several opportunities exist regarding ICT adoption and usage among PWDs. Of the nearly 7 million PWDs in the country, the majority remain unserved or underserved in terms of access and usage of communication and digital services. Less than 5% of the PWDs have basic digital literacy skills. Access to formal employment, especially in the knowledge-based sectors, remains very low at less than 1% of the formal workforce. Data quality management among PWDs remains a big issue as evidenced by the controversy regarding the latest national census 2024 results.

Yet, without appropriate data, it is difficult to have effective programme design and implementation; access to devices remains a big challenge and there is low investment in the development of local digital assistive technology innovations. Furthermore, there is limited efforts in strategy adoption of Artificial Intelligence technologies to address PWD challenges.

4.0 Program objectives

- a) Promote awareness, access and usage of ICTSs among PWDs.
- b) Promote digital literacy skills development among PWDs to enable them to acquire digital skills for them to be active citizens, socially and economically. This will boost inclusiveness in respect of e-governance, business, social life, citizen participation, employment and continuous learning. It will also reduce the widening digital divide.
- c) Promote development and uptake of innovative digital Assistive Technologies for PWDs.
- d) Promote establishment of a sustainable multi-stakeholder approach to PWD digital inclusion to ensure that PWDs can equally and equitably access and make use of the ICTs for their social and economic transformation.
- e) Promote digitalization and management of the PWD ecosystem data among stakeholders and improve data availability to support decision-making for planning, programmes development and implementation.

5.0 Program key actions and outcome areas

- a) Upgrading and expansion of the National PWD Observatory to profile at least 120,000 PWDs and lobby for integration with other key relevant PWD platforms, especially for the blind and the deaf.

- b) Provide digital literacy training for 3,500 PWDs with special focus on the blind over three years, with a focus on basic and advanced digital skills.
- c) Development and adoption of at least 6 local ICT innovations, including assistive technologies that address the specific needs of PWDs.
- d) PWD digital skills for employability: build capacity and provide entrepreneurship and job placement support for at least 300 PWDs, helping them to secure employment or create their own businesses.

6.0 Target group

This initiative targets PWDs as primary beneficiaries, especially those with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and hearing impairments.

7.0 Implementation timeframe

The program will be implemented in three phases over a three-year period as highlighted below:

- a) Phase I (FY 2024/2025)- Foundation and initial rollout, focusing on upgrading the PWD observatory, integration with other possible platforms, profiling 40,000 PWDs, support 100 PWD for employability, and providing digital literacy training for up to 1,000 PWDs.
- b) Phase II (FY 2025/2026)- Expansion and capacity building, with a focus on scaling up digital literacy training to an additional 1,500 PWDs, training 100 PWDs in digital occupational skills, profiling 40,000 PWDs and supporting the development and uptake ICT innovations.
- c) Phase III (FY 2026/2027)- Digital literacy training to an additional 1,000 PWDs, profiling 50,000 PWDs, support development and uptake of assistive technologies, and support 100 PWD for employability. This also includes sustainability and impact assessment, focusing on scaling up assistive technology development, job placement, and conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the project's impact.

8.0 Eligibility of applicants

8.1 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 program and report to the UCUSAF as shall be required.
3. The Applicant (Lead or co-applicant in case of a consortium) must demonstrate active presence and operation in areas of PWD in more than 70% of Uganda's districts and presence in all administrative regions of the country.
4. The Applicant (Lead or co-applicant in case of a consortium) must have over 10 years' experience working with all categories of PWDs.
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 (Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) should have a clear strategic plan incorporating ICTs for PWDs projects.
7. The Applicant (Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) has capacity to network and mobilize complimentary resources to sustain the initiative.
8. The Lead Applicant and co-applicant must have an existing working relationship spanning at least three years, supported by an agreement.
9. Co-applicants must demonstrate complimentary competencies to the applicant.

8.2 Preference

Preference will be accorded to applicants whose Business Plan proposals highlight the following:

1. Demonstrate clear understanding and experience in dealing with capacity enhancement of persons with disabilities.

2. 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
3. Proposals that provide for greater innovations in addressing digital inclusiveness for PWDs in a sustainable manner and demonstrating logical thought processes of the results framework in line with the national development agenda.
4. Also, proposals that provide innovation in execution of the project actions in the remote and challenging environments (e.g. lack of access to the power grid or remoteness, among others).
5. Clear financial and material contribution from the applicants over and above the grant amount.
6. Proposals that demonstrate higher value for money.

9.0 Assessment Criteria

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

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

10.0 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 assessing whether a potential engagement would involve low, medium, high, or extreme risk to UCC/UCUSAF.

11.0 Required Applicant's Legal Documents

1. Certificate of incorporation or registration for the Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) providing a legal name – the name that identifies the applicant for legal, administrative and other official purposes.

2. Beneficial owner form in case of a company.
3. Memorandum and Articles of Association for Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium).
4. Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium), physical, postal, email, template and web site where applicable.
5. Contact person details with Powers of Attorney – the name, position, phone and email contact for an authorized representative of the Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium). Powers of Attorney document to be attached.
6. Letters of support from affiliated entities or proposed implementing partners if any (co-applicants).
7. Applicant (Both Lead and co-applicant in case of a consortium) Audited Financial statements for last 3 years.
8. Signed Code of Ethical Conduct in Business for Grant Applicants and Providers- Template provided by UCC/UCUSAF (Attached as Annex).

12.0 Business Plan 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.

13.0 Application Timeline

The grant application is open effective 19th December 2024 till 10th January 2025.

A Pre – grant Application online meeting will be held on-line 30th December 2024 at 10.00am. Meeting login details are here below:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NzhkYzFiZWUtMjg2NS00ZjJiLWFkM2UtOWY2ODQzNGNmYWEw%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f7fcd5e-44c0-4686-8452-78ea57432de7%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f4f92091-537a-45fe-b0ee-00c6d011dfe4%22%7d

For any required clarification or guidance on the grant application process, please email registry@ucc.co.ug/ucusaf@ucc.co.ug.

Final Applications in triplicate (3 copies) will be submitted to the physical address below and soft copies of the same forwarded to the email addresses registry@ucc.co.ug and ucusaf@ucc.co.ug

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

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 at all times-

- (a) maintain integrity and independence in their professional judgement 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 are in 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

Applicants shall not accept contracts which would constitute a conflict of interest with, any prior or current contract with Uganda Communications Commission. Applicants shall disclose to all concerned parties those conflicts of interest that cannot reasonably be avoided or escaped.

4. Confidentiality and Accuracy of Information

- (1) Information given by Applicants in the course of THE grant processes or the performance of contracts shall be true, fair and not designed to mislead.
- (2) Providers shall respect the confidentiality of information received in the course of 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 Uganda Communications Commission that might be viewed by others as having an influence on a grant decision.

6. Inducements

- (1) 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.
- (2) Applicants shall not ask a public official to do anything which is inconsistent with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Business.

7. Fraudulent Practices

Applicants shall not-

- (a) collude with other businesses and organisations with the intention of depriving Uganda Communications Commission of the benefits of free and open competition;
- (b) enter into 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 in order 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 in order to influence the process or execution of a contract to the detriment of the Uganda Communications Commission;
- (f) Withholding 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