



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS (NCC)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), in fulfillment of its statutory mandate under Section 5(1)(l) of the Uganda Communications Act, 2013, which requires it to promote research into the development and use of new communications techniques and technologies, established the National Conference on Communications (NCC) in October 2010 as one of the strategic initiatives to achieve this objective.

The NCC was envisioned as a flagship platform to strengthen communications research, particularly in the development of locally relevant solutions through discipline-specific conference series and research knowledge exchange in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Additionally, the initiative seeks to contribute to the sustainability of the sector by building individual and institutional capacity to drive advancements in communication technologies and services.

The objectives of NCC are to:

1. Provide a national forum for presenting outputs of peer-reviewed research on ICT solutions for local challenges and improvements.
2. Offer a platform for stakeholders, including ICT industry players, government MDAs, and academia, to discuss local challenges, industry trends, and innovations.
3. Facilitate networking between young professionals, senior practitioners, and accredited training institutions to support ICT researchers and innovators in Uganda.
4. Build technical and practical capacity at academic and industrial levels for research and innovation.
5. Encourage academia to leverage ICTs in addressing Uganda's developmental challenges by recognizing outstanding ICT innovations and inspiring youth entrepreneurship through initiatives such as school ICT club competitions.
6. Inspire and nurture a culture of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship among Ugandan youth through ICTs.

The conference thus offers students, researchers, application developers, and practitioners a platform to identify new research challenges, share solutions and discuss issues relevant to the communications sector of developing countries such as Uganda. A call for papers is issued, followed by paper submissions, which undergo a rigorous peer-review process and are evaluated against specific criteria to assess their quality. The accepted papers are presented during the conference, where they receive feedback from the audience and session chairs. These papers are

subsequently published as part of the conference proceedings. Additionally, a project support grant is awarded to the best peer-reviewed paper(s) to further advance their research and innovation.

UCC is currently the secretariat of NCC, whose role is to:

1. Act as an advisor to the host institution throughout the period for the conference planning
2. Support the host institution's organizing committee in the preparations for the conference, including liaisons with the NCC Advisory Board
3. Provide financial contribution for holding the conference in the amount that is approved in the annual budget.

The first two conferences were organized by UCC in collaboration with the College of Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology (CEDAT) at Makerere University. In 2013, the conference concept was reviewed, leading to the introduction of a rotational hosting model at university campuses. Since the adoption of this approach in 2014, UCC has successfully organized eight NCC events, hosted by various universities.

The conference has provided a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, research dissemination, and stakeholder engagement within the communications sector. To ensure its continued relevance, UCC is seeking to collaborate with a team of experienced academicians to evaluate the NCC by assessing its effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION**

The primary objective is to assess the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the National Conference on Communications in achieving its goals. More specifically the evaluation aims at:

1. Assess the alignment of NCC objectives and activities with the UCC mandate, national ICT goals, and the needs of stakeholders (academia, industry, and government).
2. Determine the extent to which the NCC has achieved its stated objectives and facilitated meaningful engagement among academia, industry, government, and other stakeholders, focusing on outcomes such as networking, collaboration, and policy influence.
3. Analyze the NCC's contributions to ICT research, innovation, and capacity building at both individual and institutional levels, evaluating the impact on research output, skills development, and innovation adoption.
4. Evaluate the impact of participation in the National Conference on Communications (NCC) on the adoption of ICT-driven solutions in research and development and assess its influence on the quality and quantity of research publications generated by participants.
5. Examine the financial, operational, and institutional mechanisms supporting the NCC's continuity and growth, while considering sustainability strategies to ensure the conference's long-term existence.

6. Gather feedback from participants, sponsors, and partners to evaluate their perspectives on the NCC's quality, relevance, and outcomes. This can include suggestions for improvement and areas that need attention.
7. Investigate the long-term outcomes of NCC participation on individual and institutional growth, as well as track the evolution of themes and topics addressed at the conference to ensure continued relevance to the ICT sector's changing needs.
8. Offer evidence-based recommendations to improve the planning, execution, and outcomes of the NCC, with a particular focus on enhancing its sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with global best practices.
9. Assess how the NCC has influenced policy development in Uganda's ICT sector and the adoption of new industry practices, standards, and innovations, helping to shape the direction of the sector.

### **3. TASKS TO BE PERFORMED**

This assessment will encompass the activities outlined below. However, UCC reserves the right to modify these tasks as needed during the assessment process.

- i. Conducting a comprehensive review of all available documents related to the NCC, including past conference reports, UCC mandate, conference objectives, stakeholder engagement strategies, and any previous evaluations or assessments.
- ii. Analysing the alignment of the NCC's objectives with UCC's mandate, national ICT goals, and stakeholder needs.
- iii. Identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders, including academia, industry representatives, government agencies, participants, sponsors, and partners involved in the NCC.
- iv. Designing and conducting interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions with key stakeholders to gather qualitative and quantitative data on their perceptions, expectations, and feedback regarding the conference.
- v. Assessing the extent to which the NCC has achieved its stated objectives, including fostering engagement among academia, industry, and government, as well as contributing to ICT research, innovation, and capacity building.
- vi. Analysing the impact of the conference on individual and institutional levels in terms of skills development, networking, and knowledge dissemination.
- vii. Assessing the financial, operational, and institutional mechanisms that support the continuity of the NCC.
- viii. Identifying and documenting challenges faced in organizing and executing the NCC, including logistical, financial, and operational difficulties. Provide

recommendations and appropriate action necessary to alleviate such challenges.

- ix. Benchmarking with similar academic conferences – aimed at fostering ICTs.
- x. Analysing barriers to participation, inclusivity, and the overall effectiveness of the conference.
- xi. Collecting data from various sources, including stakeholder feedback, document reviews, and analysis of NCC outcomes.
- xii. Providing evidence-based recommendations for enhancing future conferences, with a focus on improving planning, execution, engagement, and outcomes.
- xiii. Preparing a draft assessment report presenting the key findings, analyses, and recommendations for improving the NCC.
- xiv. Revising and finalizing the report based on feedback from UCC and other stakeholders, ensuring that it includes an executive summary, key findings, and actionable recommendations.
- xv. Delivering a presentation summarizing the assessment findings, insights, and recommendations to UCC and relevant stakeholders. This presentation should highlight the key aspects of the assessment and provide an opportunity for discussion and feedback.
- xvi. Conducting communications sector surveillance, identify the significance of the NCC to the sector stakeholders and prepare justifiable considerations that are key for inclusion in the NCC’s sustainability.
- xvii. Ensuring all deliverables are submitted on time, in accordance with the work plan and agreed-upon timelines.

#### **4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES**

The following are expected:

- i. An inception report outlining the assessment approach, methodology, work plan, and data collection tools.
- ii. Monthly progress reports providing preliminary findings and insights for discussion with UCC.
- iii. Draft assessment report presenting comprehensive findings, analyses, and preliminary recommendations.
- iv. Deliver a presentation summarizing the assessment outcomes to UCC and relevant stakeholders for validation.
- v. Final assessment report incorporating feedback from UCC and stakeholders, including an executive summary, key findings, and actionable recommendations.

## **5. ELIGIBILITY**

UCC aims to collaborate with academia in accordance with its research collaboration framework. Therefore, to be eligible, applicants must meet the requirements set forth in Section 9 (Research Support and Eligibility Criterion) of the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) Research Support and Collaboration Framework. That is:

- i. The application must be in response to a call for proposals issued by UCC.
- ii. Lead facilitator **MUST** be a Ugandan citizen.
- iii. Lead facilitator must be an academic staff or an independent consultant from a registered university in Uganda with:
  - a) At least a master's degree related to the research to be done.
  - b) A continuing appointment for at least two (2) years for academic staff.
  - c) Previous experience with data collection, management, and analysis (required).
  - d) Experience in working on similar or related studies as specified by UCC.
- iv. Be an experienced individual researcher or a team with a minimum of 10 years' experience.
- v. The applicants must submit both a financial and technical proposal in response to the call for proposals.

## **6. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

In evaluating the relative merits of applicant proposals for the project, the evaluation team will consider the following:

- i. Adopt a Quality Cost-Based Selection (QCBS), in which both the technical and financial proposals shall determine the winning submission. In doing this, weights shall apply as follows:
  - a) Technical proposal = 80%
  - b) Financial proposal = 20%
- ii. Experience of the lead applicant.
- iii. Proof of continuing appointment at a university.
- iv. In case of collaboration with research firms, a copy of the agreement.
- v. Adequacy of proposed methodology and work plan.
- vi. Proposed team members' qualifications and experience.
- vii. Proposed schedule for the project, including milestones.
- viii. Extensive knowledge on the subject matter will be an added advantage.
- ix. Previous experience working with UCC will be an added advantage.

## **7. REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNER**

The ideal implementing partner should possess a strong academic and professional background in ICT, Data science, Economics, Statistics, M&E, with extensive experience in research, impact assessment, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement. More specifically:

i. Academic Qualifications/Education:

- a) The team leader of the implementing partner should hold a PhD in Economics, ICT, Data science, Economics, Statistics, M&E, Communication, or a closely related field, with a strong background in research methodologies, data analysis, and ICT development.
- b) The team leader should also have experience in academic or professional research, demonstrating their ability to handle large-scale assessments and evaluations.
- c) The team should include individuals with at least master's degrees in relevant fields, such as ICT, Data science, Economics, Statistics, M&E, Economics, Public Policy, Communication, or related disciplines. The team should be capable of supporting the team leader in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

ii. Relevant Professional Experience:

- a) A minimum of 10 years' experience in conducting research, assessments, or evaluations related to ICT, communications, or policy research. Experience in evaluating national conferences, academic research, or ICT initiatives will be considered an advantage.
- b) Previous experience in data collection, management, and analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) is required. This includes the ability to design and implement surveys, conduct interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. Experience with statistical software (e.g., SPSS, Stata, R, Python or similar) is preferred.
- c) Proven ability to engage with diverse stakeholders, including academia, industry representatives, government bodies, sponsors, and other partners. This includes conducting interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions.
- d) Extensive knowledge of Uganda's ICT policies, sector dynamics, and development goals, and how these align with global trends. The team should have an understanding of the sector's challenges, trends, and innovations.
- e) A proven history of successfully conducting evaluations, assessments, or academic research projects, with a strong record of publication or reports.
- f) Knowledge and experience in evaluation methodologies (e.g., formative, summative, and impact evaluations) with a focus on measuring effectiveness, outcomes, and impact.
- g) Expertise in peer-review processes, research dissemination, and networking within academic and research settings.

## **8. TIMELINES AND PAYMENTS**

The study duration has been defined as 6 months.

The payments to the Implementing Partners shall be made against the acceptance of deliverables as detailed below:

- i. Deliverable 1: 40% upon acceptance and approval of the inception report with all associated tools and/or interview guides.
- ii. Deliverable 2: 20% upon submission and acceptance of the assessment report.
- iii. Deliverable 3: 40% upon acceptance and approval of the final assessment report.

Deliverables 2 and 3 shall be due in line with the agreed-upon work plan in the inception report and will not be considered complete until the relevant approvals have been granted based on assessment and acceptance by the UCC.

## **9. REPORTING**

The implementing partner will report to the UCC project management team and designated project manager, who will quality assure the project deliverables under the overall supervision of the Director ICT and Research.

## **10. COPYRIGHT AND DISCLOSURE**

During and after the collaboration agreement execution period, all data collected, field tools, and other study deliverables shall remain the property of the Uganda Communications Commission and shall not be reproduced without express consent from the Commission.