



Implementation Plan for the establishment of community-based ICT access centres in five areas within Trinidad and Tobago

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	vi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale.....	1
1.2 Purpose.....	1
1.3 Background	2
1.4 Objectives.....	2
1.5 Relevant Legislation.....	3
1.6 Other Relevant Documents	4
2 Project Definition	5
2.1 Project Goal.....	5
2.2 Project Scope.....	5
2.3 Assumptions	6
2.4 Critical Success Factors	7
3 Strategy for Implementation.....	9
3.1 Key Stakeholders.....	9
3.2 Project Implementation	11
3.2.1 <i>Implementation Approach</i>	11
3.2.2 <i>Eligibility Criteria</i>	13
3.2.3 <i>Procurement Process</i>	13
3.2.4 <i>Project Management Methodology</i>	14
3.3 Funding.....	15
3.3.1 <i>Quantum of Subsidy</i>	15
3.3.2 <i>Proposed Disbursement of Funds</i>	15
3.3.3 <i>Procedures for Reimbursement</i>	16
4 Risk Management	18
5 Implementation Schedule	19
Appendix I: The Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015 as amended – Part V	20
Appendix II: Universal Service Governance Framework (Section 7 – Universal Service Framework).....	25

1	Governance Framework for the Implementation of Universal Service Projects.....	25
1.1	Act Requirements for the Implementation of Universal Service Projects	25
1.2	Objectives of the Universal Service Projects	25
1.3	Universal Service Project Management Structure and Administration	26
1.4	Operations of Project Administration	27
1.4.1	<i>Role of the Minister</i>	27
1.4.2	<i>Role of the Board</i>	27
1.4.3	<i>Role of the Universal Service Committee</i>	28
1.5	Operating Principles for Determining the Universal Service Projects.....	29
1.5.1	<i>Accountability</i>	30
1.5.2	<i>Impartiality and Transparency</i>	31
1.5.3	<i>Efficiency</i>	32
1.6	Selection of Universal Service Projects	32
1.6.1	<i>Submission of Universal Service Projects</i>	32
1.7	Project Appraisal and Selection	33
1.7.1	<i>Complete Assessment of Projects</i>	33
1.7.2	<i>Final Project Selection</i>	34
	Appendix III: ICT Access Centre Minimum Technical Specifications.....	35
	Appendix IV: Universal Service Claim Form	36

List of Figures

Figure 1: Management structure for the free mobile public Wi-Fi project.....	12
Figure 2: Structure for the Administration of the Universal Service Projects.....	26

List of Tables

Table 1: Critical success factors for achieving project objectives	7
Table 2: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities	9
Table 3: Proposed milestones for the disbursement of the USF for CAPEX	16
Table 4: Risks and mitigating strategies	18
Table 5: Project implementation schedule	19

Abbreviations

BoM	bill of materials
CROP	Consumer Rights and Obligations Policy
CUSI	contractual universal service initiative
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
ICT	information and communications technology
ISP	Internet service provider
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
RFP	Request for proposals
USF	Universal Service Fund
USR	Universal Service Regulations

1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

This initiative seeks to leverage the competitive information and communications technology (ICT) and telecommunications environment, in order to facilitate a community based platform for enhanced productivity via access to the Internet, and greater engagement between citizens and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), in accordance with the Telecommunications Act, Chap. 47:31 (the Act) and the *Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2019* (USR).

The initiative will realize the establishment of community-based ICT access centres in five areas within Trinidad and Tobago - Roxborough, Toco, Moruga, Fifth Company and Lopinot, utilising funding from the universal service fund. The initiative will improve the existing modes of Internet access and access to online services in the targeted rural communities. The ICT access centres are configured to host an Internet café/computer lab, an ICT-enabled classroom – subject to available space at the location – and free Wi-Fi throughout the centre. The MPA intends to enhance existing community centres within these areas and transform them into ICT access centres.

Considering the foregoing, the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (the Authority) proposes to use the Universal Service Fund (USF) to embark on a contractual universal service initiative (CUSI).

1.2 Purpose

This document, *Implementation Plan for the establishment of community-based ICT access centres in five areas within Trinidad and Tobago* (the Implementation Plan), describes the establishment of community-based ICT access centres in five areas within Trinidad and Tobago - Roxborough, Toco, Moruga, Fifth Company and Lopinot. The aim is to improve the existing modes of Internet access and access to online services in the targeted rural communities.

This Implementation Plan is to be submitted to the Minister of Public Administration (the Minister), who has responsibility for telecommunications, for approval. The process employed for this CUSI will serve as a model for future USF projects of a similar nature.

1.3 Background

GoRTT has recognised the socio-economic benefits to be derived from ICTs. The National ICT Plan has identified ICTs as a discrete sector and a crucial enabler to many other sectors, contributing to the diversification of the national economy and the strengthening of the country's competitiveness and viability in the global arena.

The following excerpt from the National ICT Plan reflects government's view of the country's development vis á vis the role of ICT:

“Our vision of Empowered People is one where the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago:

- i. have pervasive access to ICT;
- ii. are connected to broadband infrastructure which provides a variety of services that are affordable, of high quality, safe, and secure; and
- iii. are deriving high value from the use of ICT, benefitting themselves and society.”

In 2013, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a national initiative, which commissioned the implementation of community-based ICT access centres in ICT underserved areas across Trinidad and Tobago. The aim of these centres is to establish a user-friendly, technology-enabled environment within the communities, in addition to targeting traditionally underserved groups such as the physically challenged, the elderly and at-risk youth. The ICT access centres play a pivotal role in connecting and serving communities where telecommunications and ICT infrastructure is not widely available. Phase 1 involved the implementation of these centres in Carenage, Beetham Gardens, Mount Hope, La Horquetta and was executed by GoRTT. The Authority is currently implementing phase 2 of this national initiative for the following communities: Roxborough, Toco, Moruga, Fifth Company and Lopinot, as directed by the Minister of Public Administration and in accordance with the contractual universal service initiative identified in the USR.

1.4 Objectives

This document:

- i. identifies the five communities where ICT access centres will be established.
- ii. describes the process for establishing the five ICT access centres.
- iii. details the methodology that will be used to execute the projects.

1.5 Relevant Legislation

The Authority, pursuant to section 3(b) and (c) of the Act, is charged with the responsibility to establish conditions for:

- “...(b) the facilitation of the orderly development of a telecommunications system that serves to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the national, social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the society;
- (c) promoting and protecting interests of the public by –
 - (i) promoting access to telecommunications services;
 - (ii) ensuring that services are provided to persons able to meet the financial and technical obligations in relation to those services...
 - (iv) promoting the interests of customers, purchasers and other users in respect of the quality and variety of telecommunications services and equipment supplied;”

Section 28 of the Act authorises the Minister to establish the policy for universal service. It further provides that the Authority shall, in accordance with such a policy, determine to which services the requirements of universal service shall apply, and how these services shall be provided and funded.

Section 18(1)(c) of the Act provides for the Authority to determine universal service obligations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, pursuant to section 28, and to ensure that such obligations are realised.

The USR established the framework for the operationalisation of the USF and created the mechanisms for the implementation of mandatory and contractual universal service initiatives.

For the purposes of this project, the process established under Part V of the USR (see Appendix I) will be followed.

1.6 Other Relevant Documents

The following documents were helpful in the preparation of this Implementation Plan:

- i. *Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Plan ICT Blueprint 2018 – 2022*
- ii. *The Universal Service Framework for Telecommunications Services in Trinidad and Tobago (June 2012)*

2 Project Definition

2.1 Project Goal

The goal of this project is to establish five ICT access centres in Roxborough, Toco, Moruga, Fifth Company and Lopinot, via the CUSI process prescribed in the USR.

Upon completion, residents in these communities will have:

- i. access to information and knowledge resources via the Internet.
- ii. access to ICT equipment (connected to the Internet) via a cyber-café concept.
- iii. free wireless internet access based on a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) concept.
- iv. access to ICT knowledge and vocational training via a community centred training curriculum.

2.2 Project Scope

The project aims to deploy ICT equipment, free Wi-Fi access service and associated works at five targeted ICT access centres in Trinidad and Tobago.

The deployment will be implemented through a reverse auction, inclusive of a request for proposals (RFP) process, in accordance with the Act, the USR, the Telecommunications Tender Rules or any other applicable law.

The USF subsidises the cost of deployment of the ICT access equipment at the five sites and the data plans associated with accessing the service.

Other activities within the project scope will include:

- i. Service provider selection through:
 - a) the preparation of an RFP to submit to qualified service providers.
 - b) issuance of the RFP.
 - c) conducting a reverse auction (if more than one bid is submitted via the RFP process), followed by the awarding of the contract to the winning bidder.

- ii. Project management and monitoring which will involve the following:
 - a) Review of the contract and its associated deliverables.
 - b) project meetings with associated project reports and the establishment of a project implementation plan with project schedule, timelines and key deliverables etc.
 - c) review of project reports from service provider on the progress of the project.
 - d) ensuring implementation is aligned with the proposals submitted.
- iii. Project evaluation, as follows:
 - a) collection of data to determine project effectiveness, e.g., a feedback survey.
 - b) analysis and reporting on the project's effectiveness, with identification of areas for improvement for future CUSIs.

The designated locations for the five ICT access centres will be provided by the Ministry of Public Administration, as advised.

2.3 Assumptions

The successful implementation of this project will depend on the Authority gaining full cooperation from the relevant stakeholders. The following are some assumptions, upon which the success of this project depends:

- i. Timely availability of the designated locations by the Ministry of Public Administration.
- ii. Designated locations are ready for the provision of service in the five targeted areas.
- iii. The eligible service providers are interested in providing the ICT equipment and service.
- iv. The eligible service providers' networks in Trinidad and Tobago are technically capable of providing the necessary coverage and access speed requirements of this initiative, at the five identified target locations.
- v. Timely approval of the plan by the Universal Service Committee
- vi. Timely approval of the plan by the Board of the Authority

- vii. Timely approval of the proposal by the Authority’s line Minister
- viii. Full support and assistance from the Authority’s line Ministry in the implementation of the project
- ix. The project cost is within the limits afforded by the available funds.
- x. Available foreign exchange to fund the deployment of ICT equipment at the five ICT access centres.

2.4 Critical Success Factors

The successful implementation of this project is dependent on the factors listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Critical success factors for achieving project objectives

Objectives	Critical Success Factors	KPIs
Provide Broadband Internet Access service at the targeted communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Broadband Internet access service coverage available from concessionaires in the targeted areas where the ICT centres are located ii. Approval from relevant ministries to access completed ICT centres in targeted areas to deploy equipment and services 	

Objectives	Critical Success Factors	KPIs
<p>Deployment of ICT equipment at the targeted ICT access centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gauge the interest of service providers in accessing the USF via reverse auction process to implement the service in the five ICT access centres ii. Approvals by the relevant agencies for the deployment of the ICT equipment and access data services iii. Access to the foreign exchange needed by service providers to procure the requisite equipment iv. Timely engagement of a project manager 	<p>Granting of timely approvals of the necessary works</p> <p>Timely access to foreign exchange</p>

3 Strategy for Implementation

3.1 Key Stakeholders

The engagement and involvement of key stakeholders will be critical to the success of this initiative. The key stakeholders identified to partner with the Authority on this initiative are: the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) on behalf of GoRTT, the Ministry of Community Development, TATT and the national domestic fixed concessionaires, who currently operate as fixed ISPs.

Identification of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, along with the purpose of their engagement and expected contribution, will also be critical to the successful completion of the project. These roles and responsibilities are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
Ministry of Public Administration (on behalf of GoRTT)	<p>Policy direction</p> <p>Facilitation of engagement with other Government Ministries and agencies, in support of the Authority</p> <p>Selection of designated locations for ICT access centres at five locations</p>	<p>i. Approval of Implementation Plan</p> <p>ii. Assistance to the Authority, where required</p> <p>iii. Submission of list of designated locations</p>
Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago	<p>Universal service contractual initiative (CUSI) coordinator</p> <p>Coordination with other Government Ministries and agencies, with support from the MPA</p>	<p>i. Develop the implementation plan</p> <p>ii. Liaise with relevant concessionaires to implement the CUSI</p> <p>iii. Manage initiative under the <i>Universal Service</i></p>

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
	<p>Coordination with other stakeholders to facilitate timely approvals for infrastructure deployment</p> <p>Fund administrator</p>	<p><i>Framework for Telecommunications Services in Trinidad and Tobago</i> (June 2012) established by the Authority (see Appendix II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Issue the RFP to fixed concessionaires v. Evaluate the proposals received through the RFP and choose the best bidder vi. Hire and assign a project manager vii. Facilitate communication with, and timely approval from, agencies that may be needed to allow for the deployment of ICT equipment at the targeted ICT access centres viii. Manage the disbursement of the USF, based on targeted outcomes ix. Ensure that quality of service targets is met x. Conduct post audit of project implementation and identify any deficiencies to be addressed
Telecommunications service providers (fixed ISPs)	Telecommunications service provider(s) with contractual universal service obligations,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Installation of ICT infrastructure equipment, services and associated

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
	who were awarded the contract	<p>works at the ICT access centres, in accordance with the scope of the initiative</p> <p>ii. Provision of fixed broadband Internet access service at the targeted ICT access centres, in accordance with the requirements and technical specifications of the Authority</p> <p>iii. Obtaining the necessary permits and approvals from other government agencies in order to deploy the ICT equipment and services at the ICT access centres</p>

3.2 Project Implementation

3.2.1 Implementation Approach

The Authority is required to conduct a reverse auction for the installation and provision of ICT equipment and services at the identified five ICT access centres in Trinidad and Tobago. The winning bidder(s) will be the service provider(s) satisfying the criteria for the project at the least (USF-subsidised) cost.

Key elements of the Authority’s approach will include:

- i. the preparation of an RFP for eligible service provider(s) to install and provision the necessary ICT equipment and services at the targeted five ICT access centres in Trinidad and Tobago.
- ii. confirmation, during the evaluation of proposals, that the solution is aligned with the specifications provided by the Authority in the RFP.

In the event that no bids are received, the Authority can invoke section 22 (2) of the USR to select a suitable concessionaire to implement this initiative.

3.2.1.1 Proposed Organisation Structure for the Project

Figure 1 depicts the structure for the administration of the universal service projects from section 7 of the *Universal Service Framework for Telecommunications Services in Trinidad and Tobago* (June 2012).

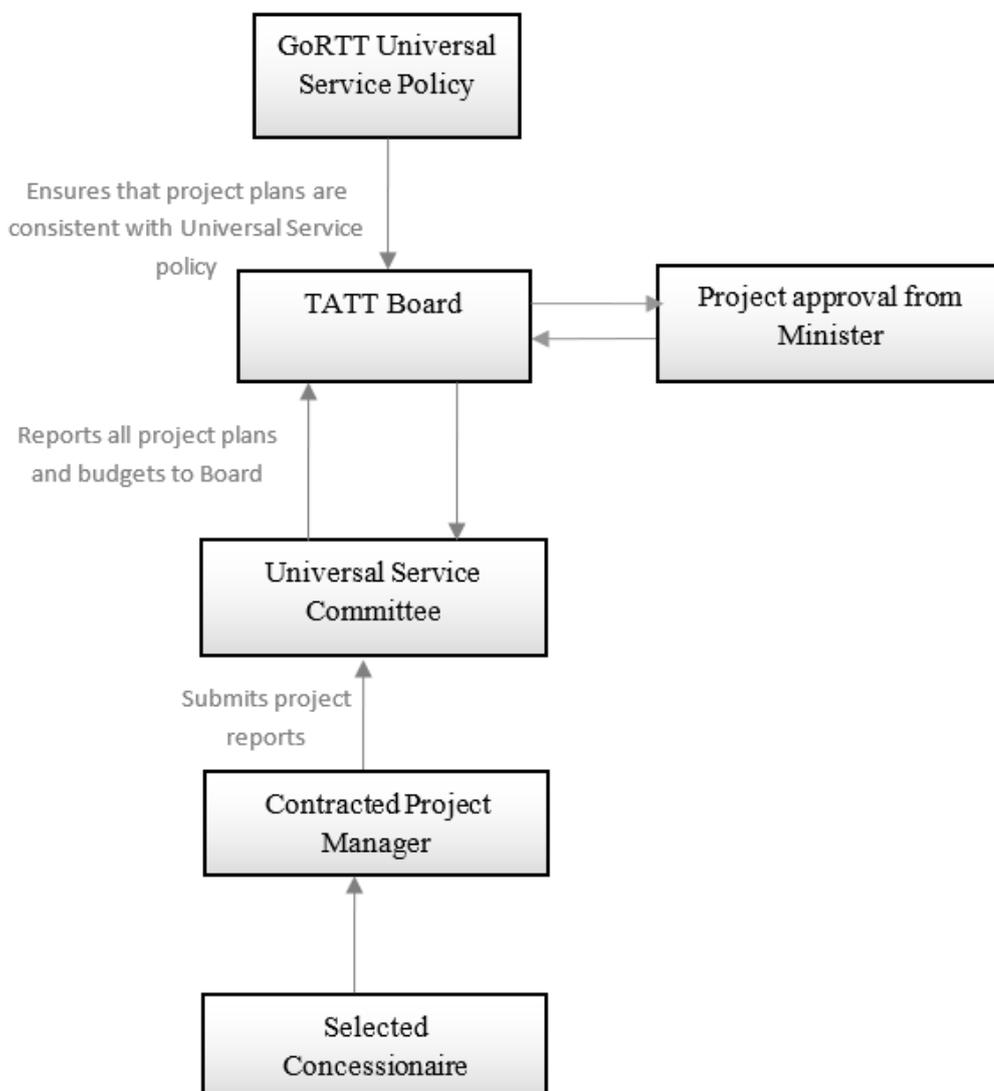


Figure 1: Management structure for the free mobile public Wi-Fi project

3.2.2 Eligibility Criteria

This criterion refers to the concessionaries that are eligible to participate in the RFP process and reverse auction, if required, to effectively provide the services intended for the relevant public modes of transportation.

The regulation 19(3) of the USR states that, “Only a concessionaire authorized to provide the service or services that comprise a Universal Service initiative may submit a bid under subregulation (1) to be granted funding to implement the Universal Service initiative.”

A “Universal Service initiative” is defined under the USR “an initiative identified by the Authority to provide and to increase access and affordability to basic telecommunications services for the benefit of–

- (a) persons resident in Universal Service areas; and
- (b) population groups within the access gap,

the implementation of which may be identified by the Authority as mandatory under Part IV or which may be implemented by a concessionaire in accordance with the terms and conditions of a contract with the Authority under Part V of these Regulations”.

3.2.3 Procurement Process

The procurement process will take the form of an RFP, followed by a reverse auction, if required. The service provider(s) that meet(s) the requirements for the provisioning of the necessary equipment and data service at the least subsidised cost will be awarded the contract.

The providers must include, as part of their proposals, the following at each site:

- i. One dedicated (public and static) IP address
- ii. A 20 Mbps dedicated download speed broadband internet service connection
- iii. One public telephone service
- iv. Minimum ICT Hardware Configuration and Professional Services as per Appendix III

- v. Completion of all associated works required for the provision of services at the location (e.g. refurbishment works, landscaping, electrical and other wiring, networking, electronic surveillance solution, furniture and fittings and AC installation)
- vi. Milestones for the project implementation, based on duration of activity and respective achievements

Additional requirements related to quality and customer service standards, in accordance with the *Consumer Rights and Obligations Policy version 0.5*, (CROP), are as follows:

- i. Service outages and other customer issues experienced are to be handled in the same manner and with the same urgency as other service outages experienced by the successful ISP(s).

3.2.4 Project Management Methodology

3.2.4.1 Hiring of the Project Manager

One of the key aspects of managing this project is the selection and recruitment of an external project manager who possesses the requisite skills and experience in handling such IT network infrastructure projects as proposed herein.

3.2.4.2 Duties of the Contracted Project Manager

The main duties of the contracted project manager will be:

- i. reporting on the project milestones tied to USF reimbursements.
- ii. reporting on the status and progress for the duration of the project.
- iii. determining the process for treating with a change of scope.
- iv. liaising with, and reporting to, the Authority's focal point.
- v. any other such duty that may be required by the Authority in pursuance of the successful completion of this project.

3.2.4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Once the project is implemented, there will be the need for post-implementation monitoring, a review of lessons learnt, and remedial actions for any mistakes made during implementation or observed as part of monitoring by the Authority.

There will also be acceptance criteria, to be met by the winning bidder, to ensure that installation and service comply with all necessary requirements and are error or issue free.

3.3 Funding

3.3.1 Quantum of Subsidy

The funding for this project will be disbursed in accordance with the procedures established pursuant to PART V of the USR in relation to capital and operational expenditure.

The total cost to the USF for the implementation of these five ICT access ICT enabled access centres will be determined when the final solution from the concessionaire(s) is selected.

The CAPEX per centre is budgeted at a maximum of TT \$1,200,000 (i.e. ICT equipment, Internet access service, associated works, signage, PR and service launch). The actual CAPEX and recurrent subsidies to be disbursed by the USF would be determined by the reverse auction.

3.3.2 Proposed Disbursement of Funds

In order to properly manage the disbursement from the USF, clear objectives will be defined. The disbursement will be specified based on CAPEX and recurrent expenditure. The disbursement for the CAPEX requirement will be determined by different outcome-based assessment targets and associated invoices, as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Proposed milestones for the disbursement of the USF for CAPEX

Milestone/target	Disbursement from USF (% of the total in accordance with the proposed winning bid)	Additional details of terms for disbursement
1. Mobilisation	15%	The provider will need to prove that the request for equipment has been made.
2. Materials in country and in the concessionaire's possession	30%	The provider will need to show that the bill of materials (BoM) required to undertake this project is all in country and has been cleared from customs.
3. Solution fully deployed	45%	All ICT equipment fully deployed and commissioned at the five sites and free mobile public Wi-Fi has been deployed and provisioned.
4. Commissioned network operating within specification	10%	All issues/deficiencies identified by the Authority are satisfactorily addressed to have a properly functioning system in place for the community.

The recurrent subsidy will include the data package required per bus, water taxi and inter-island ferry. Any additional reimbursement for recurrent expenditure, to maintain quality operations of the service, will be based on the invoices submitted.

3.3.3 Procedures for Reimbursement

To access the funds, the concessionaire(s) will be required to submit, on a milestone basis and at a minimum, the following documentation:

A completed Universal Service Fund Claim Form¹ and associated attachments including, *inter alia*:

- i. an original invoice from the concessionaire (referred to in section 3.3.2)

¹ See Appendix IV.

- ii. signed certified copies of invoices
- iii. type of claim (whether recurrent or CAPEX)

Reimbursements of funds will be in accordance with the specific terms and conditions contained in the contract.

4 Risk Management

Table 4 summarises some risks that may be encountered in the execution of this project and proposed mitigation strategies.

Table 4: Risks and mitigating strategies

Identified Risks	Mitigating Strategies
Delays in material being on island	Assistance from relevant Ministries
Foreign exchange issues	Assistance from relevant Ministries
Subsidy abuse	Explicit methodology for disbursement of funds with adequate checks and balances at specific intervals

5 Implementation Schedule

Table 5 details the project implementation schedule.

Table 5: Project implementation schedule

Project Schedule Details				
	Key Milestone	Start Date	End Date	Notes
1	Approval from the Minister	July 2020	July 2020	
2	Finalisation of project requirements	July 2020	July 2020	
3	Prepare RFP	August 2020	August 2020	This can be completed in less than four weeks with a selective tendering approach – i.e. invitations will be issued to suitable concessionaires only.
4	RFP process including reverse auction	August 2020	September 2020	A selective tendering process can be used to reduce the RFP process timeframe.
5	Selection of contracted Project Manager	August 2020	September 2020	The Project Manager employed for the TTWiFi and persons with disabilities initiatives can manage this initiative as well.
6	Full implementation of project	October 2020	December 2020	
7	Monitoring and evaluation of project	January 2021	March 2021	
8	Final post-mortem	April 2021	April 2021	

**Appendix I: The Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015
as amended – Part V**

PART V

CONTRACTUAL UNIVERSAL SERVICE INITIATIVES

Identification
of Contractual
Universal
Service
projects

18. (1) The Authority shall, from time to time, issue an invitation for submission of Universal Service projects, by publication in the *Gazette* and at least two daily newspapers in daily circulation in Trinidad and Tobago.

(2) An invitation under subregulation (1) shall invite concessionaires and relevant Ministries and stakeholder groups to identify proposals for projects to be considered as Contractual Universal Service initiatives.

(3) Proposals under this regulation shall be limited to projects which—

- (a) targets the provision of infrastructure development areas identified within the access gap by the Authority;
- (b) targets the resolution of structural deficiencies in the national telecommunications grid;
- (c) can be implemented by all similarly situated concessionaires in a given market or sub-market; and
- (d) meet other conditions as specified by the Authority in the notice.

(4) Interested concessionaires, Ministries and stakeholder groups may submit proposals within the time frame specified in the Notice.

(5) The Authority may consider proposals submitted under subregulation (4) in conjunction with projects proposed by the Authority pursuant to its evaluation of network coverage and service capacity.

(6) The Authority shall submit to the Minister its recommendations, in accordance with section 28 of the Act.

(7) Upon approval, modification or rejection of its recommendation by the Minister, the Authority shall publish the recommendation and, where applicable, the Minister's reasons for modification or rejection in respect thereof on its website for public viewing.

(8) Where a person who has made a submission pursuant to this regulation wishes to dispute the decision of the Minister, he may, within thirty days of the publication of such decision, request in writing, a review or reconsideration by the Minister of his decision, stating the grounds or reasons upon which such review or reconsideration is requested.

(9) The Minister shall determine such a review or reconsideration as soon as practicable but in any event no later than sixty days after the receipt of the request for the review or reconsideration and shall notify the applicant in writing, of his decision.

19. (1) In implementing the Contractual Universal Service initiatives planned for a given fiscal period, the Authority shall prepare and issue Requests for Proposals in accordance with the Telecommunications Tender Rules for the selected Universal Service initiatives identified by the Authority to be granted funding from the Universal Service Fund for that fiscal period.

(2) A concessionaire may submit a bid in accordance with the directions set out in any Request for Proposals that may be issued by the Authority from time to time pursuant to subregulation (1).

(3) Only a concessionaire authorised to provide the service or services that comprise a Universal Service initiative may submit a bid under subregulation (1) to be granted funding to implement the Universal Service initiative.

(4) Where more than one bid is submitted under subregulation (1), the Authority shall use the reverse auction method to evaluate the bids submitted by concessionaires.

20. (1) In response to a request from the concessionaire implementing a Contractual Universal Service initiative, the Authority may disburse mobilisation funds to support project initiation.

(2) Mobilisation payments under subregulation (1) shall be no greater than fifteen per cent of the estimated cost of the project.

(3) Professional fees associated with any Contractual Universal Service initiative shall be no greater than six per cent of the total cost of the initiative.

(4) The executing concessionaire shall submit in a form approved by the Authority and for a period not to exceed a bimonthly schedule, status reports, on the progress of Contractual Universal Service initiatives to the Universal Service Committee.

(5) Where the Authority receives a report under subregulation (4), it shall publish the report within two weeks of its receipt on its website.

Recurrent charges associated with a Contractual Universal Service initiative

21. (1) Where the Universal Service Committee determines, based on the projections of the Authority or on the presentation of relevant facts and trends by the concessionaire, that aspects of the recurrent costs associated with a completed project implemented as a Contractual Universal Service initiative may require continued subsidisation from the Universal Service Fund, the Universal Service Committee may authorise an annual charge to the Universal Service Fund to cover such a subsidy.

(2) Where the Universal Service Committee undertakes the action outlined in subregulation (1), it shall ensure that the concessionaire enters into an agreement with the Authority outlining, *inter alia*—

- (a) the terms and conditions by which the recurrent costs are subsidised;
- (b) performance obligations of the concessionaire to encourage increased service utilisation to enhance economic viability of the initiative;
- (c) reporting obligations of the concessionaire to encourage accurate and timely measurement of the uptake of basic telecommunications services in the area in which the Universal Service initiative project is implemented;
- (d) the criteria through which the Universal Service Committee may determine that a recurrent operation of the Universal Service initiative has become sustainable and no longer requires supplemental financing from the Universal Service Fund; and
- (e) that the Authority may seek to recover funds provided to the concessionaire where there is non-compliance with the Universal Service initiative and where funds received under the regulation were not utilised for the specified purpose.

Obligation to implement contractual Universal Service initiative

22. (1) The concessionaire who submits a bid under regulation 19 and is successful shall be awarded an offer or the grant of funding from the Universal Service Fund and shall, upon acceptance of the offer—

- (a) enter into and be bound by a contract of service with the Authority for the implementation of the Universal Service initiative;
- (b) have the obligation under these Regulations to implement the Universal Service initiative in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the contract of service entered into with the Authority under paragraph (a); and
- (c) be granted from the Universal Service Fund such funding for which the concessionaire had bid on the terms and conditions set out in the contract of service entered into with the Authority under paragraph (a).

(2) Where no concessionaire submits a bid under regulation 19, the concessionaire who is authorised to provide the service or services that comprise the Contractual Universal Service initiative and who, in the opinion of the Authority, has the highest available network capacity and requires the least infrastructural build out to roll out services for that particular Contractual Service initiative—

- (a) may enter into and be bound by a contract of service with the Authority for the implementation of the Universal Service initiatives; and
- (b) shall have the obligation under these Regulations to implement the Contractual Universal Service initiatives in accordance with the terms of conditions set out in the contract of service entered into with the Authority under paragraph (a).

23. (1) The Authority shall only authorize payments out of the Universal Service Fund where invoices are submitted by the concessionaire.

Disbursement
of funds
pursuant to a
Contractual
Universal
Service
initiative

(2) Invoices shall be in the form approved by the Authority.

(3) Concessionaires requesting disbursement of funds pursuant to a Contractual Universal Service initiative shall submit invoices to the Committee for certification in keeping with the conditions of the contract.

(4) A concessionaire under this regulation shall submit reports to the Authority containing information to be specified by the Authority to ensure timely certification of invoices.

PART VI MISCELLANEOUS

24. (1) The Authority may provide an amount not exceeding five per cent of the value of the contributions to the Universal Service Fund in any financial year towards the provision of services as approved by the Authority to community access centres which are established by the State or State agencies.

Funding of
community
access centre

(2) Approved services for which funding may be provided pursuant to subregulation (1) shall be targeted towards subsidising the cost of the following services only:

- (a) telephone connectivity to service a stated usage volume;
- (b) internet bandwidth as defined by the Authority from time to time;
- (c) facsimile services; and
- (d) such other services as the Authority may approve.

Appendix II: Universal Service Governance Framework (Section 7 – Universal Service Framework)

1 Governance Framework for the Implementation of Universal Service Projects

This section of the document presents the Governance Framework for the decision-making process for the selection and implementation of Universal Service projects, and for the operations of the Universal Service Fund. In particular, this section focuses on the selection process of choosing initiatives as Universal Service projects and the standards and procedures to be implemented for proper management and provision of such.

1.1 Act Requirements for the Implementation of Universal Service Projects

As governed by the Telecommunications Act, the Authority is seeking to implement Universal Service projects which are to be financed through the Universal Service Fund. The following sections highlight the areas of the Act to fulfil such requirements:

Section 28 (1) *“In accordance with the policy established by the Minister, the Authority shall determine the public telecommunications services in respect of which the requirement of Universal Service shall apply.”*

Section 28 (5) *“The Authority shall forward its recommendations to the Minister pursuant to this section and the Minister shall indicate his approval, modification or disapproval of the recommendation within sixty days of receipt of the Authority's recommendation.”*

Section 28 (8) *“The obligations to provide and contribute to the funding of the services referred to in subsection (1) shall be applied on a non-discriminatory basis as between all similarly situated telecommunications service providers and users.”*

Section 53 (3) *“Funds arising in respect of paragraph (1) (d) shall only be applied to facilitate the provision of Universal Service in accordance with the provisions of section 28.”*

1.2 Objectives of the Universal Service Projects

As described within this framework, the Universal Service Fund will consist of contributions made by service providers through the ‘mandatory Universal Service paying obligations’. In addition to this, a percentage of excess funds collected from the Authority’s Operating Budget

may be allocated towards the Universal Service Fund. Monies of the USF will be used for the implementation of the Universal Service projects. These projects will focus on:

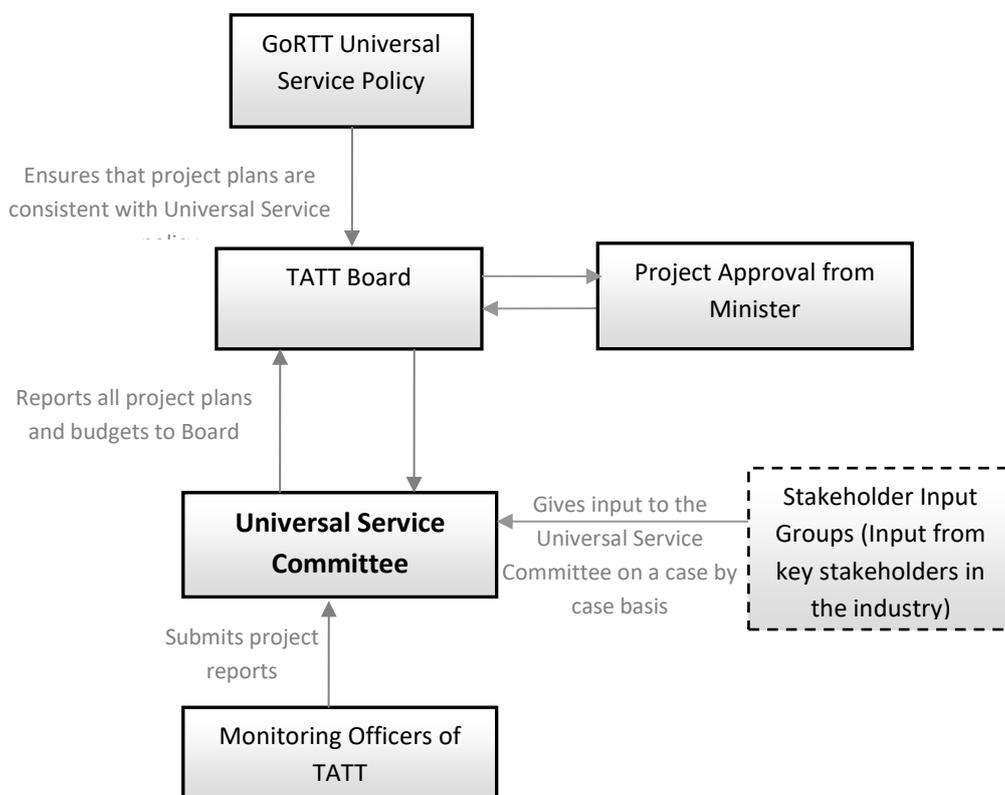
- a) Ensuring that underserved communities in Trinidad and Tobago, as identified by the conducting of Digital Divide surveys and other research methodologies, are facilitated by having access to the basic telecommunications services listed in section 2 of the Universal Service Framework.
- b) Ensuring that underserved population groups are facilitated by having access to affordable basic telecommunications services.

1.3 Universal Service Project Management Structure and Administration

The establishment of a management structure to ensure that there is governance in the decision-making process and the process by which projects implemented is necessary for its successful operations.

The Authority is prescribing to use the organisational structure prescribed in Figure 1 to manage and administer the decision-making process:

Figure 2: Structure for the Administration of the Universal Service Projects



The above diagram depicts the reporting relationships among participants in the selection and implementation process for the Universal Service projects.

At the start of the decision-making process, the Universal Service Committee will receive inputs from the stakeholder input group, in addition to considering the projects devised from research conducted into bridging the digital divide. After evaluation and deliberation of all the proposed Universal Service initiatives received, the Universal Service Committee will submit its recommended Universal Service projects to the Authority's Board for approval.

Upon receipt, the Board will review and submit its recommendations of the Universal Service projects to the Minister for approval in accordance with Section 28 (5) of the Act.

On approval by the Minister, authorisation will then be given by the Board to the Universal Service Committee for the implementation of the selected Universal Service projects. Throughout project implementation, the monitoring officers must provide reporting/feedback on the status of the projects to the Universal Service Committee.

1.4 Operations of Project Administration

1.4.1 Role of the Minister

According to Section 28(5) of the Telecommunications Act:

“The Authority shall forward its recommendations to the Minister pursuant to this section and the Minister shall indicate his approval, modification or disapproval of the recommendation within sixty days of receipt of the Authority's recommendation.”

This section gives the **Minister** responsible for Telecommunications the authority to give final approval to the Universal Service projects recommended by the Board. The Minister is required to ensure that the Universal Service initiatives suggested by the Board are consistent with the Universal Service Policy and the government's overall National Policy for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

1.4.2 Role of the Board

According to Sections 28 and 53 of the Telecommunications Act, the Authority shall determine the Universal Service initiatives to be implemented. As a result, the **Board** is a significant party in the decision-making process and shall comprise appointed members serving the Authority. They will have oversight over the USF operations and the projects to be implemented.

The Board will be responsible for:

- a) setting the overall policy for the administration of all the Universal Service projects and the Funds collected and distributed from the USF;

- b) approving annual plans and budgets for the implementation of Universal Service projects and making any suggestions to the Universal Service Committee regarding projects and USF matters;
- c) approving project and Fund annual reports and audits; and
- d) seeking authorization from the Minister responsible for Telecommunications and other relevant government bodies to ensure Universal Service projects are in line with national government policies.

1.4.3 Role of the Universal Service Committee

The **Universal Service Committee** shall be responsible for the selection and implementation of the Universal Service projects authorised by the Board as well as responsible for the management and administration of the USF. It should comprise the Chief Executive Officer and divisional members of the departments of the Authority which should include at minimum persons with experience and qualifications in the areas of law, accounting, economics and engineering. The Authority is proposing that the Universal Service Committee have responsibility for:

- a) identifying the underserved communities and population groups in Trinidad and Tobago in need of access to affordable basic telecommunications services;
- b) organising and coordinating stakeholder input group meetings to provide ideas and feedback when there is deliberation on Universal Service projects to be implemented;
- c) providing cost estimates for the proposed Universal Service projects;
- d) providing recommendations to the Board with respect to the selection of Universal Service projects and the priority to be given to Universal Service initiatives to be undertaken annually;
- e) seeking approval from the Board for the implementation of USF projects;
- f) developing objectives, budgets and operational plans for the management of the USF;
- g) ensuring the authorisation process for the award of concessions/ and or Universal Service obligation contracts to service providers;
- h) ensuring the Fund remains financially sound such that monies are available for the implementation of projects;
- i) collecting the contributions from telecommunications providers in accordance with the percentages stated in the Universal Service Regulations;
- j) reviewing the adequacy of Fund contributions received every three (3) years and submitting any recommended changes, if any, to the Board for approval;
- k) recommending the amounts that should be disbursed from the Fund within a timely manner and to whom the Funds should be disbursed in accordance with the Authority's tendering rules and the Universal Service contracts signed with the service providers;
- l) ensuring that financial accounts, reports and records are prepared and published;
- m) managing the competitive tendering process for the allocation of projects; and
- n) monitoring and overseeing the implementation of all Universal Service projects to ensure that all obligations are fulfilled within the required timeframes.

The Authority shall set up ***Stakeholder Input Groups*** from time to time to seek advice from stakeholders in the industry when the need arises. The Stakeholder Input groups may comprise stakeholders relevant to the Universal Service projects under consideration by the Universal Service Committee. Such stakeholders may include representatives from various service providers, community and social development, residents of underserved communities, representatives of the relevant Non-governmental agencies, representatives of population groups that fall within the access gap (e.g. differently-abled persons), or any other group determined by the Universal Service Committee to have a key interest.

It must be noted that members of the Stakeholder Input Group will be selected based on the nature of the proposed projects under consideration at that point in time.

The ***Monitoring Officers*** shall be employees of the Authority identified by the Universal Service Committee. The Monitoring Officers shall have responsibility for:

- a) monitoring Universal Service projects being implemented by the service providers on an on-going basis to ensure compliance with contracts awarded by the Authority; and
- b) preparing reports on the progress and the status of Universal Service projects to the Universal Service Committee; and
- c) advising on any proposed changes to the costs, deliverables or to the output of the Universal Service projects under implementation;
- d) identifying Universal Service projects that have become sustainable and no longer require financing from the USF; and
- e) measuring the uptake of basic telecommunications services in areas when Universal Service projects are rolled out.

- ***Statement on Universal Service Project Administration:***
- *The selection and implementation of the Universal Service projects will be administered by the Universal Service Committee. The Minister responsible for Telecommunications will be required to provide approval for projects before implementation.*

1.5 Operating Principles for Determining the Universal Service Projects

A key determinant of the success of any Universal Service project will depend on the creation of sound decision-making principles. All stakeholders involved, inclusive of contributors and beneficiaries of the USF, must perceive the process for the award of projects as being fair and transparent. Therefore the principles that would be upheld by the Authority during the process for choosing and implementing Universal Service projects include:

1.5.1 Accountability

Important drivers associated with determining and funding projects are proper financial management and accountability to all stakeholders involved. As a result, provisions must be put in place to uphold the financial integrity of the USF. Such provisions include:

1.5.1.1 Separate Universal Service Account

Section 53 (6) of the Telecommunications Act states:

‘The Authority shall keep and maintain a separate account opened with the approval of the Minister of Finance for the purpose of depositing funds collected in respect of the funding of the services referred to in section 28 and such funds shall not be used for any other purpose.’

Consistent with the above, the Authority has established a stand-alone account for the USF where monies are designated for the purpose of promoting Universal Service. The budget for the USF will also be shown separately within the Authority’s annual budget² in order to ensure transparency and proper recording of the collection and disbursement of Universal Service Funds.

For the operations of the USF, accounting procedures established in accordance with the Authority’s Financial Rules and the Telecommunications Act, shall be followed for collecting, tabulating and distributing monies.

1.5.1.2 Establishment of Process for Selection of Projects

There should be guidelines in place to govern the operations of the fund and the decision-making process of the Universal Service Committee who will be responsible for the selection of Universal Service projects and the collection and distribution of monies from the USF to Fund these projects. Such guidelines as listed in Section 7.4, will promote accountability and transparency as stakeholders will be aware of the process followed for the determination of the projects and for the operations of the USF.

1.5.1.3 Public Reports

The Authority considers that in order for there to be confidence by concessionaires and key stakeholders in the determination of Universal Service projects, the process for the periodic review of the projects selected by the Committee and the allocation of Universal Service Funds must be a transparent one. In order to facilitate this, the Authority shall publish a biennial Universal Service Implementation Report and an annual Universal Service Fund Accounting Report.

As referred to in Section 6.1.3, the Universal Service Implementation Report shall be published biennially in June and shall contain information on:

² The Authority’s annual budget is published in the GoRTT Draft Estimates of Expenditure

- the description and details of a two (2) year implementation plan of Universal Service projects to be undertaken and the proposed budget for these initiatives;
- A report on the progress of Universal Service projects currently being funded by the USF; and
- Any revisions of the USF objectives that may be necessary for the period following the current financial year.

Also previously mentioned, a Fund Accounting report should be published annually three (3) months after the end of the Authority's financial year and shall contain information on the collection and disbursement of Funds from the USF.

1.5.1.4 Independent Auditing

The accounts published in the Fund Accounting Report are public accounts and will be audited by the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago pursuant to section 57 (2) of the Act, which states:

“On completion of an audit of the Authority, the Auditor General or an auditor authorised by him to undertake the audit, as the case may be, shall immediately draw to the attention of the Minister and the Board any irregularity disclosed by the audit which in the opinion of the Auditor General or the auditor is of sufficient importance to justify so doing.”

1.5.2 Impartiality and Transparency

Another significant characteristic of the selection and implementation of projects is that of transparency and impartiality among service providers and other stakeholders in the industry. In particular, the integrity of the project decision-making process should not be compromised by the impression of favouritism or bias being displayed towards any one service provider or stakeholder in the industry. Impartiality and transparency however can be supported through the establishment of proper operating processes and procedures. Therefore, in accordance with Section 28 of the Telecommunications Act, the Board will forward recommendations on the Universal Service projects to be undertaken to the Minister responsible for Telecommunications for approval.

While the Universal Service Committee will be responsible for the management and project implementation of the Universal Service initiatives, the Board will provide oversight and generally an advisory and monitoring role.

1.5.3 Efficiency

Another key operating principle in the selection and implementation of Universal Service projects is that of efficiency. The Universal Service Committee must ensure that monies in the USF are efficiently used for the implementation of Universal Service initiatives to reduce the digital divide. Efficiency may be promoted through:

- The establishment and monitoring of targets for the implementation of the Universal Service projects; and
- Allocation of the required human resources to carry out the tasks required by the Universal Service Committee and other members of the decision-making and implementation process is important so as to not cause any unjust delays in the carrying out of projects.

1.6 Selection of Universal Service Projects

1.6.1 Submission of Universal Service Projects

At the beginning of each operating period the Universal Service Committee shall initiate the process of identifying projects to be considered for funding. This process will include:

- Consideration of GoRTT's national and medium term development policy and plans;
- solicitation of proposals from telecommunications service providers;
- solicitation of proposals from relevant Ministries and other stakeholder groups;
- identification of projects through conducting digital divide surveys and other data gathering exercises.

This process does not preclude the Universal Service Committee from identifying and soliciting projects at any other time during the operating period. However any implementation of identified projects must be approved by the Board and ultimately the Minister responsible for Telecommunications.

The process of soliciting project proposals from telecommunications service providers and other interested parties may include the following:

- a) public meetings and consultations;
- b) face to face meetings with specific stakeholder groups;
- c) online advertisement/solicitation through the Authority's website;
- d) public announcements/advertisements on the newspapers or the broadcasting media for the invitation of proposed projects; or
- e) any other information-gathering exercises to inform the identification of projects.

1.7 Project Appraisal and Selection

The Universal Service Committee shall review the project proposals and shall make recommendations to the Board of the Authority for approval and to be financed by the USF according to the procedures established.

The Universal Service Committee should not comprise any individuals involved in the Universal Service projects who may have foreseeable economic interests in the outcome of a decision to be taken on any fund-related matter.

1.7.1 Complete Assessment of Projects

The Universal Service Committee shall conduct complete assessments for all project proposals submitted for consideration within the given operating period. On completion of the assessments, selected project proposals will be used to determine which projects will be recommended to the Board for funding from the USF.

In conducting these project assessments, the Universal Service Committee may rely upon input and assistance from technical and other staff from the Authority, and any other external sources that can assist in the decision-making process. The Universal Service Committee may also conduct any necessary public inquiries to obtain further information about the scope, nature, benefits and costs of any proposed project, in particular through requests for information or public consultations with relevant stakeholders.

In assessing the proposed projects, the Universal Service Committee should consider the following criteria in its evaluations:

- a) Policy Priorities – Determines whether the objectives of the project are in keeping with the objectives and priorities of national policy.
- b) Technical Feasibility and Requirements - Evaluate and identify the technical and all other essential components of the project to define the potential scope of work that would be required for a telecommunications service provider to implement the project as defined. While various technologies may be proposed by different providers, a baseline set of assumptions as to the basic approaches likely to be used should be determined, to serve as a basis for assessing the economic and financial structure of the project.
- c) Financial Analysis - Estimate the initial capital investment and other, start-up expenditures necessary to launch the project. Provide a breakdown of these costs in as much detail as possible. Estimate annual recurring expenses for operations, maintenance, and support needed to maintain the ongoing delivery of the services over a 5 year period. Prepare estimated forecasts of the annual service revenues that will be

generated by the project, and will offset some of its costs. Forecasts should attempt to take into account expected revenue growth for a period of at least 5 years.

- d) Economic and Social Cost-Benefit Analysis - Prepare an assessment of the economic and social benefits to the communities or population group, and to the country as a whole, that would be likely to result from implementing the proposed project.
- e) Risk Analysis - Identify the most likely threats to the project and analyze the impact of such scenarios on the project.

1.7.2 Final Project Selection

Based on the results of the above project assessment, the Universal Service Committee shall prepare recommendations to the Board as to the priority projects to be financed during the operating period. The recommendations shall be subject to the constraint that the total cost of the combined recommended projects shall not exceed the available USF Project Budget amount for the relevant time period.

The final set of project proposals and recommendations will be presented to the Board for review and consideration in the selection of projects to be financed under the current Operating Plan.

The projects approved by the Board shall then be submitted to the Minister responsible for Telecommunications for approval. The Universal Service Committee shall publicly announce the projects approved.

Appendix III: ICT Access Centre Minimum Technical Specifications

Appendix IV: Universal Service Claim Form

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (TATT)

UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND (USF) CLAIM FORM

Project Information

- 1) Name of Concessionaire
- 2) Project Name
- 3) Project Number
- 4) Start Date of Project
- 5) Estimated Completion Date of Project
- 6) Project Phase (if applicable)
- 7) Project Location
- 8) Total Approved Funding \$.....
- 9) Total Claim Amount \$.....

10) Details of Claim:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Designation: _____

Date: _____

For official use only			
	Name in Block Letters	Signature	Date
Claim certified by			
Claim checked by			
Payment approved by			

Please attach claim form to your original invoice for the amount claimed together with all relevant documentation to support the claim.