



# **Framework for the Implementation of Free Public WiFi Hotspots throughout Trinidad and Tobago**



<b>Maintenance History</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Change Details</b>	<b>Versio n</b>
March 31, 2016	Approved version	1.0
October 9, 2019	Revised version — update to Framework, based on amendment to Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations and project scope	2.0



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This national WiFi initiative seeks to leverage the competitive Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and telecommunications environment in order to facilitate a platform for enhanced productivity via access to the Internet, as well as enhanced engagement between citizens and GoRTT, in their daily lives.

This initiative will operate alongside the existing modes of Internet access and access to online services provided by GoRTT and Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

This Framework has been developed to guide the implementation of the national WiFi initiative and to identify the necessary interactions amongst the Authority, the Ministry of Public Administration, relevant Concessionaires and other relevant stakeholders, for the successful deployment of free public WiFi hotspots within Trinidad and Tobago.

## 1.2 Background

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (“GoRTT”) announced plans to deploy free Public WiFi access at various locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago in the 2015/16 national budgetary presentation.

GoRTT has provided the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (hereafter called, “the Authority”) with a policy direction under section 19 of the Telecommunications Act Chap 47:31 in order to utilize the Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015 to undertake the initial deployment of free Public WiFi Hotspots at specified locations, in the near term (i.e. July – October, 2016).

The universal service regulations include mandatory universal service obligations for concessionaires, either on a re-imbursable or non-reimbursable basis, in accordance with guidelines published by the Authority from time to time. These mandatory universal service obligations have been identified in Schedule 3 of the Regulations.

It is noted that the second mandatory universal service initiative, as shown in Appendix I, requires concessionaires to provide, *at its own cost, public access modes (e.g. pay phones and Internet kiosks) to basic telecommunications services to be made available at all public schools, public libraries, hospitals and police stations.*

It is within this context that the Authority has been directed to undertake such activities to provide for the deployment of WiFi hotspots, in the near term, in the public waiting rooms of NALIS library locations, major hospitals and area hospitals, as identified in Appendix II.

The Authority is also required to take cognizance that this near term initiative forms part of the broader public policy to have free Public WiFi Hotspots as a mandatory universal service obligation at major target locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago including, at a minimum, waiting areas at all public hospitals and health centres, public areas external to public libraries and waiting areas at major public transport hubs.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The main objectives of this initiative are:

- i. To implement free public WiFi hotspots at the specified locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago via the mandatory universal service obligations within the Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015
- ii. To deploy free public WiFi hotspots to specified locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

## 1.4 Scope

The mandatory universal service initiative aims to deliver free public WiFi hotspots, deployed by relevant concessionaires, in the near term, in accordance with the mandatory universal service obligations, in the public waiting areas at locations specified and within the proposed timeframes as identified in Appendix II.

These WiFi hotspots shall meet for following requirements, at a minimum:

- i. The users' landing page would be to a webpage as defined by the GoRTT/Authority.
- ii. The user's session for free access shall be 2 one-hour sessions per day (during opening hours for libraries).
- iii. 20Mbps uncontended service per site for up to 100 concurrent users per site.
- iv. The WiFi Hotspot should meet the consumer quality of service requirements as specified in the Authority's guidelines and regulations

Further to the above, consideration will be given to the inclusion, in the medium term, of major target locations within this scope, as follows:

- v. Waiting areas as **ALL** public hospitals and health centres.
- vi. **ALL** public libraries.
- vii. Waiting areas for major public transport hubs, including:
  - a. Major nodes for PTSC buses such as:
    1. City Gate, Port of Spain.
    2. San Fernando Bus Terminus.
    3. Arima Bus Terminus, etc.
  - b. Water taxi and inter-island ferry docking areas.

## 1.5 Review Cycle

This Framework will be revised based on any modifications to the approach to the successful achievement of a national 'free' WiFi initiative within the scope of phase 2. The Authority will review the document accordingly.

## 2 Roles and Responsibilities

The engagement and involvement of key stakeholders will be critical to the success of this initiative. The key stakeholders identified for this initiative are the Ministry of Public Administration (on behalf of GoRTT), the Authority and, in the first instance, the National Public Domestic Fixed Concessionaires who currently operate as ISPs.

Identification of stakeholder roles and responsibilities will allow for the easy identification of roles and responsibilities for those engaged and involved. The key stakeholders, purpose of engagement and expected contribution towards the Project are identified in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
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 TATT.</p>	<p>i. Policy direction, including identification of target locations and other requirements to inform the implementation of the mandatory universal service free public WiFi hotspots.</p> <p>ii. Assistance to TATT, where required, with deployment at target locations owned by Government Ministries and Agencies.</p>
Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago	Universal Service Obligation/Initiative Coordinator	<p>i. Develop the framework, guidelines and implementation plan to execute the mandatory universal service obligation.</p> <p>i. Liaise with relevant concessionaires to implement mandatory universal service obligation.</p>

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
	<p>Coordination with other Government Ministries and Agencies, in support of MPA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Manage Initiative under Universal Service Governance Framework established by the Authority (see Appendix III).</li> <li>iii. Make recommendations to the Minister for the amendment of the Universal Service regulations, based on discussions with relevant Concessionaires.</li> <li>iii. Coordinate the deployment at target locations owned by Government Ministries and Agencies.</li> </ul>
<p>National Public Domestic Fixed Concessionaires who currently operate as ISPs</p>	<p>Basic telecommunications service provider with mandatory universal service obligation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Installation of free public WiFi hotspots in accordance with the scope of the initiative.</li> <li>ii. Provision of Internet access service to free public WiFi hotspots, in accordance with the requirements as specified by the Authority.</li> </ul>



### 3 Plan of Action / Key Milestones

The implementation of this initiative shall be guided by the following key milestones, in order to realize the successful completion of the first phase of this initiative within the period July – October, 2016, as detailed in the Deployment Timeframe within Appendix II. The key milestones are incorporated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Plan of Action/Key Milestones**

<b>Item no.</b>	<b>Key Milestone/Action Description</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1	Finalization of Framework for the Implementation of Initiative	February, 2016
2	Discussion between TATT and relevant Concessionaires.	March, 2016
3	Development and Finalization of Proposed Implementation Plan with relevant Concessionaires of phase 1 (near term) locations and phase 2 (medium term) locations.	April, 2016
4	Necessary approvals to install free public WiFi hotspots at proposed locations in Appendix II.	March - April, 2016
5	<p>Identification of any necessary amendments to the Mandatory Universal Service Obligations in the Regulations, based on discussion with relevant Concessionaires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if agreed, no change in Regulations; or</li> <li>- if at cost, amendment of</li> </ul> <p>Development of any necessary amendments to the Mandatory Universal Service Obligations in Schedule 3 of Regulations (including consultation with relevant stakeholders).</p>	April – May, 2016
6	Submission to Minister of any recommended amendments to the Mandatory Universal Service Obligations in Schedule 3 of Regulations	End of May, 2016

Item no.	Key Milestone/Action Description	Timeframe
7	Submission to Minister of any recommended amendments to the <i>Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015</i>	End of May, 2016
8	Submission of amendments to <i>Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015</i> for negative resolution of Parliament	June, 2016 – December 2018
9	Implementation of free public WiFi hotspots at proposed locations in Appendix II.	January – April, 2019.

## 4 Project Budget

It is proposed that the concessionaires participating in the implementation of the national ‘free’ WiFi initiative are compensated for both capital and recurrent costs from the USF.

The total cost to the USF for the implementation of this initiative will be determined when the number of locations (i.e. NALIS libraries, hospital waiting areas and public transport hubs) are finalized.

Nonetheless, a budgetary estimate can be determined based on the requested service, number of locations and prevailing tariffs.

The budgetary estimate for this project amounts to a CAPEX of TTD 0.5 million and an OPEX of an estimated TTD 3 million per annum.

# Appendix I – Telecommunications (Universal Service) Regulations, 2015: Schedule 3

## SCHEDULE 3

[Regulations 3(3), 16 and 17]

### MANDATORY UNIVERSAL SERVICE INITIATIVES

Universal Service Initiative	Eligibility for Universal Service Funding	Recurrent Charges to Universal Service Fund	Other Notes
1. Special provision of approved assistive technology for persons with disabilities to support use of basic telecommunications services.	Yes	Limit to set up costs, recurrent costs to be defined by the Authority from time to time.	Customers eligibility determined in accordance with the Ministry capital and with responsibility for social development and other agencies as determined by the Authority.
2. Provisions of public access modes to basic telecommunications services to be made available at all— (a) public schools; (b) public libraries; (c) hospitals; and (d) police stations.	No		Pay phones and/or internet kiosks.
3. The provisions of universal access connectivity to the following locations: (a) all public schools; (b) all public libraries; and (c) all public hospitals.	No		Universal Access Rate of up to 40% of commercial rates as defined by the Authority for— (a) telephone services; (b) internet bandwidth (as defined by the Authority from time to time); and (c) facsimile services.

Dated this 5th day of May, 2015.

R. T. GRIFFITH  
*Minister of Science and Technology*

## Appendix II – Initial Proposed Locations for Mandatory Universal Service Free WiFi Node Deployment

Location Category	Number of AP's	Implementation Approach	Oversight agency	Deployment Timeframe
NALIS Library locations (27)	27	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July - Sept
Major Hospitals				
POS General Hospital A&E	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July 2016
POS General Hospital Clinic	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
San Fernando General Hospital A&E	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July 2016
San Fernando General Hospital Clinic	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
Tobago General Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July 2016
Mt. Hope Maternity Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
Mt. Hope Children's Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
Mt. Hope Adult A&E	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July 2016
Sangre Grande Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	July 2016
Area Hospitals				
Point Fortin Area Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
St. James Medical Complex	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
Couva District Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016
Arima Area Hospital	2	Universal Service Obligation	TATT	October 2016

# **Appendix III – 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.

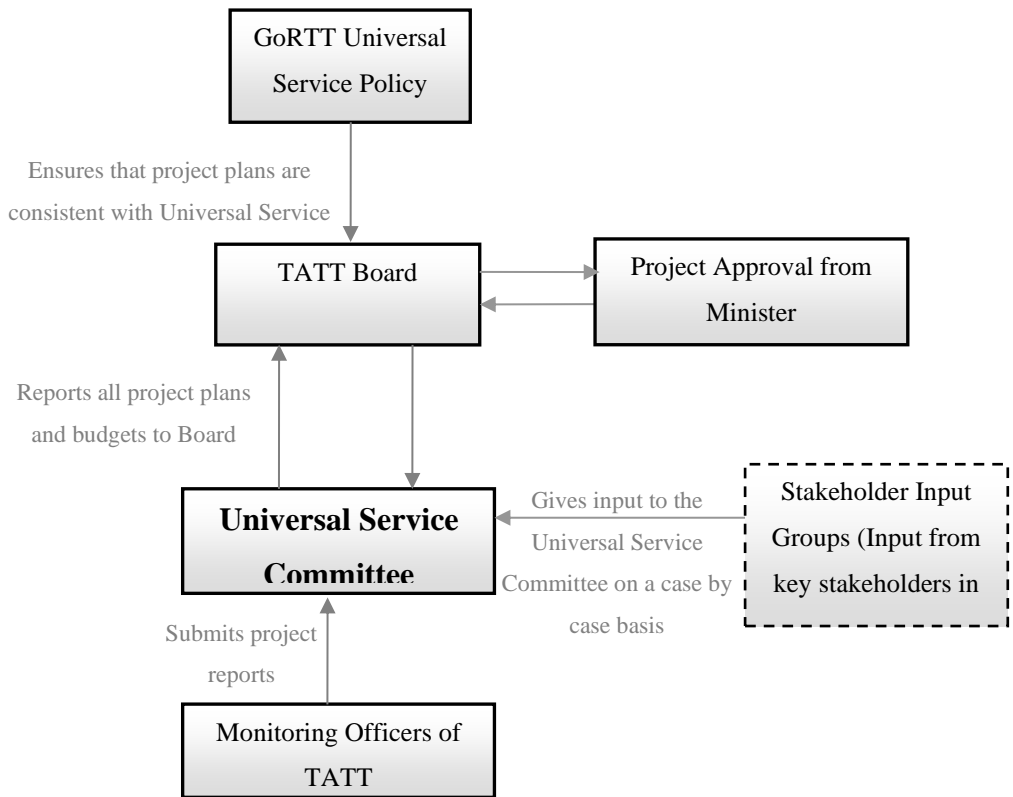
## **1.3 Universal Service Project Management Structure and Administration**

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 12 to manage and administer the decision-making process:

**Figure 1: 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 budget<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The Authority’s annual budget is published in the GoRTT Draft Estimates of Expenditure

### **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:

- 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 operator 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.