



UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND SERVICE
FUND FRAMEWORK

SEPTEMBER 2025

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1.0 Definitions and Interpretations

1.1 In the event of conflict or ambiguity between the terms defined herein and the terms defined in the Licence or in the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) Act then the following order of precedence shall apply:

- a) Communications Regulatory Authority Act;
- b) Communications Regulatory Authority Regulations; and
- c) The Framework.

1.2 For purposes of use in this Framework, the terms will have the following ascribed meanings:

“BOCRA” means Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority.

“Broadcaster” means any person who composes or distributes broadcasting service for reception by subscribers to such services or the general public.

“Communications Sector” means the aggregate regulated telecommunications, broadcasting and postal sphere of activity in terms of the CRA Act.

“Communications Services” includes the regulated telecommunication, broadcasting and postal services in terms of the CRA Act.

“CRA Act” means Communications Regulatory Authority Act No. 19 of 2012.

“Licensee” means a service provider licensed under the CRA Act by the BOCRA.

“Local Content” means the output or results of a regulated sectors’ production that have been produced using material or resources gathered in Botswana.

“Postal Operator” means a provider of postal services.

“Postal Services” means all the services related to the process of collection, transport, sorting and delivery of postal items and includes courier services;

“Public Postal Operator” means a postal operator designated as such by the Minister under Section 67 of the CRA Act;

“Radio” means the conveyance of one or more channels of audio, video or data information by means of an electromagnetic wave most usually propagated in space, having a frequency below 3000 GHz;

“Telecommunications” means any system of conveying signals, sounds, communications or other information through the agency of electric, magnetic, electro-magnetic, electro-chemical or electro-mechanical energy, or through the agency of radio waves;

“Universal Postal Services” means that part of the postal services that is considered as a basic postal service in the common economic and social interest of the inhabitants of Botswana which services must be provided by the public postal operator.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Communications Regulatory Authority Act No. 19 of 2012 (CRA Act) mandates the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA or the Authority) to promote and ensure universal access to communication services across Botswana. The communications sector comprises Telecommunications, Internet, Broadcasting, Postal, ICT and related services.
- 2.2 Pursuant to provision of Section 5 (1) (b) CRA Act, No. 19 of 2012, the Universal Access and Service Fund Trust (UASF or the Fund) was established in April 2014 through a Notarial Deed of Trust. The mandate of UASF is to promote and ensure universal access with respect to the provision of communications services by implementing universal access and service programs in the communications sector. The UASF programs support the development of infrastructure that holds national significance and economic value. The UASF delivers its mandate through providing financial assistance (subsidies or grants) to licensed communications operators to enable provision of communications services to unserved, underserved, and disadvantaged communities.
- 2.3 The Fund is primarily financed in accordance with Sections 5 (1) (c) and 29 (3) of the CRA Act, No. 19 of 2012. The former provision mandates BOCRA to impose universal access and services levy on identified operators for purpose of funding

universal access with respect to provision of communications services. The latter section stipulates that “At the end of each financial year, any excess of income received by the Authority over expenditure properly incurred shall be deposited in the Universal Access and Service Fund”.

- 2.4 In fulfillment of its mandate to promote universal access to communications services in Botswana, the Authority has developed this UASF Framework to provide guidance to the public and all stakeholders on the key aspects, principles, and considerations that will govern the funding administration and implementation of the Fund.

3.0 Objectives of the UASF

- 3.1 The broad objectives of the Universal Access and Service Fund are to:
 - a. ensure that citizens and all individuals have access to a set of basic and essential communications services throughout the country, at affordable costs.
 - b. promote delivery of communications services to population groups and areas that are beyond the reach of service providers without distorting the market; and
 - c. promote development of individuals and communities through enabling them to leverage on opportunities and benefits brought by communications services.

4.0 Governance and Management of UASF

4.1 Governance

4.1.1 Universal Access and Service Fund is a Trust registered in terms of the Trust Property Control Act of 2018. The Fund is governed by the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority with oversight of an independent Board of Trustees. The UASF Board of Trustees is appointed by the BOCRA Board in consultation with the Minister responsible for Communications. The BOCRA Board reports to the Ministry of Communications and Innovation on universal access and service issues. The function of the UASF Board of Trustees is to develop UASF Strategies and programs, supervise, and monitor their implementation. The Board of Trustees is also entrusted to monitor the Fund's financial activities in a transparent manner.

4.1.2 The specific functions of BOCRA in relation to the UASF include the following:

- a. issuing general or specific policy directions, directives and guidelines relating to the management of the Fund.
- b. serving as the Secretariat of the Fund to assist with the administrative functions.

- c. collection of the levy imposed on selected licensees for universal service purposes on behalf of the UASF.
- d. availing of its premises and human resources to carry out operations of the UASF.
- e. act as a liaison between the UASF and government to ensure support of the UASF projects, initiatives and programs.
- f. researching, managing, and monitoring UASF data and projects.
- g. interfacing with industry along with communities targeted by the UASF Program.

4.2 Financial Sources of the UASF

4.2.1 The funds of the UASF will be sourced mainly from the following:

- a. levy (not exceeding one (1) percent of annual gross turnover) charged on identified communications service providers in accordance with Section 5(1) (c) of the Communications Regulatory Authority Act, No19 of 2012;
- b. Government contributions as may be appropriate for purposes of universal service;

- c. grants, donations and other contributions received for universal access and service projects from sources as may be approved by the Trustees;
- d. any surplus income of BOCRA in accordance with Section 29 (3) of the Communications Regulatory Authority Act; and
- e. such other fees or funds as may be imposed or raised for purposes of the UASF.

4.3 Categories of Operators Obligated to Contribute to UASF

4.3.1 All licensed operators realizing a turnover in excess of BWP1,000,00.00 on licenced services shall contribute 1% towards the UASF on annual basis.

4.3.2 The 1% fee shall be deducted based on audited financial statements submitted by the operators.

4.4 Distribution of the Funds

4.4.1 The UASF Board of Trustees shall ensure that utilization of the Fund is transparent to the public, and subject to independent audit. The distribution of funds shall be conducted through a transparent, non-discriminatory, and competitive process. The distribution of funds shall be based on:

- 4.4.1.1 The socio-economic impact of proposed programs and projects. This implies that there shall be a strong demand for the communication services funded among areas which are currently underserved.
- 4.4.1.2 The readiness of any sub-sector in terms of market and regulatory reforms as per the key principle of market efficiency and targeted interventions.
- 4.4.1.3 The input of the UASF stakeholders, which includes the main contributors to the UASF according to the principle of transparency, stakeholder consultation and fairness.
- 4.4.1.4 Strategic and policy direction of the Government regarding universal access and service of communication services.

5.0 Review of the Framework

- 5.1 This document shall be reviewed every 5 years or earlier as the Fund deems it fit.

6.0 Compliance with Regulations

6.1 As the Fund is independent from BOCRA, it is critical that levy contributors be compliant with the Botswana laws especially the Money Laundering Regulations. Hence, “know you customer” exercise shall be done on all contributors at least once a year.