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GENERAL NOTICES • ALGEMENE KENNISGEWINGS

INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

NOTICE 3551 OF 2025

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GENERAL NOTICE

DRAFT AMENDMENT: TELKOM SOC LTD UNIVERSAL SERVICE AND ACCESS LICENCE OBLIGATIONS

1. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa ("Authority") hereby gives notice that it has received a request from Telkom SA SOC Ltd ("Telkom") to amend its universal service and access obligations.

2. On 07 May 1997, Telkom was granted and issued a public switched telecommunications services licence[1] which, inter alia, imposed the following universal service and access obligations (USAOs), on Telkom:

   2.1 Basic Service Provision**;**
   2.2 Public Pay-telephone Service;
   2.3 Emergency Services;
   2.4 Services for users with special needs; and
   2.5 Directory Services.

3. Section 10 (1)(f) and (g) of the Electronic Communications Act of 2005 ("ECA"), as amended, provides as follows:

"10 (1) The Authority may amend an individual licence after consultation with the Licensee-

…

(f) where the Authority is satisfied that the amendment is necessary to ensure the achievement of the objectives of this Act;

(g) if the amendment relates to universal access or universal service and is necessary, in the opinion of the Authority, as a result of –

(i) changed circumstances in the market; or

(ii) lack of electronic communications network services, broadcasting services, or electronic communications services in specifically identified areas of the Republic."

[1] Copy of the Telkom service licence as gazetted can be found at the ICASA Library and from the ICASA website.

M Ramusi (Chairperson), T Faye, Dr. C Lewis, A Matseke, Dr. TJ Maumela, K Mohale, C Mushi, N Nontombana,
N Sithole (Councillors), T Maluleka – Disemelo (CEO)

4. Due to the changes in the electronic communications market in recent years, in particular the prevalence of mobile telephony and related technological developments, some of Telkom's USAOs have become obsolete, thus necessitating a review of its legacy USAOs.

5. Therefore, the Authority is considering amending Telkom's USAOs and substituting some of them with connectivity obligations in relation to Thusong Service Centres, many of which lack Internet connectivity. Thusong Service Centres, formerly known as Multipurpose Community Centres, are one-stop public access service intervention used to provide essential government information and services.

6. The amended universal service and access obligations for Telkom, will be marked as **Annexure A**. The Explanatory Memorandum that accompanies the Notice, will be marked as **Annexure B**. Both Annexures are attached below

7. Interested parties are invited to submit written comments by means of email, post or hand delivery, for the attention of the person mentioned below. **Submissions must be made and delivered, before or on, 21 November 2025**.

   Keitumetse Setshedi (Ms)
   USAO Project Manager
   Enquiries: Tel: 012-568-3709
   Email: usoproject2016@icasa.org.za

   or

   USAO Council Committee
   Block C, Eco Point Office Park
   350 Witch-Hazel Avenue
   Eco Park, Centurion
   0169

8. Telkom will be entitled to respond in writing to written representations made by such interested parties, which written responses by Telkom must be submitted to the Authority **within twenty-one (21) working days** from receipt of the written representations. Telkom must, at the time of submitting its written responses, furnish proof to the Authority's satisfaction that it has delivered a copy of the response by hand or has sent a copy of such response by registered mail **or** by email, to the relevant person who has made the written representation.

_____

Mothibi Ramusi
Chairperson

Date: ___ /___ /2025

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ANNEXURE A

DRAFT TELKOM SOC LIMITED'S UNIVERSAL SERVICE AND ACCESS OBLIGATIONS ("USAOs")

DEFINITIONS

In this Annexure, a word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act bears the meaning so assigned, unless the context indicates otherwise:

"Act" means the Electronic Communications Act, 2005 (Act No 36 of 2005).

"Authority" means the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa.

"Connectivity" means the ability of devices, systems, or networks at each Thusong Service Centre to connect and communicate with external devices, systems and/or networks by means of a wired or wireless connection for the purposes of exchanging information or data securely and reliably within the prescribed minimum bandwidth and speed, in accordance with the specifications laid out in clause 2 below.

"DCDT" means the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies.

"Duration of connectivity" means the Licensee shall maintain connectivity for the duration of its service licence period.

"Hardware" means any network equipment required for fixed or wireless connectivity.

"Implementation date" means the date at each Thusong Service Centre site when the provision of connectivity and of the public Wi-Fi hot spot, is completed.

"**Licensee**" means Telkom SOC Limited.

"**Rollout Plan"** means a detailed strategy which lays out the schedule for providing connectivity to each of the Thusong Service Centres.

"Thusong Service Centre" means a one-stop service centre providing Government information and services to communities based on the needs of the specific community.

"Consumer" means a person who may access services rendered by a Thusong Service Centre.

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1. PROVISION OF CONNECTIVITY TO THUSONG SERVICE CENTRES

1.1. The Licensee must provide connectivity to one hundred and seventy-one (171) Thusong Service Centres, as per the list provided by the Authority.

1.2. The Licensee must provide a Rollout Plan, subject to approval by the Authority.

1.3. The rollout plan must include the information, inter alia, as follows:

1.3.1. Full list of the Thusong Service Centres (including name, location and GIS co-ordinates) provided by the Authority.

1.3.2. The technology that the Licensee will deploy at each Thusong Service Centre.

1.3.3. The target number of Thusong Service Centres to connect per year.

1.3.4. A breakdown of when the Licensee plans to connect each centre.

1.3.5. Details of how the Licensee will do assurance on quality and speed of the connectivity at the centres for the duration of the licence period.

1.4. The Licensee must commence implementation of connectivity within six months from publication date of the notice, subject to the allocation of Thusong Service Centres by the Authority and in accordance with the Rollout Plan.

1.5. The Licensee must complete connectivity to all one hundred and seventy-one (171) Thusong Service Centres as allocated, within three (3) years from the implementation date.

1.6. The Licensee must maintain connectivity for the duration of the licence period.

2. STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR CONNECTIVITY

2.1. The connectivity at each Thusong Centre must be at a speed of no less than 30Mbps.

2.2. Bandwidth in each Thusong Service Centre must be provided on an uncapped basis for the full duration of the licence.

2.3. Each Thusong Service Centre must be provided with the following hardware components:

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2.3.1. Router(s) – with Wi-Fi capabilities.

2.3.2. Firewall.

2.3.3. Cabling.

2.4. The installation of the hardware must be done by the Licensee.

2.5. The provision of other customer premises equipment in addition to the hardware specified above will be the responsibility of each Thusong Service Centre.

2.6. The Licensee must install a Wi-Fi hot-spot for public access at each Thusong Service Centre.

2.7. The Licensee must promptly attend to and resolve any maintenance or repair issues related to connectivity within five (5) working days, for the duration of the Licence Period.

3. COST AND USAGE

3.1. The Licensee must provide the services as outlined above, free of charge.

3.2. The cost for public access via the Wi-Fi hot spot must not be billed to the Thusong Service Centre.

3.3. Usage at each Wi-Fi hot spot is subject to fair usage policy, and to protect the network against abuse, a consumer will be limited to 300 MB of daily data and a monthly cap of 2 GB per consumer.

3.4. The Licensee must bear the initial setup costs, as well as the support and maintenance costs of software and hardware for the licence period.

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

4.1. The Licensee must report compliance bi-annually according to the Authority's financial year. Compliance Reports are due on or before 30 April and 31 October each year.

4.2. The information the Licensee must submit is as follows:

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4.2.1. The number of Thusong Service Centre sites connected as per the rollout plan.

4.2.2. The names of the Thusong Service Centres connected, their geographical coordinates and their addresses.

4.2.3. The type of technology used for connectivity per Thusong Service Centre site.

4.2.4. Average speed, data usage and bandwidth over the period of connectivity.

4.2.5. Average cost of usage over the period, including both cost of and revenue from each hotspot, per site.

4.2.6. Number of faults reported to the Licensee that are connectivity-related (e.g. if connection of the local area network is down due to failure of the Licensee's network etc.), their frequency, nature, and time to resolve.

4.2.7. Number of WiFi hotspot faults reported to the Licensee, their frequency, nature, and time to resolve.

4.2.8. Any Thusong Service Centres that could not be located as per the address list provided by the Authority.

4.2.9. Any Thusong Service Centres that refuses to be connected by the Licensee with reasons provided.

4.3. Any deviation from the Rollout Plan must be reported to the Authority as soon as reasonably practicable after the Licensee becoming aware thereof and is subject to the approval of the Authority.

5. CONTRAVENTION AND PENALTIES

Failure by the Licensee to comply with, or to discharge, the universal service and access obligations specified in these Regulation constitutes a breach of the licence terms and conditions and will be subject to the following fines:

5.1. Contravention of clauses 1.1.2, 1.3, 1.4 or 1.5 will render the Licensee liable to a fine not exceeding R500,000 (five hundred thousand), respectively.

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5.2. Contravention of clauses 1.1.1 or 1.6, will render the Licensee liable to a fine not exceeding R1,000,000 (one million), respectively.

5.3. Further non-compliance with any clause in this Notice, may be referred to the Complaints and Compliance Committee (CCC) of ICASA, as per section 17H of the ICASA Act.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES

Table 1: Outline of various roles and responsibilities

No.	Obligations	Licensee	ICASA	GCIS	DCDT
1.	Provision of list of Thusong Service Centres			✓	
2.	Allocation of Thusong Service Centres to the Licensee		✓		
3.	Informing Thusong Service Centres of the Project			✓	
4.	Verifying each Thusong Service Centre's location	✓		✓	
5.	Verifying each Thusong Service Centre's contact details	✓		✓	
6.	Testing coordinates on Google Maps for allocated Thusong Service Centres	✓			
7.	Determining if each Thusong Service Centre has the necessary facilities (e.g. electricity) required for installation	✓		✓	
8.	Amending the Rollout Plan if necessary		✓		
9.	Approval of Rollout Plan		✓		
10.	Preparing each Thusong Service Centre (e.g. security) for connectivity			✓	

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No.	Obligations	Licensee	ICASA	GCIS	DCDT
11.	Installation of Solution	✓			
12.	Testing Installation	✓		✓	
13.	Documenting Installation	✓			
14.	Technical training of TSC staff	✓			
15.	Handing over Installed solution and signing acceptance documents	✓		✓	✓
16.	Cost of usage of Solution and Maintenance	✓			
17.	Submission of Compliance Report bi-annually	✓			
18.	Monitoring for Compliance		✓		
19.	Reporting deviations from the Rollout Plan	✓	✓		

Table 2: National Broadband Policy Targets[1]

Target	Penetration measure	Baseline (2013)	By year 2016	Year 2020	Year 2030
Government facilities	% of government offices		50% at 5 Mbps	100% at 10 Mbps	100% at 100 Mbps

[1] Published in Government Gazette No 37119 (Notice No 37119) dated, 06 December 2013.

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ANNEXURE B

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM ON THE DRAFT AMENDMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE AND ACCESS LICENCE OBLIGATIONS (USAOs) OF TELKOM SOC LIMITED

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum explains the key requirements outlined in the 'Draft Amendment: Telkom Soc Ltd Universal Service and Access Licence Obligations' for providing connectivity to Thusong Service Centres as mandated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA).

1.2 The Explanatory Memorandum seeks to explain and clarify where necessary, the General Notice on ICASA Draft Telkom's USAOs (**Annexure A**).

1.3 The proposed amendments of the legacy obligations aim to strengthen universal access and service through providing connectivity to Thusong Service Centres and by setting out minimum standards for connectivity of such Thusong Service Centres.

2. **PROVISION OF CONNECTIVITY**

2.1 **Scope**: The Licensee must provide connectivity to all 171 Thusong Service Centres as per the list provided by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) and the Government Communications and Information System (GCIS) to promote access by disadvantaged communities to government content and services.

2.2 **Rollout Plan**: An agreed Rollout Plan will include details of all Thusong Service Centres, technology to be deployed, target numbers and quality assurance measures. Such a roll out plan is necessary for approval by the Authority and to assist with monitoring compliance.

2.3 **Implementation**: The provision of connectivity must commence from the effective date and be completed within three years.

2.4 **Maintenance**: The connectivity must be reliable and of good quality and must be maintained for the duration of the service licence period.

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3. STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

3.1 **Speed and Bandwidth**: The speed of connectivity must be at least 30 Mbps, with uncapped bandwidth strictly for public services. The National Broadband Policy Target is 100 Mbps by 2030; hence the Authority decided to set a minimum of 30 Mbps.

3.2 **Usage and data allocation**: The Authority currently does not have a framework for data usage on public WiFi hotspots at Thusong Service Centres. Therefore, the principle used elsewhere for providing access to zero-rated government websites was applied, in line with clause 5 of ICASA General Notice No 50612 dated, 01 May 2024.

3.3 **Hardware Requirements**: Routers with Wi-Fi, firewalls and cabling are required for connectivity to be functional. The Licensee may provide whatever else it may deem necessary to ensure connectivity.

3.4 **Installation and Maintenance**: The Licensee is responsible for installation and prompt resolution of issues. The Licensee is expected to ensure that whatever equipment it may use remains in good condition throughout the period of the licence.

4. CLARITY ON SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE GENERAL NOTICE

4.1. A "Rollout Plan" must be finalised and submitted to the Authority within 30 days of publication of the final Amendment Notice in the government gazette. The plan must include the name and location of the centre, rollout dates per centre, type of technology to be used and number of centres to be connected each year.

4.2. A connectivity speed of 30 Mbps has been specified, with due consideration to the National Broadband Policy Target which specifies 100 Mbps by 2030.

4.3. Zero rating will be applied for access to government websites via Thusong Service Centres as per ICASA General Notice No 50612, dated 02 May 2024.

5. REGULATORY OVERSIGHT

5.1. Setting Standards and Specifications

ICASA establishes the standards and specifications for connectivity, including minimum speed requirements, bandwidth, and quality of service. The standards are there to ensure that the connectivity provided to Thusong Service Centres is reliable and meets the needs of the communities they serve.

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5.2. **Monitoring and Reporting**

ICASA requires licensees to submit bi-annual compliance reports detailing the connectivity status of the Thusong Service Centres. The reports should include information on the number of centres connected, the technology used, average speed and data usage, and any connectivity-related faults.

5.3. **Enforcement and Penalties**

ICASA has the authority to impose fines and penalties on licensees who fail to comply with their USAOs. The enforcement mechanism ensures that a Licensee adheres to their obligations and maintain the required standards of connectivity.

5.4. **Promoting Affordable Access**

a) ICASA works to promote affordable access to communication services for all South Africans.
b) Initiatives such as this are aimed at reducing data costs and ensuring that public institutions, such as schools, clinics and, in this case, Thusong Service Centres, are connected to the Internet.
c) By fulfilling these roles, ICASA helps to bridge the digital divide and ensure that communities across South Africa have access to essential communication services.

6. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

6.1 **GCIS / DCDT:** Provides the list of Thusong Service Centres to be connected.
6.2 **ICASA:** Allocates centres, approves rollout plans and monitors compliance.
6.3 **Telkom:** Verifies locations, installs the solution, tests the installation and submits compliance reports.

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1. These amendments to Telkom's USAOs are designed to ensure reliable and high-speed connectivity at Thusong Service Centres, thereby improving access to government services and information for communities across South Africa. Compliance with these obligations is crucial for the successful implementation and maintenance of connectivity services.

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7.2. The final gazetting of the amendment to Telkom's USAOs will mean that some of Telkom's legacy licence USAOs will be reviewed, removed, retained and or replaced. The obligations that will be removed[2] are the following:

a) Basic Service Provision.
b) Public Pay-telephone Service (see 7.3, below).
c) Emergency Services.
d) Services for users with special needs.
e) Directory Services.

7.3. The obligations that the Authority has decided to retain[3] are the following:

(a) Public Payphones. This obligation will be retained insofar as it pertains to the provision of public payphone services to Correctional Services' facilities, but on a technology-neutral basis. This decision is informed by the absence of written confirmation of a commitment from the Department of Correctional Services ("DoCS") for the procurement of an alternative payphone service provider at Correctional Services' facilities.

(b) Maritime Emergency Services ("MES"). This obligation will also be retained in the absence of a written confirmation of a commitment from the Department of Transport ("DoT") indicating its intention to assume primary responsibility for securing MES services to DoT, as per the international commitments of the Republic.

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[2] Per letter to Telkom dated, 22 November 2023.
[3] See footnote no. 2, above.

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