



UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND (USF)
Annual Report
2018



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1. BACKGROUND

The Universal Service Fund was established under Section 42 Telecommunications Act (Cap 418) of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines of 2009. The Fund is managed by the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) – which collects, disburses and makes relevant decisions with regards to the proper and effective management of the Fund.

1.1 What is the Universal Service Fund?

The Universal Service Fund (USF) is a fund which is used by the NTRC to compensate any telecommunications provider that is required to provide or promote Universal Service.

Universal Service includes the provision of:

- Public voice telephony
- Internet access
- Telecommunications services to schools, hospitals, similar institutions and the physically challenged
- Other services by which people access efficient, affordable and modern telecommunications

The Fund will encourage efficient access to, and use of telecommunications networks and services throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines with special focus on rural, under-served and maritime areas, and with the goal to help promote social, educational and economic development.

The Fund will also ensure the reasonable availability and affordability of basic and advanced telecommunications services, where the commercial telecommunications market is unable to deliver such services in a financially viable manner independently; and also to the physically challenged, elderly and indigent communities.

The Fund will also provide support for the introduction and expansion of telecommunications services to schools, health facilities and other organizations serving public needs.

1.2 Who contributes to the Universal Service Fund?

As set forth in the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund Contribution) Order 2008, all telecommunications providers shall contribute to the Universal Service Fund. In terms of due dates for payments of these contributions, Section 5 of the Contribution Order states that within forty-five (45) days of the reporting year, the contributor must pay and provide supporting documents used in the calculations. Parliament may also appropriate funds for use by the USF. Grants and donations may also be made to the Fund by individuals or legal entities.

1.3 Management of the Fund

Effective September 16, 2008, the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Regulations 2008 was gazetted and came into operation. The aim of these Regulations is to provide for the efficient and effective management of the USF. The Regulations govern the way in which the Fund operates. Along with these Regulations, there are Universal Service Guidelines issued under Section 7 of the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Regulations to facilitate the proper operation of the Fund. These guidelines are an indication of the policy and procedures that must be followed in the operation of the Fund.

The USF plays an integral role in the development and technological innovation of the telecommunications sector and of the country as a whole.

2. SWOT ANALYSIS

2.1 Strengths

- The NTRC has been able to maintain the necessary human resources so as to properly monitor and evaluate the seven (7) USF projects which have been implemented since becoming operational in 2008 and ensuring that their services are functional.
- The NTRC has found innovative ways to encourage ICT development through the implementation of the My App Summer Program and the I Squared competition.
- The NTRC has operated within the established framework for the proper management of the Universal Service Fund.

2.2 Weaknesses

- The Fund has not been able to sign any new contracts for project since 2012.

2.3 Opportunities

- With the widespread availability of wireless internet access provided by the USF, access to information by the general public is now more prevalent than before.

- With programs such as the Associate Degree levels in Cyber Security and Software Development being delivered under a project supported by the USF, opportunities exist for persons to be employed in these lucrative areas locally, regionally and internationally.

2.4 Threats

- Misuse of the free Wi-Fi services being provided by the USF is always a concern and the NTRC has been working along with the Royal St Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force Cyber Crime Unit in holding consultations on how to use the web safely.

3. CRITICAL ISSUES

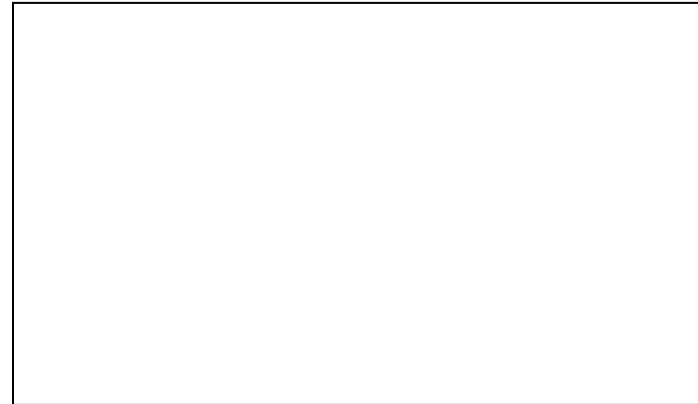
There is one critical issue which is currently affecting the USF which is the ability to implement a new large scale USF project. This was developed with the goal of seeking international funding for its implementation.

4. 4.SECTOR REVIEW

4.1 Telecommunications Revenue

Fig 1. Shows data from the NTRC Annual Report 2018

The revenue generated by telecommunications operators decreased by a margin of 3% in 2018. This was due to a reduction in revenue for mobile services.



4.2 Financial performance of the Universal Service Fund

Revenue

For the year ended December 31, 2018, the Universal Service Fund was budgeted to receive a total of One Million, Seven Hundred and Thirteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Two Dollars (\$1,713,252) from telecommunications service providers, and interest on the account was projected to be Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) and other income of Sixty Two Thousand Dollars (\$62,000.00). The actual revenue received by the Universal Service Fund in 2018 was One Million, Eight Hundred and Forty One Thousand Six Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$1,841,640). The additional revenue relates to more fees being received from a Telecommunications Provider.

Expenditure

Recurrent:

For the year ended December 31, 2018, the USF projected to spend Four Hundred and Eight Thousand, Three Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$408,340) on recurrent expenditure. However, Three Hundred and Sixty Five Thousand, Two Hundred and Forty Five Dollars (\$365,245) was actually spent. This is primarily because we have not entered into contracts for four of our projects which were previously tendered out. These payments will be made as we expect that contracts will be in place by the first quarter of 2019.

Projects:

For the year ended December 31, 2018, the USF budgeted to spend One Million, Nine Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand, Eight Hundred and Thirty Six Dollars (\$1,985,836) for payment on projects. However, Four Hundred and Sixty Four Thousand Two and Ninety Four Dollars (\$464,294) was actually spent. This is primarily because some contractual obligations under some of the USF projects were not met and we decided to withhold these maintenance payments until these issues are resolved. There are currently five projects which have ended and are currently being retendered. These are the Internet Project, Community Center Project, Schools Project, Maritime Project and the Police and Health Center Project.

4.3 Projected revenue for 2019

The Fund is projected to receive Two Million Dollars in 2019. This consists of contributions from telecommunications service providers of Two Million, One Hundred and Twenty Three Thousand, Eight Hundred Dollars (\$2,123,800.00), and an interest on the Fund's account of Two Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) as there are a number of project payments due to be settled with Providers which would impact the Fund's balance in its savings account.

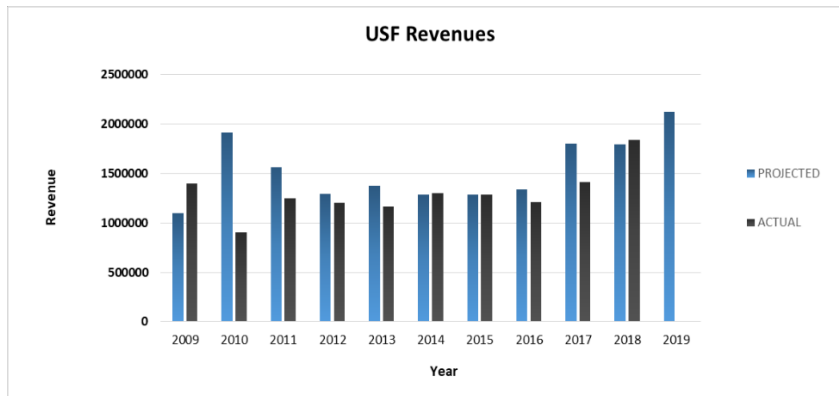


Fig 1. Shows data on the USF Projected Revenues

5. PUBLIC AWARENESS

In 2018, The NTRC executed several public awareness initiatives.

1. Open Day Event

Open day events were held at the Mayreau Government School on June 14th 2018 and the Emmanuel High School Mesopotamia on July 24th 2018. For these events, the various function of the NTRC and the dispute resolution process was outlined along with the projects which were implemented by the Universal Service Fund. The NTRC also partnered with the Adult and Continuing Education Department to provide computer appreciation sessions, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) sessions and practical application in the use of the internet. The issue of Cyber Crime was also discussed during these sessions.

2. Public Information Session

The Public Information Session was held on July 27, 2018 at 9:00AM under the Kingstown Post Office. The purpose of the session was to inform the general public about the upcoming Sixth annual *i*² competition.

3. Radio and Television Presentation

These were conducted to inform the general public of the NTRC's sixth annual *i*² competition and other events carried out by the NTRC during 2018. Interviews were done at the Agency for Public Information, Xtreme FM, Praise FM and National Broadcasting Corporation Radio Station.

4. Career Fairs

A Career fair was held at the Adelphi Secondary School on September 19th 2018 where the NTRC staff outlined the various career opportunities which exist within our organization. The opportunity was also taken to encourage students to register for the NTRC's 2018 *i*² Competition. The staff also outlined the functions of the NTRC and the projects implemented by the Universal Service Fund.

5. Social media Campaign

In an effort to reach a wider audience, the Commission engaged the public on Facebook and Instagram with information about our organization and held several competitions on these social media networks to engage the public and to increase following.

implementation of a new system or improve existing systems within those sectors.

6. School Visits

In an effort to increase the number of entries for the Sixth annual i^2 competition, the public awareness committee visited eight (8) secondary schools that had not participated in the competition since its inception. These schools include;

- Bequia Community High
- Bequia Seven Day Adventist Secondary
- West St George Secondary
- St. Clair Dacon Secondary
- St. Joseph Convent Marriaqua
- Adelphi Secondary School
- Buccament Bay Secondary
- Campden Park Secondary

The presentations at the school events revolved around the NTRC's i^2 competition over the years, the different phases in the competition, how to register for the competition and the rewards of entering the competition.

7. Sixth annual i^2 competition

On September 6, 2018 the Commission launched the 2018 i^2 competition. This competition was a forum that challenged students to develop and present projects in the form of Ideas and/or Mobile Applications from both the public and private sectors of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to facilitate the

In 2018, there was an increase in the number of entries for the competition over 2017. A record breaking number of fifty-four (54) entries were received compared to fifty (50) entries which were received for the 2017 competition. Twenty-two (22) groups entered the Secondary Idea Category, Thirteen groups (13) entered the Secondary Mobile Application Category and In the Open Category, and Individuals under the age of 35 years, there were Nineteen (19) entries.

The schools that entered the secondary level were Petit Bordel Secondary School, Mountain View Adventist Academy, Union Island Secondary School, St. Vincent Girls High School, St. Vincent Grammar School, Emmanuel High School Mesopotamia, West St. George Secondary School, Troumaca Secondary School, Dr. JP Eustace Memorial Secondary School, North Union Secondary School, St. Martins Secondary School and the St. Joseph's Convent Kingstown.

The Open Category saw participation from Seventeen (17) teams from the public.

For the first time in the history of the competition, entries were received from the West St. George Secondary School and the Dr. J P Eustace Memorial Secondary School. The finals of the competition concluded on November 14, 2018 at the Methodist Church hall. The winners of the various categories of the competition were as follows:

- Secondary Mobile Application Category: "Team Titans" from the St. Vincent Grammar School.
- Secondary Idea Category: "Young Inventors" from the Petit Bordel Secondary School.
- Open Category (Individuals under the age of 35 years): "Med Lab Pro".

sent out to all schools for the principals to submit the names of students that would qualify for the assistance and the reason/s why they should be considered. A committee consisting of NTRC staff members met and went through the names and selected the most suitable students. The financial assistance program will continue for the foreseeable future.

8 NTRC's 2018 MyApp Summer Program

The fourth consecutive year, the NTRC held its annual MyApp Summer program in 2018. This year the program was held on the Grenadine island of Bequia. It was held from July 16- Aug 10 2018 at the Bequia Community High School. A total of Nineteen (19) students attended the program. The objective of the NTRC's MyAPP Program is to teach participants between the ages of 13-18 who may or may not have previous exposure on how to code and design applications. The program introduced participants to ways in which they can portray their acquired skills in larger incentive forums, such as the annual NTRC's i^2 Competition. The valedictorian for the program was Eli Davis. The 2018 program was made possible through sponsorship from the Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Digicel, Flow, Jack's Bar and Outdoor Graphics.

9. The Yearly Financial Assistance Program

In 2017, the NTRC developed a yearly program where financial assistance was given to one Primary school student and one Secondary school student. This program continued over into 2018 where Latonya Shallow from the Diamond Government School received an amount of \$500.00 and Mosranny Harry from the Barrouallie Government School received an amount of \$1,000.00. The program targeted students attending rural areas on the mainland as well as, the Grenadine Islands. A letter was

6. USF PROJECTS STATUS

The following gives an update of the USF projects currently being implemented under the USF:

6.1 Internet Project

The first project undertaken by the NTRC in SVG was called the Internet Project, and was signed with telecommunications provider LIME, at a cost of Four Hundred and Twenty-Seven Thousand, Six Hundred and Eight Dollars and Ninety-Eight Cents (\$427,608.98). Twenty-eight (28) rural locations were outfitted with wireless internal and external internet access points with minimum speeds of 8 Mbps. These locations included thirteen (13) Learning Resource Centers, nine (9) rural schools and six (6) Community Centers. This project was commissioned on July 6, 2011, and ran for a period of five (5) years. This project was combined with another project, the Community Center Project and was retendered in the third quarter of 2016. In 2018 the Commission had planned to enter into a contract with a service provider for the continued provision of services under this project in 2018. However, there were some setbacks as some additional clauses needed to be included to ensure that the project is monitored more efficiently than before. The lessons learnt from this

project over the years have played a role in the development of these new clauses and the Commission has seen it fit to include them in the terms and conditions for the new contract. Noting this, the Commission is currently negotiating these terms and conditions with a service provider and we hope to have a contract in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

6.2 Payphone Project

The second project is called the Payphone Project and was signed with LIME in 2011, at a cost of One Million, Four Hundred Thousand, Five Hundred and Seventy-Five Dollars and Forty-Five Cents (\$1,400,575.45). Twenty-five (25) payphones were installed at various locations across SVG – including tourism sites, beaches and at points along the main road. Internet access was also provided at the tourism sites and beaches at a minimal cost. Overt vandal proof security cameras were also installed at selected tourism sites and at the beaches to minimize the threat of vandalism to the payphones, as well as to provide some security for visitors to these locations. All of the equipment has been installed and the project was commissioned in January of 2017. The NTRC will continue to ensure that the services and equipment remain functional to benefit the general public.

6.3 Schools Project

The third, and largest project is the Schools Project. This project provides high-speed wireless internet services to all one hundred and seven (107) educational institutions with speeds of up to 20 Mbps. This contract was signed in 2011 by the telecommunications provider Cable and Wireless, and the project was commissioned in 2012. The

project came to an end in 2017. The Commission had planned to enter into a contract with a service provider for the continued provision of services under this project. However, there were some setbacks as some additional clauses needed to be included to ensure that the project is monitored more efficiently than before. The lessons learnt from this project over the years have played a role in the development of these new clauses and the Commission has seen it fit to include them in the terms and conditions for the new contract. Noting this, the Commission is currently negotiating these terms and conditions with a service provider and we hope to have a contract in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019. The new project will see the continuation of the services at all of the location in the previous contract with improved speeds.

6.4 Maritime Project

The fourth project, which is the VHF Maritime Project, this project was commissioned on November 20, 2012 and was implemented to provide access to both emergency and non-emergency communications in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of St Vincent and the Grenadines and saw the implementation of a GMDSS system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The project was executed for a total cost of One Million, One Hundred and Twenty Five Thousand, Seven Hundred and Eighty Dollars (\$1,125,780.00) and was being maintained for a period of five years. Five Hundred and Forty Thousand Dollars (\$540,000.00) of this amount was accessed from the World Bank for the purchase and installation of the equipment. The remaining Five Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand, Seven Hundred and Eighty One Dollars (\$585,781.00) was paid by the Universal Service Fund for the maintenance of the services and equipment over the five year period.

GMDSS stands for Global Maritime Distress and Safety System and is a set of safety procedures, types of equipment and communication protocols used to increase safety and make it easier to rescue distressed ships, boats and even aircrafts. GMDSS provides for distress alerts, distress relays, search and rescue, on scene communication and location services. This system is mandatory for all ships subject to the Safety of Life At Sea (SOLAS) convention of 1974. The basic concept of this system is that the Coast Guard, as well as vessels in the immediate area of a ship in distress, will be rapidly alerted to the emergency so that they can assist with minimum delay time. Digital Selective Calling (DSC) is one of the most important aspects of this GMDSS system and is a standard for sending pre-defined digital message via the pressing of one button. Noting this, the NTRC identified and implemented this project to improve the VHF maritime coverage around the country.

Under this project the control system was installed at the Coast Guard Base while three antennas and three transceivers were installed at the Mt St Andrews remote site. These two locations are also linked via a 2Mb leased circuit.

Under this project, several training sessions were held in 2016 in collaboration with the St Vincent and the Grenadines Coast Guard Services with fishermen in various communities informing them of the system and use of the VHF DSC enabled radios. This project was tendered out in 2017 as the current contract which was in place came to an end in 2017. The Commission had planned to enter into a contract with a service provider for the continued provision of services under this project. However, there were some setbacks as some additional clauses needed to be included to ensure that the project is monitored more efficiently than before. The lessons learnt from this project over the years have played a role in the development of these new clauses and the Commission has seen it fit to include them in the

terms and conditions for the new contract. Noting this, the Commission is currently negotiating these terms and conditions with a service provider and we hope to have a contract in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019. The new project will see the continuation of the maintenance of the GMDSS system.

6.5 Police and Health Center Project

The fifth project is the Police and Health Center Project. This project provides wireless internet access at all twenty-nine (29) Police Stations and forty-two (42) Health Centers throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines at a minimum speed of 8 Mbps. The cost of this project is Seven Hundred and Eleven thousand, and Fifteen Dollars (\$711,015.00), and was implemented by Karib Cable for a period of two (2) years. Thirty-one (31) computers were also installed at various clinics, and fourteen (14) computers were installed at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. The Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines (RSVG) Police Force Training School was also outfitted with ten (10) computers to assist the recruits and other officers with their research work. This project also came to an end in 2017 and a project for the continuation of the maintenance of the services was tendered out. The Commission was hopeful that a contract would have been in place before the end of 2018, however, we were not successful with this. The Commission is still in the negotiation process with this project and we are looking to have a contract in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

currently negotiating these terms and conditions with a service provider and we hope to have a contract in place by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

6.6 Community Center Project

The sixth project implemented is the Community Center Project. This project provides wireless internet access at eleven (11) Community Centers in various communities throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as a Learning Resource Centre, and seven (7) group institutions and public venues, all at a minimum speed of 20 Mbps. The contract for this project was signed in 2012 with Karib Cable, at a cost of One Hundred and Nineteen Thousand, Five hundred and Three Dollars and Twenty-Nine Cents (\$119,503.29), and is being implemented for a period of two (2) years. The project was commissioned on March 4, 2014. Under this project, the newly established Salvation Army Children's Home will also be outfitted with six (6) computers and internet access to assist with the development of the children's ICT skills. All residents from the various communities, where these project sites are located, will have access to the wireless internet on a 24/7 basis.

This project was combined with another project, the internet project and was retendered in the third quarter of 2016. In 2018 the Commission had planned to enter into a contract with a service provider for the continued provision of services under this project in 2018. However, there were some setbacks as some additional clauses needed to be included to ensure that the project is monitored more efficiently than before. The lessons learnt from this project over the years have played a role in the development of these new clauses and the Commission has seen it fit to include them in the terms and conditions for the new contract. Noting this, the Commission is

6.7 SMART Project

The seventh and last project that was undertaken by the NTRC is the SMART Project. This project facilitated the necessary infrastructure and platforms at SVGCC to enable it to offer its existing and new courses online and in real time. Another component of this project is that three hundred and forty (340) households currently benefit from subsidized internet access at a price of ten dollars (\$10) per month for a maximum of two (2) years. Additionally, a state-of-the-art computer lab containing thirty-five (35) high powered computers, including twenty (20) Apple Mac computers, were handed over to the Division of Technical Education, SVGCC. This project is being executed at a total of One Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred and Ninety-Four Dollars (\$1,698,994.00), and is being implemented by LIME. This project was commissioned on September 25, 2014 and will be coming to an end in 2019. As such, this project will be tendered out in the first quarter of 2019 to ensure that there is adequate time for a seamless transition from the old contract to the new one.

7. STATISTICS

7.1 Fixed Line Subscriptions

Figure 3 shows a comparison in Fixed Line Subscribers for Cable & Wireless and Karib Cable. In 2018, Cable & Wireless and Karib Cable recorded a decrease for Fixed Line Subscribers.

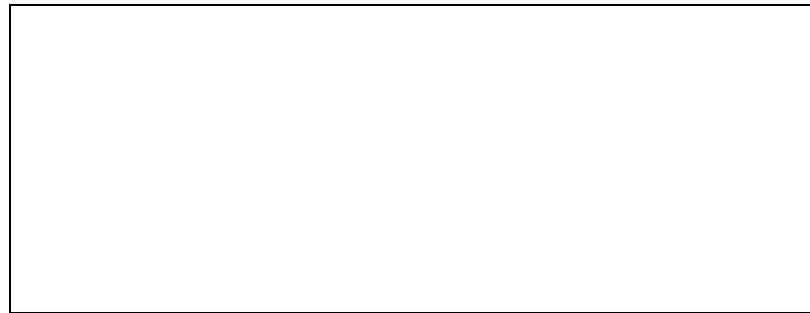


Fig 3. Shows data from the telecommunications providers in SVG

7.2 Broadband Internet Subscribers

Figure 4 below shows the number of Broadband Internet Subscribers from 2012 to 2018 on a whole. There has been an increase in the Broadband Internet Subscribers from 2012.



Fig 4. Shows data from the telecommunications providers in SVG

Figure 5 shows the number of Broadband Internet Subscribers per provider. Cable and Wireless experienced a decline in broadband subscribers in 2018, however there was an increase in broadband subscribers for Karib Cable within this year.

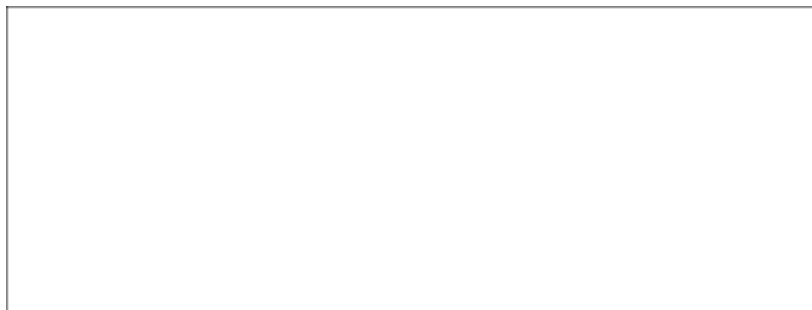


Fig 5. Shows data from the telecommunications providers in SVG

7.3 Portable Computers

Figure 6 below depicts the number of portable computers entering St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In 2018, 11,819 laptops were imported in SVG. This is a 148.12% increase from the year 2017 which saw 4761 devices being imported.

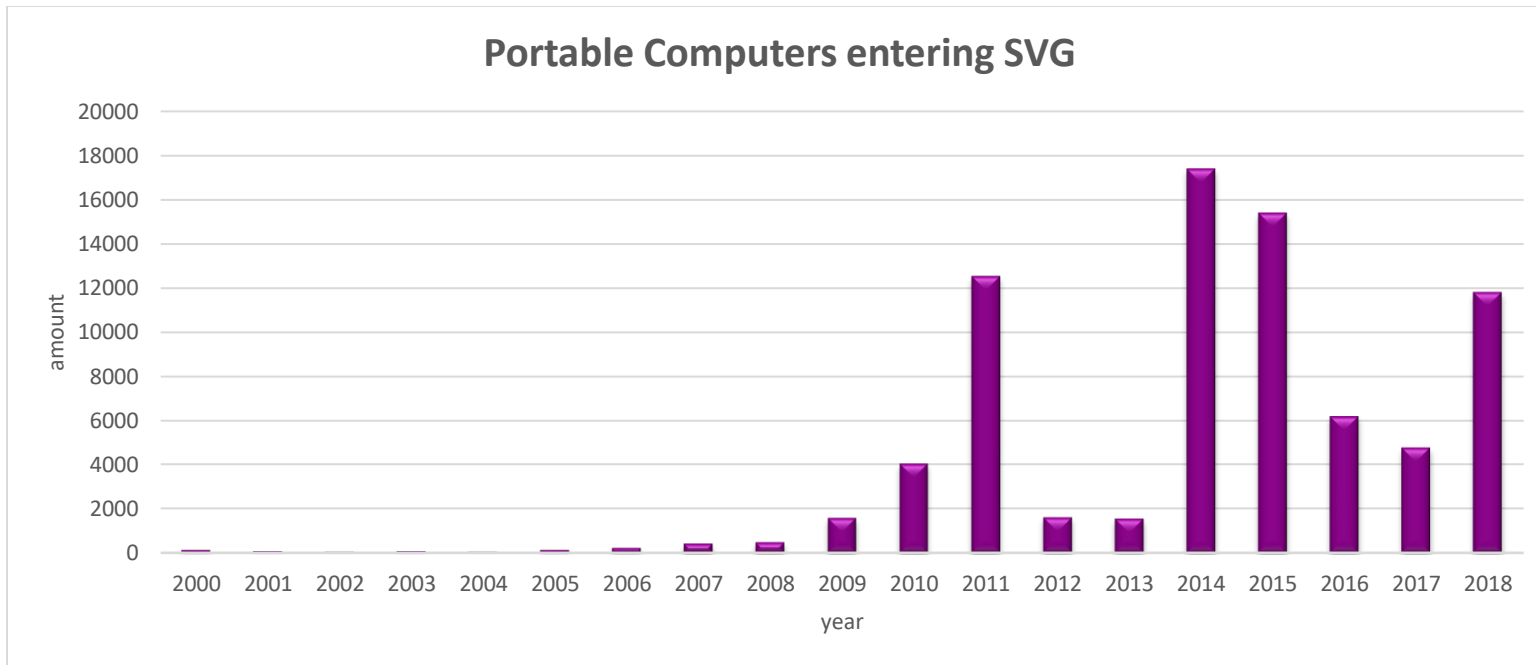


Fig 6. Shows data from the Customs and Excise Department

7.4 Desktop Computers

Figure 7 below shows the number of desktop computers entering the country. The graph shows that there has been a decrease in the number of desktops being imported. In 2017, there were 1,438 units which were imported compared to 949 units for 2018. This represents a 34% decrease in the figures from 2017.

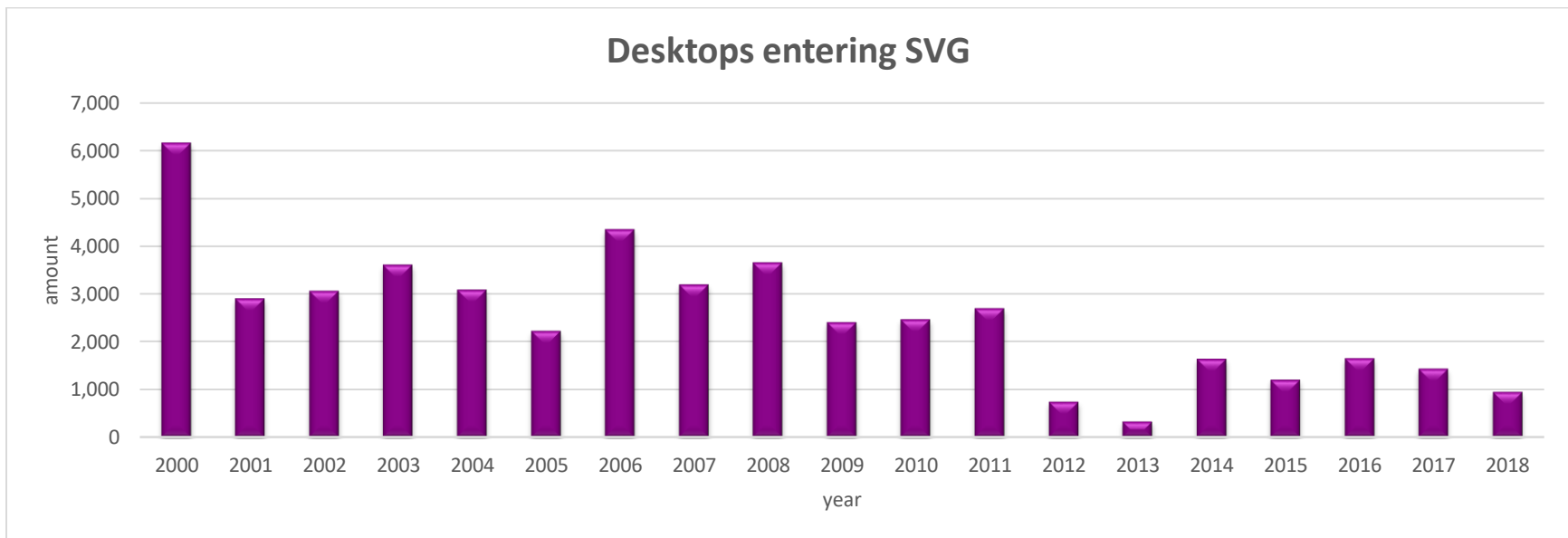


Fig 7. Shows data from the Customs and Excise Department

7.5 Mobile phones

Figure 8 below shows the number of mobile phones entering the country. The graph shows that there has been a decrease in the number of mobile phones being imported. The figure decreased from 27,277 in 2017 to 22,586, showing a 17.19 % decrease in the number of mobile phones imported in the year 2018.

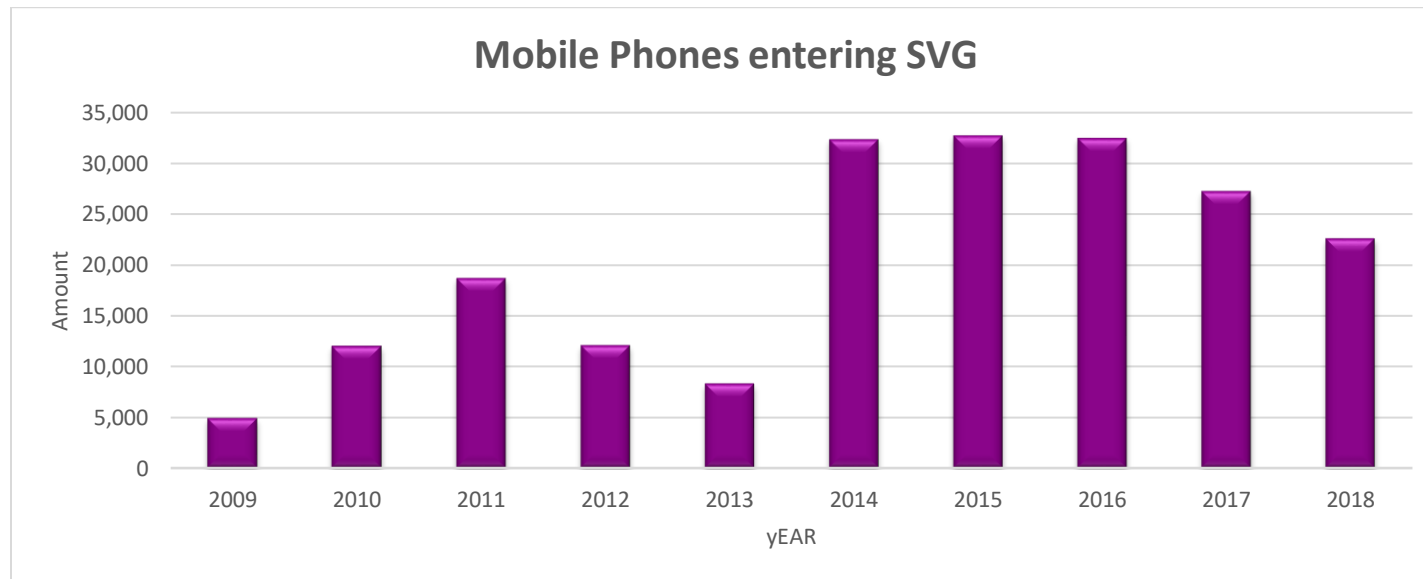


Fig 8. Shows data from the Customs and Excise Department

8. BROAD RESPONSE STRATEGIES

The 7th edition to the I Squared Competition will be held in 2019.

The USF will continue its field work activities by visiting those sites which have services and equipment under the various projects being implemented by the USF Island wide.

The USF will continue to seek regional or international funding for projects which we have developed.

Projects which were developed with the aim of seeking external funding for their implementation. The USF will continue to work on this task in 2019 to have it executed.

- 3. Projects which have been implemented thus far under the USF will be routinely visited to ensure that the services and equipment being paid for are present at the various locations.**

This objective was completed. The USF conducted visits to sites under the USF projects which have been implemented.

9. RESULT INDICATORS 2018

- 1. The 2018 Operating Plan will be established. This plan will set out the objectives of the Fund for the operating year 2018.**

This objective was completed. The USF 2018 Operating Plan was established in June of 2018. This plan outlined the priority goals of the USF for the year.

- 2. The USF will be working on seeking funding from international donor organizations for two projects which have been developed. The USF will be working along with the regional NTRCs so that we can all benefit from these projects.**

This objective was not completed in 2018 as we were unable to find a funding agency to provide funding for the USF

- 4. Public awareness activities will continue, and will include school discussions at various schools, community discussions, and radio and television presentations.**

This objective was completed. As eight schools and five radio stations were visited and presentations made.

- 5. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Schools project is entered into.**

This objective was not completed in 2018. The Commission is currently in the process of negotiating the terms and conditions under this contract and it is expected to be signed by the second quarter of 2019.

6. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Community Access project is entered into.

This objective was not completed in 2018. The Commission is currently in the process of negotiating the terms and conditions under this contract and it is expected to be signed by the first quarter of 2019.

7. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Police and Health Center Project is entered into.

This objective was not completed in 2018. The Commission is currently in the process of negotiating the terms and conditions under this contract and it is expected to be signed by the second quarter of 2019.

8. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Maritime Project is entered into.

This objective was not completed in 2018. The Commission is currently in the process of negotiating the terms and conditions under this contract and it is expected to be signed by the first quarter of 2019.

1. The 2019 Operating Plan will be established by April 2019. This plan will set out the objectives of the Fund for the operating year 2019.
2. The USF will seeking funding from international donor organizations for two projects which have been developed. The USF will be working along with the regional NTRCs so that we can all benefit from these projects.
3. Projects which have been implemented thus far under the USF will be routinely visited to ensure that the services and equipment being paid for are present at the various locations.
4. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Schools project is entered into by the second quarter of 2019.
5. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Community Access project is entered into by the first quarter of 2019.
6. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Police and Health Center Project is entered into by the second quarter of 2019.

10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2019

7. The USF will ensure that the new contract for the Maritime Project is entered into by the first quarter of 2019.
8. The SMART project will be tendered out in March 2019.
9. An ICT survey will be executed in 2019 in March of 2019.

11. AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS