

# **USF Operating Plan 2022**

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

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The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was established by the Telecommunications Act (Cap 418) of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2009 to efficiently regulate the telecommunications sector in collaboration with the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL). The NTRC was also mandated to manage the Universal Service Fund (USF).

## **1.1 WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND?**

The Universal Service Fund (USF) was established under Section 42 of the Telecommunications Act (Cap 418) of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2009. The Fund was set up to compensate any telecommunications provider who is required to provide or to promote Universal Service. Universal Services include: Public voice telephony, Internet access, telecommunication services to schools, hospitals, and similar institutions, and to the physically challenged. The USF encourages efficient access to, and the use of telecommunication networks and services throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with special focus on rural, underserved, and maritime areas. The provision of Universal Service will provide social, educational, and economic development for our nation.

The Fund will be used to ensure the reasonable availability and affordability of basic and advanced telecommunication services, where commercial telecommunication markets may be unable to deliver such services in a financially viable manner, independently.

The USF is mainly funded by annual payments made by telecommunication providers. The Fund may also receive income from appropriations made by Parliament and official grants, donations, bequests, or other contributions, if the NTRC considers it consistent with the best interest of the Fund. The annual payment received from telecommunication providers is calculated as a percentage of their gross annual revenue considering the number of years in operation. This payment structure ranges from 0.25% of gross revenue for the first year of operation, 0.5% of gross revenue for the second year, 1% for the third year, 1.5% for the fourth year, 1.75% for the fifth year and 2 % for the sixth and each subsequent year of its operation.

## **1.2 REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS OF THE USF**

There are several regulatory instruments that govern the Universal Service Fund. They are as follows:

### **1.2.1 Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund Contribution Order) Regulations S.R.O. #4 of 2017.**

This was gazetted in January 2017. This revised Order sets out the method for the calculation of annual payments and the deadline by which they are to be paid. This document can be accessed on the NTRC's website at the following URL:

[http://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/USF\\_contribution\\_order-1.pdf](http://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/USF_contribution_order-1.pdf)

### **1.2.2 Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Regulations (Cap 418) of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2009**

The Regulations were gazetted on September 16, 2008 and the aim of these regulations is to provide a broad framework for the efficient and effective management of the Fund. This document can be accessed on the NTRC's website at the following URL:

[https://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/Universal\\_Service\\_Fund\\_regulations\\_20110418.pdf](https://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/Universal_Service_Fund_regulations_20110418.pdf)

### **1.2.3 Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Guidelines 2009**

This document outlines specific procedures and policies for the management of the USF in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It also outlines the basis for the development and use of the Guidelines derived from the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Regulations. This document can be accessed on the NTRC's website at the following URL:

[http://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/USF\\_guidelines\\_20110418.pdf](http://ntrc.vc/docs/usf/USF_guidelines_20110418.pdf)

## **1.3 TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT 2009**

Section 42 of this Act mandates the establishment of the USF. This document can be accessed on the NTRC's website at the following URL:

[https://ntrc.vc/docs/legislations/telecom\\_act\\_2001\\_SRO\\_NO\\_11.pdf](https://ntrc.vc/docs/legislations/telecom_act_2001_SRO_NO_11.pdf)

## **1.4 USF OPERATING PLAN**

The USF Operating Plan is a policy document which outlines the priority objectives of the USF within St. Vincent and the Grenadines on an annual basis. This document summarizes the state of

development of telecommunications in the country, and it sets forth the broad objectives, targets, and types of projects that the Fund may seek to promote during the year. It also provides a financial status of the fund to stakeholders.

## **1.5 USF BUDGET**

### **Financial Performance of the Universal Service Fund**

#### **Revenue**

For the year ended December 31, 2021, the Universal Service Fund had projected to receive a total of Two Million Three Hundred and Seventy Thousand, Four Hundred Dollars (\$2,370,400.00) from Telecommunications Service Providers and interest of Eighteen Thousand Nine Hundred Dollars (\$18,900.00). The actual revenue received from telecommunications providers was Two Million Three Hundred and Seventy-Six Thousand and Fifty-Two Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2,376,052.50) while interest received amounted to Twenty-Three Thousand and Two Dollars and Thirty-Eight Cents (\$23,002.38). A further Twenty-Three Thousand Nine Hundred and Twelve Dollars and Sixty-Six cents (\$23,912.66) were received consisting of donations towards our MyApp summer programme and icode784 competition and a refund on project expenses.

#### **Expenditure**

##### **Recurrent:**

For the year ended December 31, 2021, the USF had projected to spend Four Hundred and Forty-Five Thousand, Four Hundred and Fifty-Six Dollars and Sixty-Eight Cents (\$445,456.68) on recurrent expenditure. However, Three Hundred and Fifty-Three Thousand, and Fifty-Four Dollars and Twenty-Nine Cents (\$353,054.29) was spent. Due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic, overseas travelling for the attendance of training and meetings were cancelled. Also, the winners from the Secondary Mobile Applications category of the 2020 iCode784 competition were to travel to Barcelona as part of their prize to attend the GSMA 4YFN Start-up event. However, this too was cancelled due to the pandemic. The trip to Barcelona is now scheduled to take place within the first quarter of 2022.

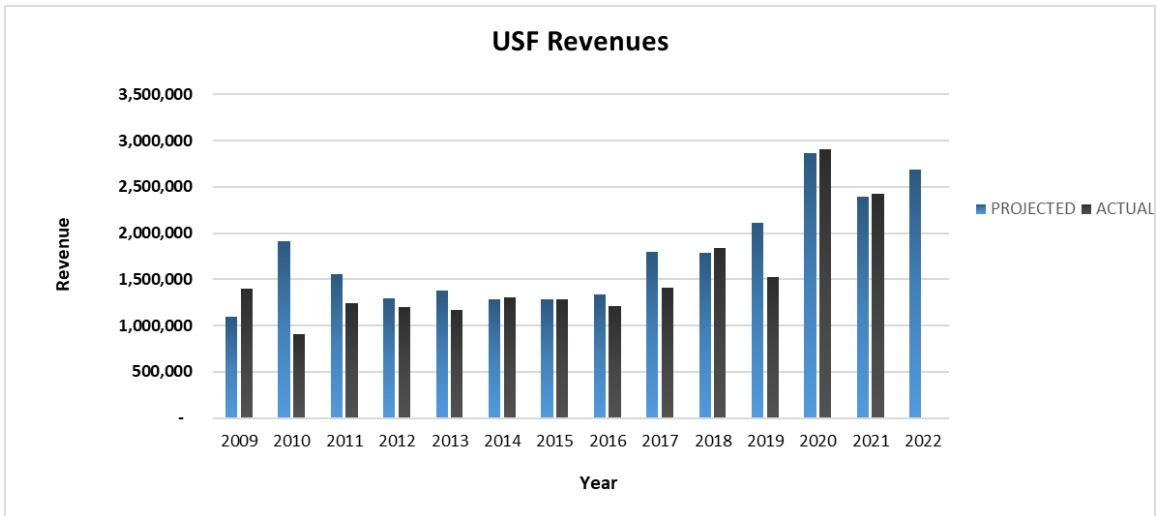
##### **Projects:**

For the year ended December 31, 2021, the USF budgeted to spend Three Million, Five Hundred and Seventy-Nine Thousand, Two Hundred and Six Dollars and Ten Cents (\$3,579,206.10) for payments on projects. However, Two Million Two Hundred and Fifty-One Thousand, Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven Dollars and Forty-Three Cents (\$2,251,237.43) was spent. This is primarily because the contractual obligations under some of the USF projects were not met and therefore, the payments of fees were deferred until the issues were resolved.

## Projected Revenue for 2022

The Fund is projected to receive Two Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Four Thousand One Hundred and Sixty-Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2,684,167.50) in 2022. Two Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-One Thousand Six Hundred and Sixty-Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2,681,667.50) is expected to be collected from the Telecommunications Service Providers and interest of Two Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) is projected on the fund's balance in its saving account.

**Figure 1**



*Fig 1. USF Projected and Actual Revenue (Source: NTRC Annual Report 2021)*

## 2 TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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The year 2021 brought many challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a significant growth in the use of web conferencing and online classroom platforms to keep persons connected. In addition to COVID-19 in 2021, the country experienced a volcanic eruption in April which helped to highlight the deficiencies in telecommunications in the country as most schools adopted the online approach as opposed to face-to-face learning.

In addition, the monitoring and evaluation of projects executed by the Universal Service Fund was affected due to protocols implemented to combat the pandemic. Monthly site visits under the five USF projects to ensure that the equipment is functional, and services are in place at the various locations had to be delayed in some areas due to the pandemic. As such the USF is exploring other methods to assist with the monitoring and evaluation process of the projects so that this important aspect is not adversely affected should similar situations arise in the future. The methods explored would also help to evaluate if the objectives of the projects, are being realized by the parties impacted by the USF projects implemented.

The NTRC has 322 wireless access points at 125 locations nationwide, which were installed under six projects implemented by the USF. These access points are monitored and managed through a central dashboard which is hosted in the cloud. While conducting our monitoring of these access points, the increase demand for the internet was observed as we noted that a total of 645.98 Terabytes of data was consumed by 1,696,376 devices in 2021, which is a 47.7% increase in usage compared to 2020 which had 437.35 Terabytes data consumption by 68,108 devices.

In 2021, the NTRC held ICT training in the rural areas with the MyApp Summer Program. The program was held at the Canouan Secondary School and Spring Garden Resort with an estimated twenty (20) students for each location.

### 2.1 UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND (USF) PROJECT STATUS

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

#### 2.1.1 Community Access Project

This project is the combination of the first project undertaken by the NTRC, The Internet Project, and the sixth project, The Community Center Project. The contract for this project was signed on March 8th, 2019, between Cable & Wireless and the NTRC for a total of Three Hundred and Thirty-Three Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Two Dollars and Three Cents (EC\$333,172.03) and was commissioned on December 19th, 2019 as all the services and equipment were in place. This project ran for two years and came to an end on December 18th, 2021. In the project, forty-seven (47) locations were outfitted with wireless internal and external internet access points with

minimum speeds of 20Mbps download and 3Mbps upload. These locations included nineteen (19) Community Centers, thirteen (13) Learning Resource Centers, eleven (11) Group Institutions and Public Venues and four (4) Public Libraries. This project will not be retendered but will be incorporated under a new project called the Online 24/7 Project.

### **2.1.2 Payphone Project**

The second project is the Payphone Project, and was signed with Cable and Wireless in 2011, at a cost of One Million, Four Hundred Thousand, Five Hundred and Seventy-Five Dollars (EC\$1,400,575). Under this project, 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. This project was commissioned in December 2016 and will run for a five-year period. The sites under this project are routinely visited to ensure that the services and equipment are functional. Three sites were removed following negotiations with Cable & Wireless in 2019 as they were negatively impacted by environmental conditions due to their location. These sites were Cumberland Trail, Rawacou and Fancy. Additionally, electricity was placed at the Mt Wynne beach site for the equipment under this project. The electricity was installed on February 28, 2021, and the equipment at the site are currently functional. The payphone project came to an end on December 28, 2021. This project will not be retendered but will be incorporated under a new project called the Online 24/7 Project.

### **2.1.3 Schools' Project**

The Schools' project was first signed on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 which saw all 107 schools throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines with wireless internal and external internet access points with minimum speeds of 8Mbps download and 2Mbps upload. This original contract came to an end and a new contract for this project was signed on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, for a total of Two Million Five Hundred and Fifty-One Thousand, Fifty-Four Dollars and Eighty-Seven Cents (EC\$2,551,054.87). The project will run for five years and would come to an end on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. Each school included in the project received an internet connection with a download speed of 100 Mbps and an upload speed of 15 Mbps. Schools with a large student population and other areas with high traffic were provided with 100 Mbps symmetrical internet connection using fiber technology.

A five-year license for a centrally managed content management system which interfaces with all existing access points under the project was provided. This is to provide content filtering at each



location and to monitor the status of the services at each location. This project was expected to be commissioned by the second quarter of 2020, however during our commissioning activities, there were several changes to be made to schools. These works were completed by Cable & Wireless. The project was commissioned April 30, 2021.

Additionally, on December 14, 2020, the contract document was amended to include the installation of 116 additional access points across 57 schools. This saw an improvement in the coverage at schools. The additional access points were purchased, and their desired placement was finalized. The installation of the new access points was completed by the third quarter of 2021 and the addendum for the Schools' Project was commissioned November 30, 2021.

#### **2.1.4 Maritime Project**

The VHF Maritime Project was initially commissioned on November 20, 2012 and ran for five years. The project 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 Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) 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 (EC\$1,125,780) and was maintained for a period of five years. Five Hundred and Forty Thousand Dollars (EC\$540,000) 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 Dollars (EC\$585,780) was paid by the Universal Service Fund for the maintenance of the services and equipment over the five-year period. 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. Digital Selective Calling (DSC) is one of the most important aspects of this GMDSS system and is a standard for sending a pre-defined digital message via the pressing of one button.

This project was retendered in 2017 as the contract which was in place came to an end. The NTRC subsequently entered a contract with Cable & Wireless for the continued maintenance of the equipment and system to facilitate the GMDSS System. The contract was signed on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, for a period of five years for a total cost of Five Hundred and Ninety-One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Forty Dollars and Sixty-Five Cents (\$591,840.65). Additionally, under this new contract the NTRC was able to purchase handheld GMDSS enabled radios and replacement components (such as antennas and batteries) for resale at a subsidized cost. The cost of the VHF Radio is Five Hundred Dollars (EC\$500.00), the cost for battery and antenna is One Hundred Dollars (EC\$100.00) and Forty Dollars (EC\$40.00) respectively.

### **2.1.5 GMDSS Expansion Project in Jerome Union Island**

The objective of the project is to expand the coverage to the GMDSS system which is in place in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). The GMDSS coverage is limited to the Mainland and Northern Grenadines as there is only one transmission site located at Mount St. Andrews. The addition of a new transmission site in Union Island which would be linked to the existing system using the newly installed CARCIP Subsea fiber would greatly improve the GMDSS coverage, resulting in a safer environment for our fisherfolk, yachts, cruise ships and all other vessels transiting our sea space.

During 2021, the NTRC conducted the tender process for the project within the guidelines of the Universal Service Fund (USF) as per requirements of the Telecommunications Act (CAP 418) of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2009 and the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) Regulations 2008 (S.R & O #45 of 2008). There was a sole bidder being Cable & Wireless. After negotiations with Cable & Wireless, the NTRC came to an agreement with the company for the capital costs of the project in the amount of Four Hundred and Forty-Eight Thousand Seventy-One and Eighty-Two Cents Eastern Caribbean Dollars (\$448,071.82) and One Hundred and Sixty-Six Thousand Four Hundred and Nineteen and Ninety-One Cents Eastern Caribbean Dollars (\$166,419.91) for the maintenance cost. The contract for the maintenance will be for 5 years after commissioning of the project. The signing of the contracts is expected to be completed within the first quarter of 2022.

### **2.1.6 Police and Health Center Project**

This project was initially signed on November 1, 2012, and it provided 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 was Seven Hundred and Eleven Thousand, and Fifteen Dollars (EC\$711,015), and was implemented by Karib Cable (FLOW) for a period of two (2) years. Thirty-one (31) computers were installed at various clinics, and fourteen (14) computers installed at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. The Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) Training School was also outfitted with ten (10) computers to assist the recruits and other officers with their research work. This project was commissioned on June 12, 2015 and came to an end in June 2017 and a project for the continuation of the maintenance of the services was tendered. The NTRC subsequently entered a contract with Cable and Wireless on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, for the continued provision of services at the sites under the project. The contract for this project is Five Hundred and Forty-One Thousand, Three Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$541,340.00) and will run for two years. This project will come to an end on October 27, 2022 and will be retendered in the fourth quarter of 2022.

### **2.1.7 SMART Project**

The first contract for this project was signed on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at a total of One Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred and Ninety-Four Dollars (EC\$1,698,994) for the for the supply of equipment and teaching aids at the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College (SVGCC) to enable them to offer specialized ICT training. This included a state-of-the-art computer lab containing Thirty-Five (35) high powered computers, twenty (20) of which were Apple iMac computers, were handed over to the SVGCC: Division of Technical Education. In addition to this, Three Hundred and Forty (340) needy households benefitted from subsidized internet access at a cost of ten dollars (\$10) per month for a maximum of two (2) years. This five-year project was commissioned on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and came to an end in September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

The project was retendered on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and the NTRC subsequently entered a contract with Cable & Wireless on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The new contract brought new equipment for the supply of specialised supplementary ICT training equipment at the St. Vincent Community College and the supply of internet access at the subsidized cost of ten dollars (\$10) per month to an increased Six Hundred and Eighty (680) needy households. Also, Six Hundred and Forty (640) Computers would be disbursed to various schools throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Currently, the ICT training equipment have been delivered to the Community College, Three Hundred and Forty (340) households have an internet connection at a subsidized cost and One Hundred and Fifty (150) computers were disbursed to schools. The NTRC reopened applications for the subsidized internet in March of 2021 to have another Three Hundred and Forty (340) households connected with internet connection and the application portals are still open as the quota was not met in 2021, there remains One Hundred and Fifty (150) households to be connected. Also, the NTRC expects to disburse another One Hundred and Fifty (102) Computers to schools throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines for 2022.

### **2.1.8 Online 24/7 Project**

The project is comprised of four Lots which includes the Community Access locations from the community access project. The objective of this lot is for the provision internet service and new access points to offer open Wi-Fi access at existing locations throughout the urban and rural areas of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Additionally, internet service and access points will be provided to new locations such as high traffic locations, NGO's, playing fields hard courts and tourism sites.

Also, the old payphone project will be merged under the Online 24/7 Project, however the payphones at the previous locations will be replaced with internet access. The existing camera equipment under the payphone project are to be replaced with new camera equipment which will be joined to the network created under the E-Bus Project implemented by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Moreover, the project will enable the provision of charging stations at bus stops throughout urban and rural areas, as well as popular tourism sites. These charging stations would be fitted with USB-A ports that would allow persons to charge their mobile devices with the use of their own USB cable. Lastly, this project will facilitate highspeed internet connection at the SVGCC Glen Campus and the purchasing of additional access points that can be installed when the need arises to ensure the smooth operation of services provided under the project.

This project was tendered out on October 30,2021, and two bids were received on December 21, 2021. However, the bids received exceeded the Commission's budget. As such, the NTRC revised the scope of works and some aspects that were unclear in the tender document. This project is expected to be retendered in March 2022.

### 3 SUMMARY MARKET ASSESSMENT

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In the year 2021, the Schools' Project was amended which saw the addition of 116 new wireless access points to improve the wireless coverage at fifty-eight (58) schools across the country. The addendum for the schools' project was commissioned November 30, 2021. The USF also continued to maintain the Three Hundred and Twenty-Eight (328) free wireless internet access points across the country and other services and equipment which are in place under the six projects currently being executed under the Fund.

Additionally, funding was received for the Expansion of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) to the Southern Grenadines from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, and Information Technology. Currently, the GMDSS coverage is limited to the Mainland and Northern Grenadines as there is only one transmission site located at Mount St. Andrew. The addition of a new transmission site in Union Island which would be linked to the existing system using the Subsea fiber cable installed under the CARCIP Project would greatly improve the GMDSS coverage, resulting in a safer environment for our fisherfolk, yachts, cruise ships and all other vessels transiting our sea space.

Moreover, during 2021 the NTRC conducted the tender process for the Online 24/7 project within the guidelines of the Universal Service Fund (USF) as per requirements of the telecommunications Act of 2001 and the Telecommunications (Universal Service Fund) regulations 2008 (S.R & O #45 of 2008). The project was tendered out on March 2, 2022, and the deadline for the submission of bids is March 16, 2022. The project comprises of four lots, Lot 1 will provide internet access to community locations, tourism sites, NGO's, playing fields and hard courts. Also, the cameras that were previously under the payphone project will be replaced with new equipment and joined under the E-bus project in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for Lot 2. Lot 3 will comprise of charging stations installed at bus stops in urban and rural area. Finally, Lot 4 will comprise of providing high speed internet to SVGCC Glen Campus and the purchasing of additional access points that will be readily available for when the need arises to provide consistent and reliable service at the various locations.

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) organized a survey that was conducted from December 1, 2021 to December 20, 2021. The aim of the survey was to acquire the status of telecommunication access throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines. The survey was designed as a household survey with a targeted sample size of two thousand (2000) persons spread across the thirteen (13) census divisions of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The survey was carried out by several individuals within communities throughout the country and was done with the use of questionnaires over a Two (2) week period. These questionnaires were administered by the interviewers and all information received is confidential. The information gathered from the survey will assist the commission in identifying underserved areas and aspects of the sector that needs upgrading. This will eventually lead to an improved and more enhanced telecommunication sector.

Additionally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has received financing in the amount of US\$ 30,000,000.00 equivalent from the World Bank toward the cost of the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project.

The project includes several components that seeks to integrate digital technologies across the public sector which should results in improved productivity of the Government service and delivery of better service to Vincentians.

The components of this project are as follows:

**Component 1: Digital Enabling Environment (USD 2,000,000.00)** The project will support for development of national level cybersecurity capability to monitor, identify, protect against, and respond to cyber threats and support for requisite enabling environment and capacity improvements at national level. The CERT will be established using a regionally compatible design and frameworks developed as part of the regionally implemented activities under the subcomponent.

**Component 2: Digital Government Infrastructure, Platforms, and Services (USD 22,750,000.00)**

- **Subcomponent 2.1: Cross-Cutting Enablers of Digital Government Operations and Services**
  - Digital Government strategy, standards, business continuity, and protocols
  - Unique digital identifier and citizen authentication
  - Digital infrastructure strengthening.
  - Government payment platform
  - E-Document management system
  - Capacity building of public sector IT professionals and civil servants
  
- **Subcomponent 2.2: Government Productivity Platforms and Citizen-Centric Digital Services**
  - End-to-end digitization, business process re-engineering, and integration of priority services and systems
  - Single window for land/property transaction
  - Single window customs clearance
  - Tax system development

**Component 3: Digital Skills and Technology Adoption (USD 2,750,000.00)**

- **Subcomponent 3.1: Workforce-Ready Digital Skills**
- **Subcomponent 3.2: Technology Adoption**

**Component 4: Project Implementation Support (US\$ 2.5 million)**

This component includes support to the PIU for the implementation and management of national level project activities, including capacity building and training initiatives.

Lastly, the SVG Intelligent Bus Management and Monitoring System Project known as the eBus project, was signed on January 26, 2019, between the Republic of China on Taiwan, and the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines seeks to improve the management of the public transportation sector (eBus phase) and enhance surveillance in public areas (CCTV Phase), in this country. The CCTV Phase has been completed with a fully functional surveillance system currently in operation. Smart bus stops were installed at approximately 40 locations throughout the country, and 200 Telematic Control Units (TCUs) are projected to be installed on Government-owned and contracted buses, and on privately owned buses who agree to be part of the project.

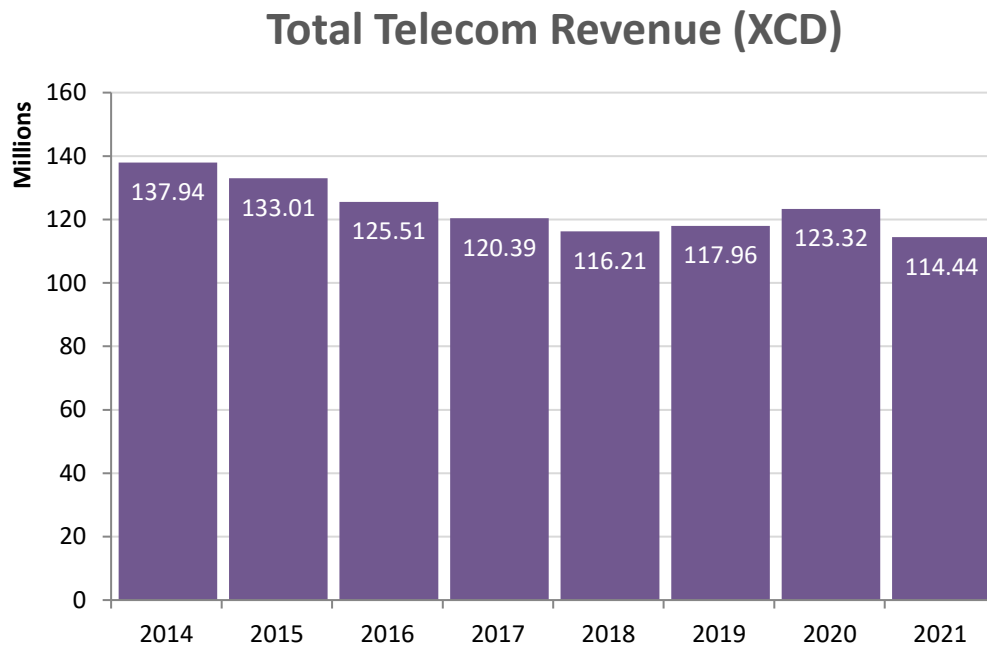
The overarching objectives of the project are to improve the management of the public transportation sector (eBus phase) and enhance surveillance in public areas (CCTV Phase), in this country. The CCTV Phase is completed with a fully functional surveillance system currently in operation.

This project is expected to yield tremendous dividends to all stakeholders, not least of which will be the much-needed relief to the travelling public by greatly reducing the waiting time for buses, as commuters will be in a position to determine the buses' location, and therefore know when to get to the bus stop at an appropriate time and avoid long waits.

### 3.1 REVENUE OF TELECOM OPERATORS

Figure 2 below shows the revenues received by the respective telecommunication operators. The revenue generated by telecommunications operators reduced by a margin of 7.2% in 2021.

**Figure 2**

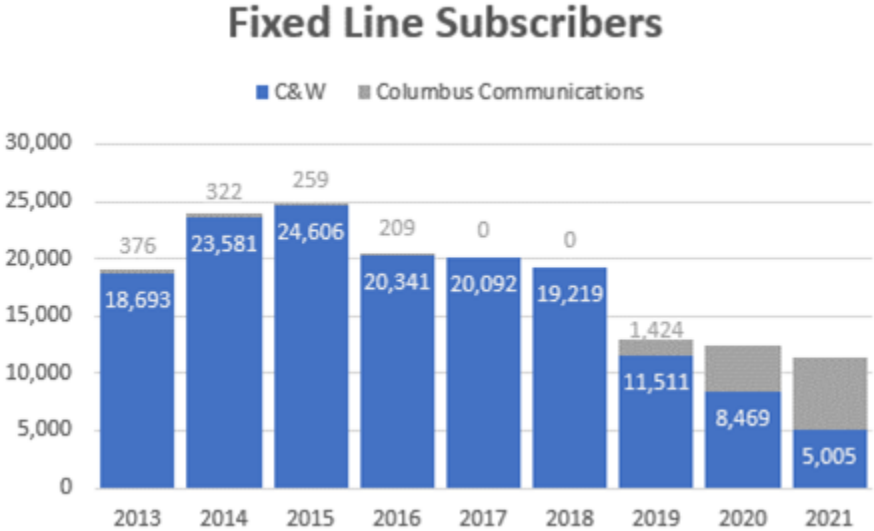


*Fig 2. Telecom Revenue for the telecommunications providers in SVG (Source: NTRC)*



Figure 3 shows Fixed Line Subscribers over the last eight years.

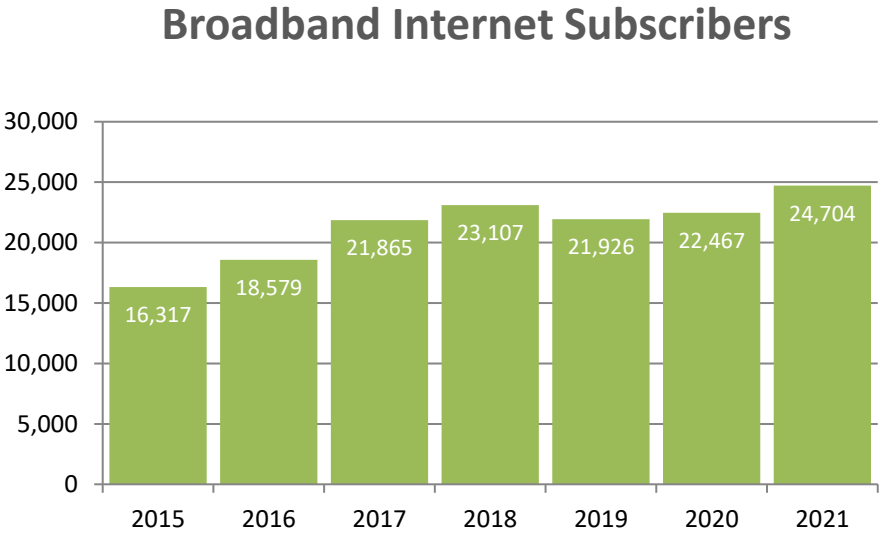
**Figure 3**



*Fig 3. Fixed Line Subscribers (Source: NTRC)*

Figure 4 below shows the number of Broadband Internet Subscribers from 2015 to 2021. There has been an increase in the Broadband Internet Subscribers from 2015 to 2021 except for 2019 and 2020.

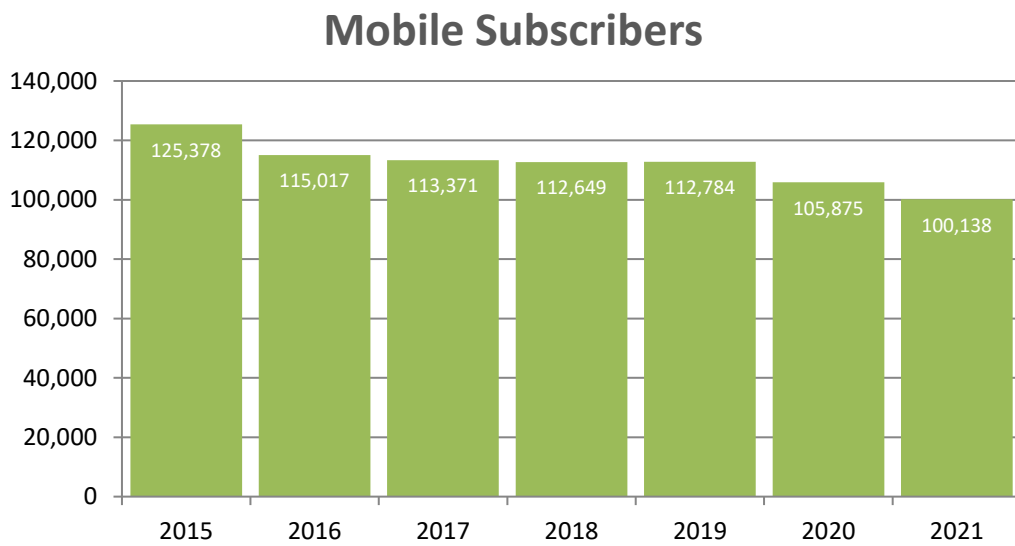
**Figure 4**



*Fig 4. Broadband internet subscribers in SVG (Source: NTRC)*

Figure 5 shows the number of mobile subscribers for the years 2015 to 2021. The figure shows a 5.4% decrease in the figure for 2021 as compared to 2020.

**Figure 5**



***Fig 5. Mobile Subscribers (Source: NTRC)***

### 3.2 PORTABLE COMPUTERS ENTERING ST. VINCENT

Figure 6 below depicts the number of portable computers entering St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Portable computers. In 2020, Seven Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty-Eight (7,688) portable computers were imported into SVG while 2021 saw Ten Thousand, Five Hundred and Ten (10,510) devices being imported. This represents a 37% increase from 2020.

**Figure 6**

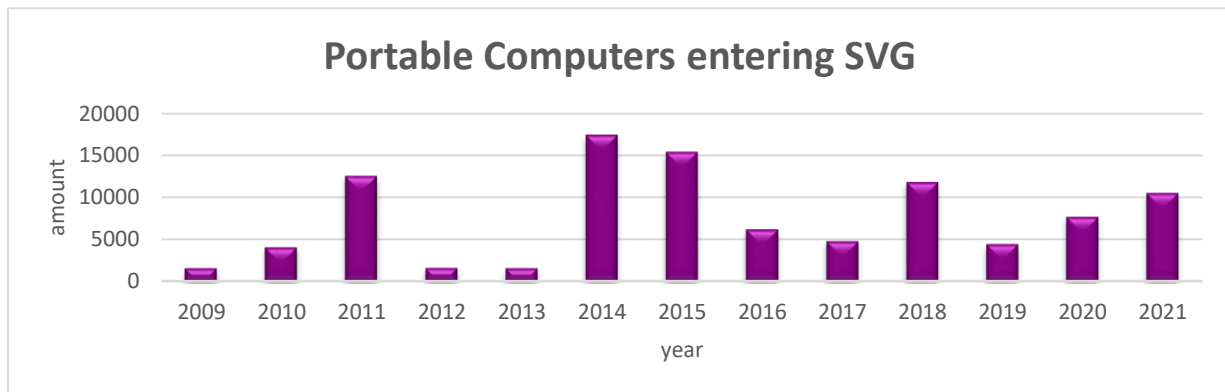


Fig 6. Portable computers entering SVG (Source: *The Customs and Excise Department*)

### 3.3 DESKTOPS ENTERING ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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 2020, there were Four Hundred and Ninety-Five (495) units which were imported compared to Four Hundred and Sixteen (416) units for 2021. This represents a 16% decrease in the figures from 2020.

**Figure 7**

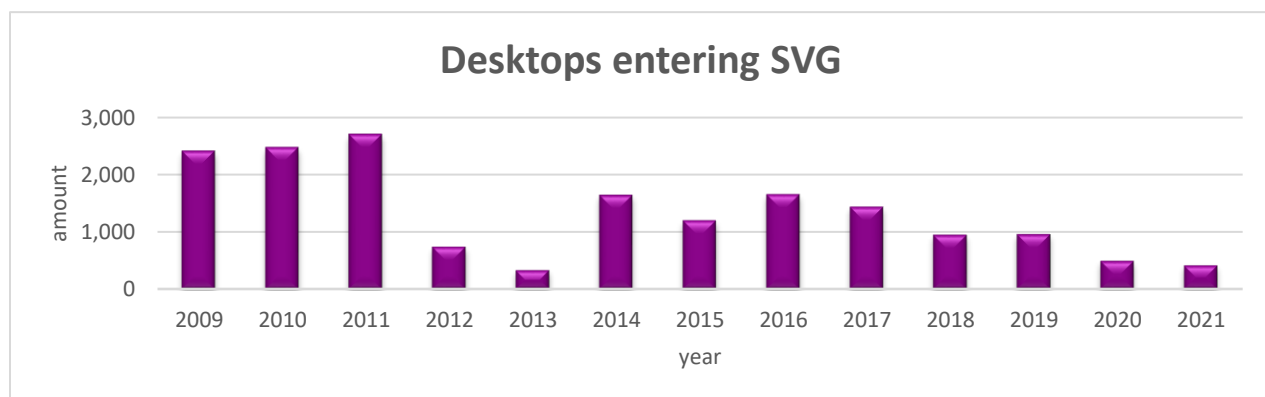


Fig 7. Desktop entering SVG (Source: *Customs and Excise Department*)

### 3.4 MOBILE PHONES ENTERING ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Figure 8 below shows the number of mobile phones entering the country. The graph shows that there has been a significant decrease in the number of mobile phones being imported. The figure for 2020 was Thirty-Four Thousand, Nine Hundred and Sixty-Four (34,964) devices being imported while in 2021, the figure is now Twenty-One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty (21,850). This represents a 37% decrease in mobile phones entering the country from 2020.

**Figure 8**

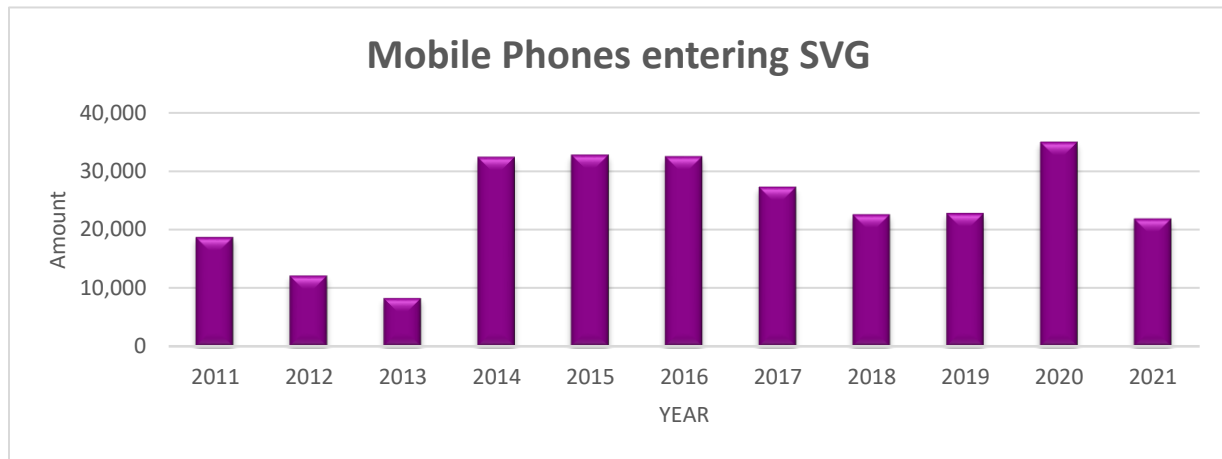


Fig 8. Mobile Phones imported (Source: *The Customs and Excise Department*)

### 3.5 PENETRATION RATES FOR TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

Figure 9 below shows the penetration rates for various telecommunications services over the last seven years.

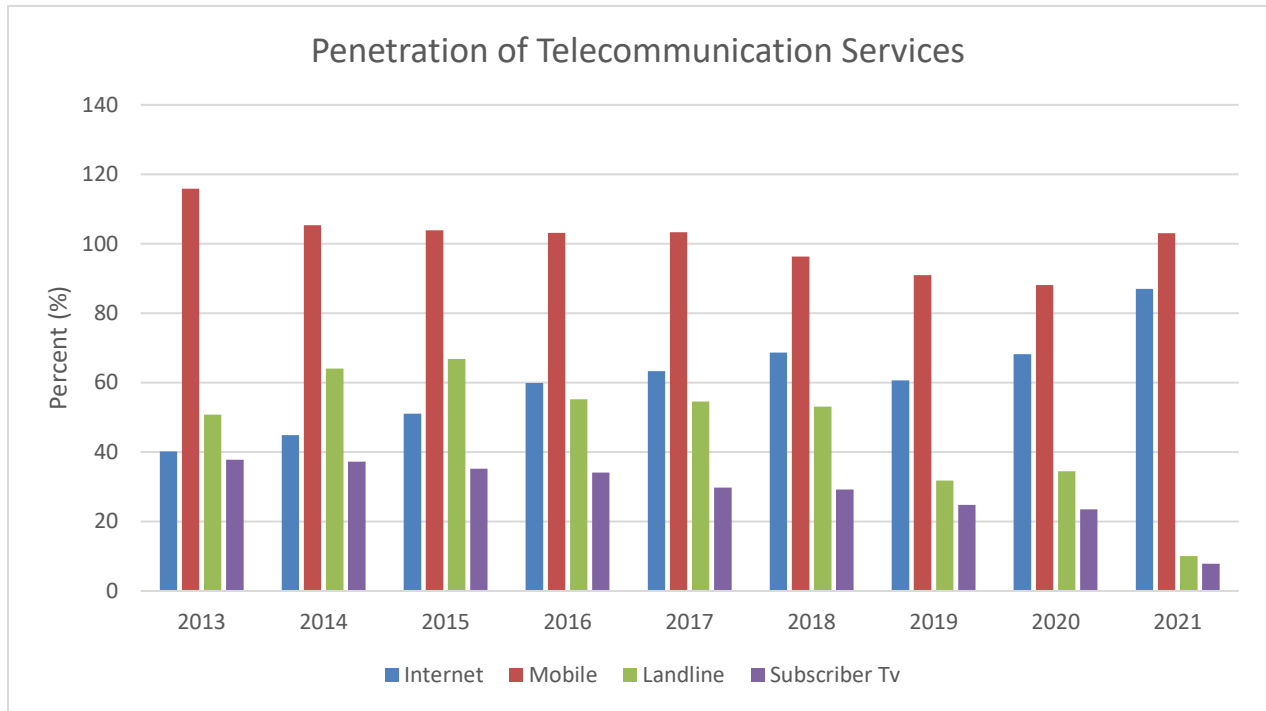


Figure 8: Penetration Rates (Source NTRC)

## 4 PRIORITY GOALS 2021

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The Operating Plan for 2021 identified priority areas requiring the attention of the USF for the year 2021. The status of priority goal and the sub goals are as follows:

1. **The 2021 Operating Plan will be established by March 2021. This plan will set out the objectives of the Fund for the operating year 2021.**

The objective was complete. Although, the USF Operating Plan was scheduled to be completed by March 2021, due to delays in its preparation, the task was completed in April 2021.

2. **The USF will seek funding for two new projects through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, and Information Technology.**

This objective is incomplete as the NTRC was only able to receive funding for one project from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, and Information Technology. The project approved for funding would expand the GMDSS coverage to the southern Grenadines by erecting a site in Union Island.

3. **Monthly site visits would be conducted under the five USF projects to ensure that the equipment is functional, and services are in place at the various locations.**

This objective was completed. The USF conducted regular checks on all projects which have been implemented by the USF. This includes physical visits to the project sites to ensure that the service and equipment are functional. The NTRC also remotely monitored the services at the selected locations daily to ensure that the services are functional.

4. **Provide an internet connection to Fifteen (15) playing fields and hard courts throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines.**

This objective is incomplete. The task was incorporated under the Online 24/7 project that was tendered out on October 30, 2021. However, the bids submitted exceeded the Commission's budget hence the project will be retendered by March 2022.

5. **Connect 340 needy households with an internet connection in our efforts to bridge the digital divide.**

This task is not complete as the NTRC did not achieve its target to receive 340 complete applications, approximately 150 persons have been connected thus far. However, the application process remained opened and the remaining 180 connections are expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2022.

6. **The USF will ensure that a GMDSS training session is executed with the Coast Guard radio operators.**

This objective was completed. The NTRC hosted a GMDSS training session with the Coast Guard Radio Operators.

7. **The USF will ensure that electricity is placed at the Mt Wynne Beach under the payphone project to provide power to the equipment.**

This objective is completed. In October 2020, the NTRC liaised with the National Parks, Rivers, and Beaches Authority to have electricity brought to the Mt. Wynne beach. The electricity was installed on February 28, 2021, and the equipment at the site are currently functional.

## 5 USF PRIORITY GOALS 2022

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The USF priority goals for 2022 are as follows:

1. The 2022 Operating Plan will be established by March 2022. This plan will set out the objectives of the Fund for the operating year 2022.
2. The contracts for the GMDSS Expansion project in Union Island are to be signed by the second quarter of 2022 and the project commissioned by the third quarter of 2022.
3. The contract for the Online 24/7 project will be entered into by the second quarter of 2022. The procurement, installation of equipment and commissioning of the project is to be completed by the second quarter of 2022.
4. Revision of the Curriculum for the Associate Degree Cyber Security program will be completed by the second quarter of 2022.
5. Host consultation sessions with the Ministry of Health and the RSVGPF to discuss ways in which the internet service provided under the Police and Health Center Project can be improved, this is to be completed by the second quarter of 2022.
6. The retendering of the Police and Health Center Project is to be completed by the third quarter of 2022.
7. Monthly site visits would be conducted under the five USF projects to ensure that the equipment is functional, and services are in place at the various locations.
8. Connect 180 needy households with wireless internet access at a subsidized price of \$10 per month in our efforts to bridge the digital divide third quarter of 2022.
9. Results from the National ICT Survey conducted in 2021 are to be made available by the second quarter of 2022.
10. Develop methods to improve the monitoring and evaluation process of USF Projects is to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2022.



## **6 USF BUDGET ESTIMATES**

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The Fund is projected to receive Two Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Four Thousand One Hundred and Sixty-Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2,684,167.50) in 2022. Two Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-One Thousand Six Hundred and Sixty-Seven Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$2,681,667.50) is expected to be collected from the Telecommunications Service Providers and interest of Two Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) is projected on the fund's balance in its saving account.