



**REVIEWED 1st DRAFT
GUIDELINES ON
SHORT CODE
OPERATION IN
NIGERIA
(VERSION 43)**

20221

History of Short Code Guidelines Issued by the Commission

VERSION	DATE MODIFIED	DESCRIPTION OF MODIFICATION
1.	April, 2011	First Guidelines on Short Code Operation in Nigeria
2.	August, 2020	Reviewed 1st Draft Guidelines on Short Code Operations in Nigeria (Ver. 1)
3.	September, 2020	Reviewed 1st Draft Guidelines on Short Code Operations in Nigeria (Ver. 2)
4.	May, 2021	Reviewed 1st Draft Guidelines on Short Code Operations in Nigeria (Ver. 3)
<u>5.</u>	<u>June 2022</u>	<u>Reviewed 1st Draft Guidelines on Short Code Operations in Nigeria (Ver. 4)</u>

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**THE ~~NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS~~
~~COMMISSION~~ NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS
ACT 2003**

**~~REVISED~~ GUIDELINES ON SHORT CODE OPERATIONS ~~S~~ IN
NIGERIA**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Nigerian Communications Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) is established under the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003 to create and provide a regulatory framework for the Nigerian ~~C~~ommunications Sector and all matters related thereto and for that purpose.

In exercise of the powers conferred upon it by Sections 70, 71, 72, 128 and more specifically Section 72 of the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003 and all other enabling powers in that behalf, the Commission hereby makes these ~~revised~~ Guidelines.

- 1.2 ~~The existing Guidelines on Short Code Operation in Nigeria was issued in 2011, to achieve uniform and Standard Short Code Services framework for the Nation. In view of the success of the harmonised Short Code Operation, it is imperative that the Commission expands on the scope and further harmonise the standards adopted in its operations.~~

~~Accordingly, the existing Guidelines have been reviewed to ensure efficient and progressive management of the number resources, and facilitate equitable access, transparency, fair competition and consumer protection.~~

- ~~1.3—These Guidelines are for the most part intended to prescribe a standard of practice for providers of short code services and to provide a ~~revised~~ framework for the provision of these services.~~

- ~~1.3 and for the protection against misuse.~~

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1.4 Short Code Classification and Categorization

1.4.1 There shall be classification and categorization of Short Codes issued by the Commission based on classes of services namely:

- (a) Short Codes for Government related services; and
- (b) Short Codes for non-Government related services (as shown in Annexures 1 of these Guidelines).

1.5 The Commission shall issue Short Codes to Content Service Providers and Application Developers from time to time as the need arises. It shall also issue Short Codes to VAS aggregators for test purposes only.

Number Band per Short Code Category –it.

1.6 There shall henceforth be number band per short code category – as a result of the new developed classes and categories of short code

1.6.1. (a) The 3-digit short codes shall be reserved exclusively for *critical services*.

1.6.1. (b) The 4-and 5-digit short codes shall be used for other services as the Commission may determine from time to time.

1.7 The Commission shall develop a harmonized common service codes for accessing common information/services across all networks to enhance customer experience. The number bands and common service codes shall be as shown in Annexure 2 to the Guidelines.

All harmonized common service codes referred to above will be at no charge except **“voice mail deposit and retrieval”** that will attract tariff on the end-user for usage across all networks.

1.8 ~~Additionally,~~ There shall be a **“Stop service”** short code for implementation by Mobile Network Operators (MNO's). This service may be used by mobile network subscribers to stop the use of any type of network service(s) voluntarily subscribed to at any specific time as desired by the subscriber.–

- a) ~~For “stop service” to work,~~ The database of the mobile switching centres shall be configured to keep track of all services voluntarily subscribed to by each individual subscriber via ~~at their~~ Subscriber Identification Module (SIM).

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- b) When the “stop service code” 305 is sent from a subscriber’s mobile phone, the list of all the services voluntarily subscribed to by that specific subscriber is displayed on the mobile phone by means of Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD). From the displayed list of subscribed services, the subscriber may can specify the specific service(s) to unsubscribe.-(stop).

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1.9 The Commission shall henceforth solely allocate and regulate the operation of short codes including monitoring, compliance and enforcement of these Guidelines in compliance with the Act and the Numbering Regulations.

1.10 The Commission shall—at its discretion define, create and allocate number bands per Short Code.

2. Objectives of these Guidelines are to:

- 2.1 Prescribe a regulatory framework for the provision of a minimum standard of practice for providers of short code services and to provide procedure for the provision of these services.
- 2.2 Provide guidance on the standard and procedure which network operators and VAS aggregators are expected to adhere to in the provision of the Short Code Services.
- 2.3 Ensure a well-developed and organized short codes market in Nigeria with appropriate legal framework that meets international best practice.

3. Scope and Operation

3.1 These Guidelines are made to provide a frame work for the operation of short codes and for the protection against misuse.

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3.23.1 These Guidelines are also intended to apply to Mobile Network Operators—(MNO), VAS Aggregators, Application developers and Content Service Providers.

3.33.2 National Emergency Telephone—number Number (112) for emergency services will not attract any fee or charge for usage by the

consumer. However, all other categories of Short Codes apart from Common Service Codes shall be paid for.

~~3.4.3.3~~ An ~~Mobile Network Operator~~ shall not charge an End User for a category of messages, including Short Messaging Service ~~(SMS)~~, containing help or error or messages requesting for information or stopping a service.

4. Application/Renewal Process

4.1 The Commission may from time to time approve or give authorisation for the use of short codes in a non-discriminatory manner, upon an application by Network Operators, Application developers, Content Service Providers and others.

4.2 The Commission shall reserve the right to allocate short code(s) upon payment of a fee to be determined by the Commission. The Commission may assign short codes subject to the following conditions:

- a. Fairness and transparency in assignment
- b. Proper usage/proper purpose

4.3 Revenue sharing arrangement/agreements amongst ~~Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)~~, VAS Aggregators, Application Developers, Content Service Providers and others, that the Commission may from time to time approve or give authorisation to are strictly commercial agreements. The revenue sharing arrangements ~~and such charges shall be in line with the provisions of the VAS Aggregator Framework. In cases where a dispute arises, such dispute shall be referred to the Commission for resolution.~~

5. Application and /Renewal fee for Short Code

5.1 From the effective date of these Guidelines, all applicants for Short Codes or renewal of Short Codes shall pay a fee in a manner and as determined by the Commission. ~~While,~~

5.1.1 Licensees shall pay a fee for only the renewal of the Short Codes.

~~5.1.2~~, Non-Licensees shall pay a fee for both the application and the renewal of the Short Codes.

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5.2 Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 5.1 above, all Applicants including Licensees and Non-Licensees shall pay a processing fee to be determined by the Commission.

6. Validity Period of Allocated Short Code

6.1 All allocated Short Codes shall have validity period as stipulated in the letter of allocation by the Commission. Upon expiration of the validity period, the aAllottee shall be required to apply for a renewal as provided for in Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of these Guidelines.

7. Conditions and Process for the Suspension of Allocated Short Code by the Commission

7.1. Allocated short codes may be suspended by the Commission in any of the following circumstances-

7.1a. The use of Short Code(s) for purposes and Classifications classifications for which they were NOT-not allocated.

7.2b. The use of Short Code(s) by allottees beyond the validity period contained in their letter of allocation without renewaling same.

7.3c. The expiration of operating licence of the Allottee-allottee without renewal-of same.

7.4d. The use of allocated Short Code(s) for purposes considered to be a threat to National Ssecurity.

7.57.2. Notwithstanding the provisions in 7.1(a) to 7.4,1(d) the Commission reserves the right to suspend the use of any allocated Short Code(s) if it suspects an arbitrarily use of such Short Code(s).

7.67.2.1. Where an allottee is deemed to have contravened the provisions of paragraphs 7.1 to 7.5,2 the Commission shall;

a. Inform the aAllottee in writing on

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- such infractions on the usage of the allocated Short Code(s).
- b. Give the aAllottee not less than Fifteen (15) working days to respond to the Notice.
 - c. Suspend such allocated short code(s) if it considers such response not satisfactory.

~~7.77.2.2.~~ The Commission ~~in compliance with the procedure laid out in 7.6~~ will commence the process of withdrawal of such allocated Short Code(s) if in exercise of its discretion it is not satisfied with the response from such aAllottee or Licensee as the case may be.

~~7.2.3.~~ The Commission shall notify the aAllottee of its decision to commence the process of withdrawal of allocated Short Code(s).

~~7.97.2.4.~~ Notwithstanding the provisions of 8.1 and 8.2 of these Guidelines, the Commission shall reserve the right to withdraw any allocation without notice if in its opinion the usage of such allocation contravenes National Ssecurity, public safety, public order, public morality or public health.

8. Voluntary Surrender of Allocated Short Code by Allottees

~~8.1. 8.1.~~ Allottees can voluntarily surrender allocated Short Codes at any time. ~~NOTHING~~
8.2. Nothing in this provision shall suggest a refund of licence or allocation fee in any way.

9. Code of Practice, Quality and Operational Guidelines

~~9.19.1.1.~~ ~~Mobile~~ Network ~~Operators~~ Operators(MNOs), VAS Aggregators, Application Developers, Content Service Providers shall comply with the following code of practice.

- a. ~~Mobile~~ Network ~~Operators~~ Operators(MNOs), VAS Aggregators, Application Developers, Content Service Providers will be primarily responsible for any contravention of any of the provision of these Guidelines and appropriate sanctions will be imposed accordingly.

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- b. ~~Mobile~~-Network Operators (~~MNOs~~), VAS Aggregators, Application Developers, Content Service Providers shall ensure that service providers provide the highest level of service to the consumers and the consumers are:
 - i Provided with sufficient information to enable them make informed decisions about using Short Codes.
 - ii Provided convenient, fair and efficient means of resolving complaints arising in respect of content services using the availability of an independent complaints handling mechanism.
 - iii Sufficiently informed of the nature, prices, terms and conditions of using the Short Codes at the time of sale, advertising and using the services.
 - iv Able to distinguish content considered suitable only for adults or which should not be made available to children.
 - v Able to readily access unsubscribe mechanism for each content service, discontinue a service and avoid incurring further charges, without undue delay. Where refund is considered, the licensee shall make the refund via the same medium or mode through which the amount was received.
- c. No content service shall be promoted as being “free” if it is obtainable only by the use of premium rate service involving a charge to the customer.
- d. Short messages service sent to short codes and received by consumers must be stored by the ~~Mobile~~-Network Operators and Service Providers for—a minimum period of ~~six-two (2) years(6) months or any period determined to be reasonable by the Service Provider; but not less than six (6) months.~~
- e. All subscription terms and billing intervals must be specified and there shall be no hidden charges, any associated charges for services rendered shall be disclosed.

- f. The terms and conditions of service must set out the refund processes where the competition mechanism or voting conditions changes prior to entry.
- g. ~~Mobile~~ Network Operators (~~MNOs~~), VAS Aggregators, Application developers, Content Service Providers shall submit Service Level Agreements or any other agreement to the Commission.
- h. Where the types of services contemplated by the service providers require authorization from other government agencies; such authorization shall first be obtained.
- i. ~~Mobile~~ Network Operators (~~MNOS~~), VAS Aggregators, Application developers, Content Service Providers shall maintain a customer support where complaints would be addressed within a reasonable time frame. In a situation where a complaint is not considered, reasons for decision must be conveyed to the complainant within a reasonable period of time.

~~9.29.1.2.~~ The Commission shall at its discretion periodically audit the usage of assigned number resources to ensure that the resources are utilized in accordance with these Guidelines and for the intended purposes and the allottee(s) shall submit all materials relevant for the audit to the Commission subject to a reasonable Notice by the Commission.

10. Eligibility and Use of Allocations

~~40.4~~10.1.1. Short Code Allocations

Licensees of the Commission, government agencies and any other organization the Commission may deem fit are eligible for allocation of short codes.

~~40.2~~10.1.2. Short Codes for Public Emergency Services

Subject to the provision in 3.3 of these Guidelines, the Commission may allot or approve use of National Emergency Telephone nNumber (112) for emergency services which will not attract any fee or charge for usage by the consumer.

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40.310.1.3. Facilitation of Traffic to Unallocated Numbers

Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) must ensure that traffic is not delivered to Short Codes that do not exist within the Nigerian Communications Commission Numbering Plans.

40.410.1.4. Activation of Short Code Allocations

- i. Short Code allocations must be put into service by the allottee(s) within a period of six months from the date of allotment.
- ii. , The allottee(s) shall inform the Commission in writing on the date of activation and the dialing format on or before activation of the Short Code allocations.
- iii. The Commission may withdraw any Short Code allocation that is not activated within the stipulated period or where the Commission is not informed of the activation date including the dialing formats, or both.

40.510.1.5. Transfer of the Allocated Resource

Number resources allocated by the Commission are not transferable to another entity or another service without the prior written approval of the Commission. The Commission shall conduct regular audits on their utilization to ensure that the resources are utilized in accordance with these Guidelines and for the intended purposes.

40.610.1.6. Dialing Formats

~~Mobile~~ Network Operators (~~MNOs~~) shall ensure that the allocated short codes are dialed in the prescribed format including the prescribed Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) protocol formats.

40.710.1.7. Protocol for USSD Strings Design

Network Operators and Service Providers may format Short Codes with USSD strings as may be necessary. Such strings shall be designed from the allocated number resources and associated services. Additionally, the initial digit of the allocated series shall form the first decimal digit of the USSD in consistence with the guiding principles outlined in these Guidelines.

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11. Advertising and Promotions

- ~~44.411.1.1.~~ In line with the Commission's Guidelines on Advertisements and Promotions, all advertising and promotional materials ~~shall~~**must** clearly include the name(s) and contact details of ~~Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)~~, Content Service Providers and VAS Aggregators.
- ~~44.211.1.2.~~ The system ~~shall~~**must** not be used to disseminate offensive, obscene or seditious information.
- ~~44.311.1.3.~~ All terms and conditions including pricing information ~~shall~~**must** be clearly spelt out and conspicuously displayed.
- ~~44.411.1.4.~~ All advertisements and promotions ~~shall~~**must** clearly indicate whether a service is a subscription or not; terms and condition of programme clearly stated and service pricing information clearly and conspicuously indicated.
- ~~44.511.1.5.~~ All advertising promotional materials, and service help message shall clearly display the consumers right to "opt in" or "opt out" of any promotion, programme or service, whether subscription based or otherwise.
- ~~44.611.1.6.~~ The ~~Mobile Network Operator (MNO)~~ shall set out measures to safeguard to the satisfaction ~~of~~ the Commission that no sexually suggestive or explicit material is transmitted in the course of the service.
- ~~44.711.1.7.~~ VAS Aggregators shall implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure and make available by appropriate means at least two methods of directly contacting the Content Service Provider. In this regard, all advertisements ~~shall~~**must** include the name, telephone numbers and contact details of the relevant Content Service Provider.

12. Dispute Resolution

Any dispute arising from the operation of these Guidelines shall **first** be resolved by parties in accordance with the dispute resolution clause in their commercial agreement.
Where parties are unable to resolve disputes arising therefrom such

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dispute should be referred to the Commission, ~~within a reasonable period of time.~~

13- Interpretation Section

13.

In line with the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 and the VAS Aggregator Framework, definitions bear the same meaning as appearing on the Framework and all definitions in the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 are hereby incorporated into these Guidelines and where expressly mentioned in these Guidelines, the words and items listed hereunder shall bear the following meanings;

1. “Application Service Provider” means a person that provides an application service.

2. “Class licence” means a licence for any or all persons to conduct a specified activity and may include conditions to which the conduct of that activity shall be subject.

3. “Content” means any sound, text, still picture, moving picture or other audio-visual representation, tactile representation or any combination of the preceding contents which is capable of being created, manipulated, stored, retrieved or communicated electronically.

4. “Content Service Provider” means a person or a business that provides some kind of communications service, storage service or processing service or any combination of the three.

5. “Industry group” means a private industry, professional organization or group of persons that monitors and analyses industry trends and published industry documents.

6. “Licensee” means a person who either holds an individual licence or undertakes activities which are subject to a class licence granted by the Commission under Chapter IV of the Nigerian Communications Act 2003.

4.4 — “Network Operator” means a person that provides network service.

7.

4.28. “VAS Aggregator” means a person or a business that gathers Web content (and/or sometimes applications) from different sources for reuse or resale and ~~who holds~~ a licence ~~see~~ issued by the Commission.

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~~1.3 — “Licensee” means a person who either holds an individual licence or undertakes activities which are subject to a class licence granted by the Commission under Chapter IV of the Nigerian Communications Act 2003.~~

~~1.4 — “Industry group” means a private industry, professional organization or group of persons that monitors and analyses industry trends and published industry documents.~~

~~13.1 “Class licence” means a licence for any or all persons to conduct a specified activity and may include conditions to which the conduct of that activity shall be subject.~~

~~1.5 — “Content Service Provider” means a person or a business that provides some kind of communications service, storage service or processing service or any combination of the three.~~

~~1.6 — Mobile “Network Operator” (MNO) means a person or a business that provides network service, carrier services (network services) in the wired or wireless arena or a person who monitors and maintains the operation of a communications service.~~

~~1.7 — “Application Service Provider” means a person or a business that provides an application service.~~

~~“Content Service Provider” means a person or a business that provides content.~~

~~3.2 “Content” means any sound, text, still picture, moving picture or other audio visual representation, tactile representation or any combination of the preceding contents which is capable of being created, manipulated, stored, retrieved or communicated electronically.~~

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Issued by the Nigerian Communications Commission

this day of, 20224

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PROF. UMAR GARBA-
DANBATA
(FAENG; FNSE; FRAES;
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~~The~~ Executive Vice Chairman

 Nigerian Communications Commission.

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**THE NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION NIGERIAN
COMMUNICATIONS ACT 2003**

REVISED GUIDELINES ON SHORT CODE OPERATION IN NIGERIA

Explanatory Notes

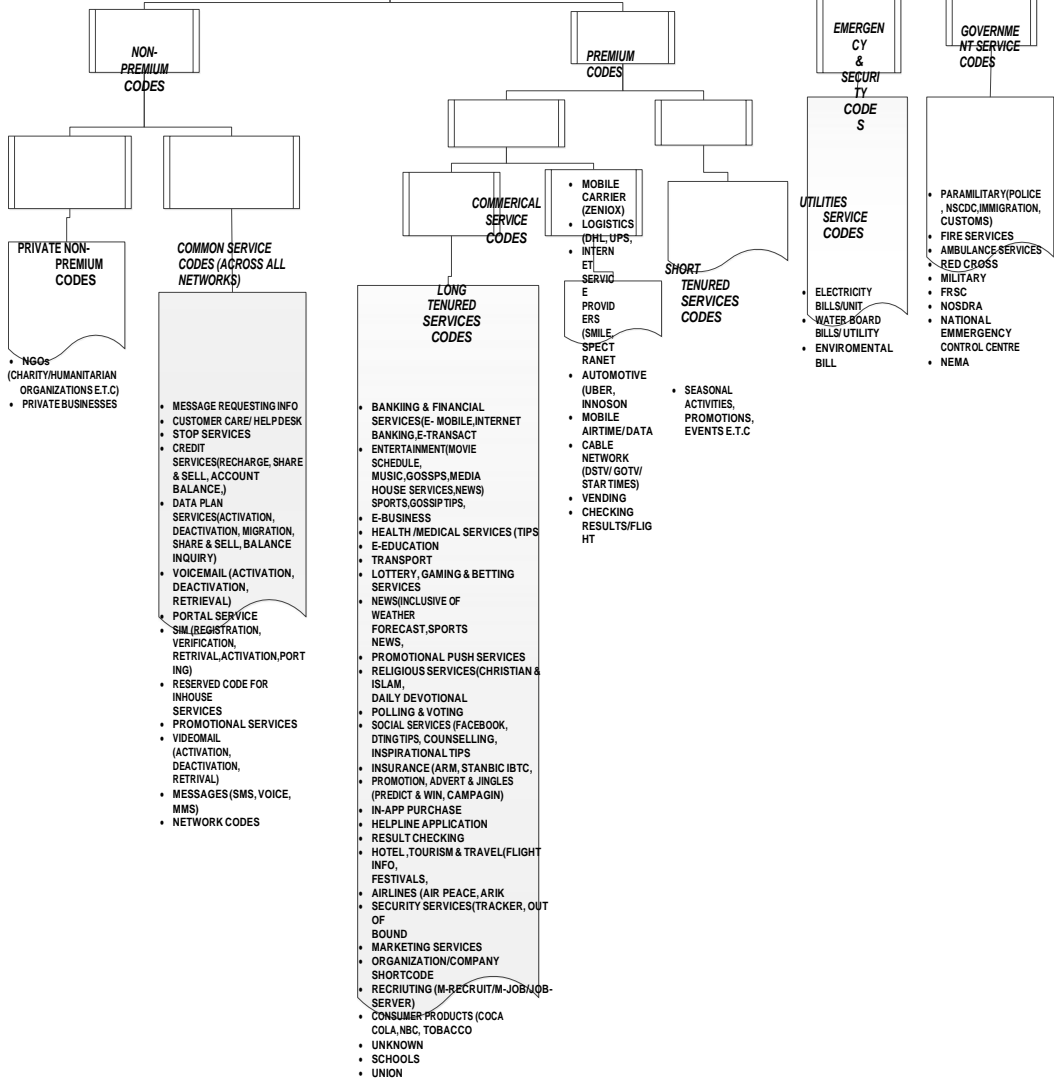
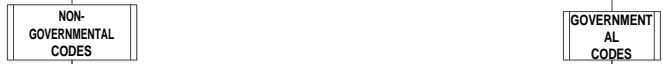
1. Short Codes are numbers shorter than full numbers which can be used to address wireless Short Messaging Service (SMS) and Multi Media Messaging Service (MMS) messages and Voice Services from mobile phones or fixed lines.
2. The Numbers are specifically designed to be shorter and easier to remember than normal telephone numbers. The numbers are at the different technological level, unique to each Operator.
3. When these classes of numbers are inter - operator they are called Common Short Codes.
4. The Common Short Codes has its unique characteristics;
 - a. While normal telephone numbers (following the E.164 standard) form a prefix code, no numeral used as telephone numbers acts simultaneously as the prefix of another, since conventional land line phones numbers are sent all at once, so the network knows the end of the dialed number.
 - b. On a land line phone, one could not use the short code 12345, since one could not dial the number 1 234 567 8901 or 1 234 500 0000, or any number that shared the prefix 12345, but on a mobile phone there is -no such ambiguity.
 - c. The Short Codes function -through the End Users, Carriers, Connection, Application Developers and Content Service Providers.
 - d. End Users are people or an entity that use Short Codes for Communication with Application; the carriers provide the Network infrastructure for the delivery of messages between end users and connection Aggregators.

e. Connection Aggregators provide connectivity between Carrier Networks and Content Service Providers, Content Service Providers provide the technology platform for Short Code service applications and Application Developers often license content to Content Service Providers for delivery to end users.

5.—The Commission may decide to regulate the industry or create an industry group to regulate and ensure compliance. ~~The industry group is expected to transmute to a regulatory body that may regulate the sub-sector in line with the Commission's goal of promoting self-regulation.~~

ANNEXURE 1: PROPOSED SHORT CODE CLASS AND CATEGORIES

SHORT CODES



- FEDERAL, STATES &
LGA& MDA (NINC,
EFCC,NAFDAC,MINIS
TRIES,DPR
.NCC,SERVICOM
- NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY
- STATE ASSEMBLY
- PRESIDENTIAL
HOTLINE
- ECC SITE TESTS
- TSA (REMITA)

ANNEXURE 2

HARMONIZED COMMON SERVICE CODES ACROSS NETWORKS

S/N	HARMONIZED SERVICES	HARMONIZED CODES
1	CALL CENTER/HELP DESK	300
2	VOICE MAIL DEPOSIT	301
3	VOICE MAIL RETRIEVAL	302
4	SIM VERIFICATION	304
5	STOP SERVICE	305
6	CREDIT RECHARGE	311
7	DATA PLAN	312
8	BORROW SERVICES	313
9	SHARE SERVICES	321
10	CHECK BALANCE	322
11	DATA PLAN BALANCE	323