



General Authorisation Framework

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1. Introduction

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is conscious of the rapid evolution of the Nigerian Communications Sector and its immense potential for transformative services and enablement of the Nigerian digital economy. This clear imperative has opened new service areas hitherto not envisaged, expanding the frontiers of innovation and emerging technological changes. This evolution presents both challenges and opportunities, raising concerns about the adequacy of the subsisting licensing Framework.

These constant innovative changes necessitated the need to reform the licensing process in the Nigerian Communications Sector, to accommodate new services and the controlled testing of incubated ideas and services under a General Authorisation. The General Authorisation Framework is thus designed to drive innovation and implement a more flexible licensing regime by the Commission. The General Authorisation will cater to new services for which an appropriate licensing framework has not been developed, affording a Proof-of-Concept and Regulatory Sandbox for testing incubated ideas, while enabling the Commission to study the technical, legal, policy and consumer issues that may arise.

2. Objectives

The primary objective of the General Authorisation Framework (GAF) is to provide a structure for the regulation of Proof of Concept (PoC), regulatory sandbox and similar services, specifically to

- a. foster innovative communications systems that expand available services for consumers.
- b. create a supportive environment for exploring, testing and evaluating new technologies and services, with a structured framework that permits trials within a limited timeframe, to assess feasibility and manage risks effectively.

- c. define clear terms and conditions for operation under a General Authorisation through various mechanisms such as Interim Service Authorisation, Proof-of-Concept and Sandboxes.
- d. collect data to inform the development of appropriate regulatory and licensing frameworks.
- e. support a seamless transition from temporary Authorisation to licensing as appropriate regulatory frameworks are established.
- f. monitor activities, especially for possible impact on existing Licences for regulatory responsibility.

3. Scope of the General Authorisation

The General Authorisation will permit the Holder to provide and test innovative communications services and emerging technologies in any of the following, and the distinctive scope of each service is also outlined below:

3.1.1 Scope of Operations of Proof of Concepts

A Proof of Concept (PoC) is the initial stage of testing where the feasibility and basic functionality of a new technology or service are demonstrated. It is conducted in a trial mode without actual service provision to subscribers, focusing on validating operational, technical, commercial, and regulatory viability.

- a. The purpose is to test and validate the feasibility and core functionality of a new technology or service in a controlled, lab-like environment before commercial deployment.
- b. The testing is confined to a pre-approved, non-public technical environment (e.g., lab, test site). No live services are offered to the public or paying subscribers.
- c. The duration will be valid for 3 months, renewable once for a maximum total duration of 6 months.

- d. The Holder must set clear test goals and success measures, follow all data protection and cybersecurity rules, and submit a Final PoC Report at the end of the test.
- e. A successful PoC does not mean automatic licensing. It may lead to applying for a Regulatory Sandbox or Interim Service Authorisation (ISA) depending on NCC's review.

3.1.2 Scope of Operations of Regulatory Sandbox

A Regulatory Sandbox is a controlled environment where innovative technologies and services can be tested in a real-world setting under the specific supervision and oversight of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

- a. The goal is to support innovation by allowing new products or services to be tested with real users in a controlled, live market environment under NCC supervision.
- b. The testing occurs in a real-world setting with a limited number of participating customers (e.g., up to 10,000) and is confined to specific, pre-approved locations.
- c. The Authorisation lasts up to 9 months (with possible extensions) and requires monthly reports under close NCC supervision.
- d. The service must be genuinely new or unique. The applicant must explain why current rules are restrictive and show a solid plan to protect consumers and the market.
- e. The Commission may give temporary exemptions from some regulations, but consumer protection and data privacy laws always apply.

3.1.3 Scope of Operations of Interim Service Authorisation (ISA)

An Interim Service Authorisation (ISA) is a temporary regulatory approval that allows a qualified entity to commence limited-service provision or pilot operations, effectively filling the regulatory gap until a formal license category is developed and issued.

- a. The purpose is to act as a temporary bridge, permitting limited commercial pilot operations for market-ready services that lack a formal license category, preventing regulatory delays.
- b. The Authorisation allows limited, real-world service provision on a pilot basis to specific locations, but is explicitly temporary, non-exclusive, and does not guarantee a future full license.
- c. The duration will be for a standard valid period of 3 months, extendable at the Commission's discretion for up to two additional 3-month periods (max 9 months total).
- d. The Holder must follow all relevant regulations, submit monthly reports, and inform users that the service is temporary and on trial.
- e. The ISA acts as a pathway to a full license once a formal category is created, though success under an ISA does not automatically lead to a license.

4. SPECIFIC AUTHORISATION CONDITIONS

Each General Authorisation will be subject to the specific conditions for which it is granted. The holder of a General Authorisation will also be required to comply with the General Obligations outlined in Appendix 3C of this GAF.

Upon successful completion of the testing phase or establishment of the required regulatory framework, the holder of a General Authorisation will be required to apply for the relevant licence. The Application will be evaluated on its merits by the Commission and if successful, the licence will be issued with all relevant regulatory conditions to be met for continued service provision.

5. Technical Requirements

Applicants must provide a detailed project plan including:

- a. Network service deployment topology and trial schedule.
- b. Testing parameters, such as the regulatory flexibility requested, scope, and duration of the test.
- c. Metrics to evaluate the success or failure of the trial.
- d. Any other technical information that may be required by the Commission.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

The holder of a General Authorisation will be closely monitored to ensure compliance with regulatory prescriptions.

Monthly reports are to be submitted on service roll-out, usage of network resources and revenue generated from the holder of a General Authorisation which should include:

- a. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and milestones achieved.
- b. Operational and technical issues encountered during the test.
- c. Actions taken to resolve issues.
- d. Customer feedback and satisfaction reports.

7. Eligibility Criteria for General Authorisation

- a. An applicant should have relevant registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission as a Business Name or Limited Liability Company and valid Tax Clearance. After the expiration of the Authorisation period, when it is determined that an Individual Licence be issued, a Business Name will be required to upgrade its corporate status to a Limited Liability Company.

- b. A holder of a General Authorisation is expected to review and comply with the provisions of the Nigerian Communications Act 2003, relevant regulations and applicable codes of the Communications Sector.
- c. Evidence of payment of an administrative fee of (Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira) N250, 000.00 only to be submitted with the application for General Authorisation. Applicants will also be required to pay for spectrum and Numbering resources where applicable.
- d. Applicants should fill the applicable form and provide as much detailed information on the proposed service.
- e. The Applicant must satisfy the Commission that the proposed service is innovative with the potential to improve efficiency, quality in communications services and not compromise network integrity and security
- f. Where applicant is proposing a service that will involve the processing of consumer data, the applicant is required to comply with the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, as well as other Data Protection Prescriptions in the Communications industry. This includes providing evidence of filing a Data Protection Compliance Audit Returns (CAR) and a Data Compliance Certificate from the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC).
- g. A minimum baseline of the Commission's Cybersecurity Framework shall be mandatory. This requirement applies specifically to services that facilitate interconnection and/or process, transmit, or store consumer data.

- h. For service proposals that require technical skills/personnel, an applicant will be required to provide relevant certifications with the application.
- i. Applicants must conduct risk assessments and demonstrate their ability to mitigate these risks and have sufficient resources and expertise to support the testing phase.

8. Definitions

- a. General Authorisation: This refers to a temporary, limited scope licence granted by the NCC to allow for testing and validation of new communications services or technologies that do not yet have established regulatory frameworks.
- b. **Interim Service Authorisation (ISA)** refers to a temporary regulatory Authorisation to operate/provide service until the development of a formal licence category.
- c. **Proof of Concept (PoC):** This is the initial stage of testing where the feasibility and basic functionality of a new technology or service are demonstrated.
- d. **Regulatory Sandbox:** This is a controlled environment where innovative technologies and services can be tested in a real-world setting under regulatory supervision.
- e. **Holder or Holder of a General Authorisation:** A Business name or Company Limited by Liability which has been issued a General Authorisation by the Commission.

Appendix 1



General Authorisation Form (GAF)

APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Name of Company: -----
2. Address: -----

3. Telephone: -----
4. E-mail: -----
5. Name of Authorized Representative: -----
6. Representative Contact Number: -----

7. Ownership Structure

Directors:

S/ N	NAME DIRECTORS	OF	ADDRESS	E-MAIL	NATIONALITY

Shareholders:

S/ N	NAME OF SHAREHOLDERS	ADDRESS	E-MAIL	NATIONALITY

8. Registration status with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)?

- Limited Liability ☐ RC No. _____
- Business Name ☐ BN _____

9. Provide details of current or previous licence(s) issued by the Commission (if applicable)

Licence type: _____

Licence Number: _____

Validity Period: _____

10. What is the General Authorisation required for:

- a. Proof-of-Concept ☐
- b. Regulatory Sandbox ☐
- c. Interim Service Authorisation ☐

11. Is the Authorisation required for use by, or to advance the business interests of a current licensee of the Commission (if yes, please provide details, including copies of relevant agreements, memorandum of understanding or other instrument signed, or proposed to be signed by the parties)

12. Are there individuals connected to the applicant, that is a Director, Shareholder or member of any licensee of the Commission?

Yes ☐

No ☐

13. Category of specific service(s) you intend to offer

- Voice services ☐
- Data services ☐

- SMS services ☐
- Others (please specify) _____

14. (a) Provide a brief Description of Proposed Service:

(b) Attach detailed description of Proposed Service:

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

15. Provide full particulars of the company's experience and expertise, including those of its Partners, Suppliers, Contractors, and Providers of Technical support. (attach documents): -----

16. Do you require approval from other relevant Regulatory Agencies?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

If yes, list the Agencies and Type of approval: _____

17. Network resources required, (select where applicable)

- a. Numbering
 - i. Short Code ☐
 - ii. National Numbering Plan ☐
- b. Frequency ☐

BUSINESS & FINANCIAL INFORMATION

18. provide details of financial capability (attach evidence of funding)

19. Submit Details of financial plan, including:

- Projected revenues for the next three months (*where applicable*)
- Projected expenditures (CAPEX and OPEX) for the next three months (*where applicable*)
- Breakdown of startup costs
- Funding sources

- Location and coverage of service. National ☐
- Regional ☐
- Specify State/city/locality:

20. Provide details of the proposed timeline for service commencement.

- Launch date
- Roll out Plan/Milestones

21. What strategies will you implement to monitor service quality and performance metrics?

- Network monitoring tools
- Customer feedback mechanisms
- Quality of service (QoS) standards
- Performance reporting and analytics

OTHER INFORMATION

22. Indicate if your operations under this Authorisation involve the collection, processing, storage, or handling of consumer personal data?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please provide details of the type of personal data and the purpose for which it will be used.

23. What measures will you take to ensure compliance with environmental regulations? (if applicable)

- Environmental Impact Assessment
 - Sustainable practices
 - Waste management
 - Energy efficiency
- * Please note that your application must be supported with documents such as Business Plan, Technical Documentation, Consumer Protection, Data Protection and Data Retention Policy, Complaint & Dispute Resolution Policy Documents, Certificate of Incorporation, Certified True copy of Articles & Memo of Association, Valid Tax Clearance, Passport photograph of the Directors and Shareholders, Or passport photograph of the applicant), Certified True Copy of Company's Registered Address, CAC Status Report and

Memorandum of Understanding with Operator. *(An applicant for an ISA may be required to provide additional information)*

- Applicant is to ensure that all submitted documents are clear, legible, and duly authenticated.

Undertaking:

I/We _____ hereby certify that the information supplied in this application form is true in all respects and I/We hereby give an undertaking that upon grant of the Licence, I/We shall abide by the terms and conditions upon which the Licence is granted. I/We accept that my/our Licence may be revoked, and the appropriate penalty applied if it is established that I/We have been granted Licence based on incorrect information.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Certified Passport Photographs of authorised representative & Company Seal.



Appendix 2



Checklist for General Authorisation Application

S/n	REQUIREMENTS	NOTE
1.	Applicant information	
2.	Business Registration with Corporate Affairs Commission: CAC Incorporation Certificate, Memorandum & Articles of Association and Status Report	
3.	Technical Requirements: Service/ Technology to be used; MoU with Operators	
4.	Security Requirements (if applicable)	
5.	Financial Requirements (if applicable): Investment/Investors Evidence of Funding	
6.	Fees: Authorisation Fees & Other Fees	
7.	Documentation (e.g., business plan, network diagram)	
8.	Compliance with Regulatory Framework	
9.	Approval from Regulatory Authorities	
10.	Ongoing Compliance Monitoring	
11.	Other regulatory Permits (where applicable)	

Application Review Officer:

Observation:

Remarks:

NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Appendix 3

Authorisation No.

0000 0000 0000



General Authorisation Certificate

The Nigerian Communications Commission, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by the Nigerian Communications Act 2003 hereby grants to

The Holder is hereby authorised to run the communications service described hereunder:

within geographical area.

This General Authorisation shall commence on _____ and expire on _____ (YYYY) subject to the specific Conditions hereto attached.



Sample

Dr. Aminu Maida
Executive Vice-Chairman



General Authorisation Terms & Conditions

The General Authorisation granted to for has the following Authorisation Conditions:

1. Scope:

This Authorisation shall be for the provision of only

2. Duration:

Provided that the commencement date of each Authorisation shall take effect from the date of receipt of the Authorisation fee, the duration of each Authorization shall be as follows:

- a. Interim Service Authorisation shall have a duration of three (3) months which may be renewed twice for a period not exceeding three (3) months each/respectively.
- b. Proof of Concept shall have a duration of three (3) months which may be renewed once for a period of three (3) months.
- c. Regulatory Sandbox shall be issued with a duration not exceeding 1 year/12 months.

3. Limitation:

The Authorisation is limited to the specific service(s) mentioned in the application and approved by the Commission. The licensee may not provide additional or unrelated services outside the approved scope without obtaining prior approval from the Commission.

4. Liability:

The Commission's total liability, cumulative or otherwise, under this Authorisation and regarding any matter related to the Authorisation shall at all times be limited to the actual cumulative amount paid at any given time to the Commission by the Licensee pursuant to this Authorisation.

5. Technical & Network Conditions:

The Holder shall comply with the technical standards specified by the Commission. It shall introduce measures and always use its resources to ensure that equipment and apparatus operated by the Holder complies with network interoperability and interface.

6. Geographical Coverage

The General Authorisation is restricted to the geographical locations designated by the Commission. The Holder is permitted to deploy and test services only within these defined boundaries in Nigeria.

7. Consumer Protection Conditions

The Holder shall prepare and submit to the Commission its Consumer Protection Policy which includes:

- a. Guidance to their customers and employees in respect of disputes or complaints relating to the provision of service by them and the time frame for handling complaints through this procedure.
- b. Further recourse available to a customer who is dissatisfied with the Authorisation Holder's complaints handling procedure.
- c. Advice to customers on charging, billing and enquiries in relation thereof.
- d. Advice and procedures on the proper use of the service by such customers.

8. Consumer Disclosure

The Holder shall ensure that consumers are informed ahead that services are experimental and time limited. Disclosures should be clear, detailing the service's nature, risks, and test duration. Consumers must acknowledge understanding before participating. Non-compliance may lead to exclusion or regulatory action.

9. Data Protection and Cyber-Security Conditions

a. The Holder must abide with all Data Protection and Retention policies and laws in place and ensure full compliance.

b. The Holder shall apply industry-standard Cyber-Security measures to safeguard systems.

c. Other regulatory bodies will be identified as relevant in the cause of evaluation of the application, for compliance.

10. Competition Conditions

The Holder shall comply with all competition requirements in the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA), 2003 and the Competition Practices Regulations issued by the Commission.

11. Interoperability

The Holder is required to ensure that all network infrastructure and equipment deployed during the testing phase are Type-Approved to ensure interoperability with existing networks and services. This is to maintain seamless integration and service quality across the communications ecosystem in line with type approval regulations by the Commission.

12. Accounts, Documentation and Reporting Obligations

The Commission may request the Holder to submit periodic reports, financial statements, corporate information, statistics and other data regarding the operations and activities of the company. The Commission may publish such information with the exception

of confidential information, privileged information and trade secrets.

The Commission shall have the right to inspect or to instruct an auditor or other personnel to (at the expense of the Company) review the files, records and other data of the Company with a view to monitoring anti-competitive practices and ensuring compliance to the terms of this Authorisation and extant laws effectively. In giving such instructions, the Commission shall be mindful, fair and reasonable and must not present an undue burden on the Holder of the General Authorisation.

13. Regulatory Supervision

The Commission will closely supervise the Holder during the validity of the Authorisation. The Commission reserves the right to amend or revoke the General Authorisation if the Holder fails to comply with the stipulated terms or if the service poses risks to the public, consumers, or other operators.

14. Suspension and Termination

This Authorisation may be suspended where the Commission determines that the Holder is engaging in anti-competitive practices or breach of corporate governance codes, and other regulations, until such issue is rectified. The Authorisation can be terminated for repeated breaches, offering of services outside the approved scope or where the commission determines that continued provision of the services is against public interest.

15. Agreements & Arrangements

The Holder shall submit particulars of any of the agreements or arrangements with other Companies or Licensees of the Commission, which is executed for the purpose of providing communications services.

16. Commencement of Service

The Commission will determine the commencement of each Authorization on evaluation.

17. Compliance with Regulations:

Throughout the period of operation under the General Authorisation, the holder will be subject to the provisions of the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA), 2003 and its subsidiary legislation and all terms and conditions as may be specified by the Commission.

18. Indemnification:

The Holder must provide indemnification against harm caused by authorized testing. This applies to consumers, third parties, and stakeholders within the approved testing framework. Compensation terms, limits, and claims process must be clearly outlined in the agreement. Negligence, misconduct, or unauthorized deviations are not covered.

19. Amendment of Authorisation:

The Commission may amend this Authorisation from time to time where objectively justifiable, if the Commission determines that such modification or amendment is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Act or relevant regulations, or is in the public interest, taking into consideration the reasonable interest and contractual rights of the Holder.

20. Payment of Fees:

The Applicant for a General Authorisation shall pay the sum of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira (N250, 000.00) only as administrative fees. The Applicant will be requested to pay the applicable fees for Spectrum and Numbering.