

Ascension Island Government



Invitation to tender

Telecommunications Advisor to the Ascension Island
Government

May 2022

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Executive summary

The Ascension Island Government seeks a suitably qualified firm to provide expert advice with regard to developing a new telecommunications policy for the effective governance of telecommunications in Ascension.

This will encompass general advice on the effective regulation of telecommunication systems in Ascension in line with the Telecommunication Ordinance 1997, the consideration of licence applications under that Ordinance, the review of that Ordinance and the development of a new policy concerning the regulation of telecommunications in Ascension.

This role can be done remotely.

Background

Ascension is an isolated island 800 miles from the nearest landfall, St Helena, with a population of roughly 800 people. It forms part of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

Significant changes are expected to take place imminently in the telecommunications market for small remote territories. Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) telecommunications options are expected to become available in Ascension as early as the end of 2022. In the longer term, there may be possibilities for Ascension to access subsea fibre-optic cables.

This has the potential to have a significant disruptive effect on the telecommunications market within the territory. As such, the Government needs to develop a new policy regarding the regulation of telecommunications to ensure that the delicate market in Ascension can accommodate these developments in a way which does not critically undermine the resilience and functionality of key communication services.

Ascension currently has one telecommunications service provider, Sure South Atlantic Ltd. They deliver mobile, fixed line and internet services (via satellite) to the island community and business organisations.

Sure is the successor company to Cable and Wireless, who themselves were the successor company to the Eastern Telegraph Company. As such, much of the infrastructure has passed from one brand to the next. Since 2013, Sure has been a wholly owned subsidiary group of Batelco Group.

Sure holds a 10 year licence to operate in Ascension, issued in 2014 and due for expiry in 2024. They do not have any exclusive rights to operate in Ascension, but due to the nature of the territory have formed a natural monopoly over services. With little regulation and no natural competition in the market, there is limited economic incentive for Sure to invest in services, new technologies or efficiencies.

With alternative options likely to become available in the near future, the Ascension Island Government needs to develop a clear understanding of the opportunities and risks that competition might provide. Reducing the cost of services to users (including the

Government) is not the only consideration. As a remote island territory, resilience of connectivity options is critical, and therefore careful consideration of future market models is needed.

Following completion of work to develop a new policy concerning the regulation of telecommunications and consequent legislative changes where necessary, it is likely that Ascension Island Government will seek to establish a regulatory body to oversee the market in Ascension.

Role of the advisor

Whilst the Government will provide detailed information on matters to be considered, it will be for the advisor to provide expert guidance on potential options in line with these. In addition to the main issue of providing input into the development of a new telecommunications policy, the Ascension Island Government is keen to source expert advice on a number of other issues currently being discussed, as well as for general assistance and advice on the management of telecommunication services in Ascension.

The Ascension Island Government therefore seeks an advisor with responsibility for the following:

1. To provide general expert advice to the Ascension Island Government on matters concerning telecommunications services.
2. To advise on matters and questions which arise with regard to the interpretation of the Telecommunications Ordinance 1997.
3. To provide expert advice on the review of the Telecommunications Ordinance 1997, with a view to assessing its fitness for application, both in the current market and likely future challenges posed by disruption to this market from new technologies.
4. To provide expert advice and input on the development of a new policy concerning the regulation of telecommunications in Ascension.
5. To assist the Ascension Island Government with making legislative changes, as may be appropriate, in line with the new telecommunications policy.
6. If appropriate, assist the Ascension Island Government in negotiations with current or new telecommunications services operators that apply for a licence to operate in Ascension.
7. To assist the Ascension Island Government in developing options for a regulatory regime to oversee the effective operation of the telecommunications market in Ascension, in line with local and international legislative requirements.

Timescales for work

Noting the scope of the role of the advisor, it is not expected that appointment will be made with a view to delivering a standalone piece of work within a set period of time. Given the breadth of the actions to be undertaken, it is anticipated that an advisor will be appointed to assist the Government in an ongoing capacity.

However, there will nonetheless be certain milestones that will need to be achieved within set timeframes.

These are broadly anticipated to be as follows:

| Task | Deadline |
|--|--|
| 1 Provide general expert advice | Ongoing |
| 2 Advise on matters relating to the Telecommunication Ordinance 1997 | Ongoing |
| 3 Review and advise on fitness for purpose of Telecommunications Ordinance 1997 | Four weeks after contract award |
| 4 Assist with development of new telecommunications policy | Six weeks after completion of Task 3 |
| 5 Assist with legislative changes, if appropriate, made in line with new telecommunications policy | Eight weeks after completion of Task 4 |
| 6 Assist and advise on application for licences to operate telecommunication services | Ongoing |
| 7 Assist in developing options for a regulatory regime | Ahead of completion of legislative changes |

Information to be submitted by tenderers

If you believe that your firm or consultants are able to sufficiently deliver against the responsibilities previously outlined kindly respond stating:

- Experience
- Availability
- Pricing
- Proposed support model

The Ascension Island Government requests interested parties to respond with proposals by email no later than **31 May 2022**, the format of which may be determined by the tenderer.

If potential tenderers decide against submitting an offer it would be very much appreciated if the reasons for this could be transmitted to the Ascension Island Government for consideration.

Instructions and information for tenderers

Tenders must be submitted by email to [Alasdair Bain](#) no later than Tuesday 31 May 2022.

Tenders received after the date for receipt of tenders set out above may, at the sole discretion of the Ascension Island Government, be disregarded and returned.

If tenderers have any queries or requests for further information they should be submitted directly to [Alasdair Bain](#).

The Ascension Island Government does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

Tenderers shall treat the invitation to tender documents as confidential and restrict their circulation and distribution to a 'need to know' basis within the tenderer's organisation. Tenderers shall not disclose their tender in whole or in part to any third party prior to either the award of a contract by the Ascension Island Government or receipt of notification that the tender has not been accepted as the case may be.

Tenders shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than sixty calendar days from the final date for submission of tenders.

Proof of qualification for all professional staff they propose to use for the execution of the contract will be required of any successful tender.

Contact details

The point of contact within the Ascension Island Government for this tender is Alasdair Bain, Policy Officer.

Email Alasdair.bain@ascension.gov.ac
Telephone (00 247) 67000 ext. 122