



U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Donna Thiessen
(703) 875-4357

USTDA AWARDS GRANT TO DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE BACKBONE NETWORK IN RWANDA

KIGALI, RWANDA – Upgrading Rwanda’s information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure to further the nation’s economic development is the goal of a USTDA grant awarded yesterday to the Government of Rwanda, acting through the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA). The USTDA grant will fund a study on the financial viability, method of ownership, and business and operational model of a communication infrastructure backbone project, which has been identified by The World Bank for partial funding under its Regional Communication Infrastructure Program. The USTDA-funded study will assist MININFRA in developing and securing a public-private partnership arrangement for full implementation of the project.

The \$390,000 grant was conferred in a signing ceremony held at the Ministry of Infrastructure in Kigali. The Honorable Michael R. Arietti, U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda, and His Excellency Eng. Albert Butare, Rwandan Minister of State for Energy and Communications, signed the grant agreement on behalf of the U.S. and Rwandan governments, respectively.

Rwanda is committed to improving the national and regional ICT infrastructure in order to achieve its goal of transforming the country’s predominantly agricultural economy into a knowledge-based economy per the country’s *Vision 2020* plan. This entails increasing universal access, promoting economic growth, and increasing cross-border trade and economic activity with Rwanda's neighboring countries. The President of Rwanda, His Excellency Paul Kagame, is personally committed to this vision and has taken great strides to promote the emergence of the country’s ICT infrastructure as a catalyst for growth in other sectors. The priority that Rwanda has placed on this sector has made the country a key partner in the development of the ICT sector throughout Africa.

The USTDA grant stems from contacts made during the USTDA-sponsored *Sub-Saharan Africa Information and Communications Technology Conference: Solutions for a Vibrant ICT Market*, which was held in San Francisco, California in March 2007. The conference promoted dialogue on the development of the ICT infrastructure necessary to support Africa’s economic development and connected African delegates to U.S. experts in the ICT industry. President Kagame and Minister Butare were speakers at the event.

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The opportunity to conduct the USTDA-funded study for the Government of Rwanda will be competed on the Federal Business Opportunities website at www.fbo.gov. Interested U.S. firms should submit proposals according to the instructions contained in the Federal Business Opportunities announcement. MININFRA will select the U.S. firm that will provide the USTDA-funded assistance.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.

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