

Licence overview and Award Process Internet Service Provider Licence (ISP)

Introduction and status of this document

Bahrain has opened its telecommunications market to competition. Matters relating to the liberalisation process are referenced in this website and in particular within the Publications page, will be found 'A Guide for potential entrants to the Bahrain market (CCA DC 003).

Internet Service Provider (ISP) licence is available to qualified and competent applicants. This licence will provide wide scope for new entrants as they permit the provision of a wide range of services.

ISP licence is a class licence, issued by the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority. The remainder of this document gives details of the licensing process, the associated licence fees and provides an application form.

Legislative Decree no. 48 promulgating the Telecommunications Law governs applications for, and, the content and grant of licences. This document is issued in accordance with Section 32 (c) of the Telecommunications Law. Nothing in the document shall be construed to conflict with, or amend, the Telecommunications Law and applicants should familiarise themselves with the Law and the draft licences that are available on TRA website www.tra.org.bh.

Process

ISP licence applicants are invited to register with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

The licensing process must, amongst other matters, ensure that licensees are qualified, as defined by the Law, financially sound, technically competent, and capable/willing to comply with security and anti-obscenity requirements, so that TRA is able to fulfil its obligations and exercise its rights under the Telecommunications Law. Notable among the obligations imposed upon TRA by the Law are the following:

1. protect the interests of subscribers and users in respect of:
 - the tariffs charged for services;
 - availability and provision of service;
 - quality of services; and
 - protection of personal particulars and privacy of services;
2. promote effective and fair competition among new and existing licensed operators; and
3. ensure, when assessing applications involving provision of public telecommunications services, that any applicant or any person to whom any such service falls to be provided, shall be able to provide those services.

Once an ISP licence is awarded, the licensee is added to a list held by TRA, which is open to public inspection.

Licence term, eligibility and Fee Structures

Licences are granted by TRA, under the terms of the Law, for a period of fifteen years. It is the present intention of TRA to issue licence in the form illustrated in Sample ISP Licence, LSU LC 015 which can be found on the Licensing page.

No limit is set upon the number of ISP licences that may be granted by TRA.

In order for a licence to be granted, the following is required:

1. that the licence applicant be a juristic entity incorporated in the Kingdom, or a branch of a foreign company licensed to operate in the Kingdom in accordance with the Commercial Companies Law.
2. that substantially all the infrastructure and personnel associated with the provisions of telecommunications service be located in the Kingdom.

For the Internet Service Provider licence, an initial fee of BHD5,000 will be charged by TRA, upon grant of ISP licence. This will cover the period from the date at which the licence becomes effective to 31st December in the year of grant of the licence. Subsequently, there will be an annual licence fee, payable to TRA, which is 2% of gross annual turnover arising from licensed activities.

Applicants ISP licence should note that they, will upon becoming licensees, in addition, be required to pay an annual fee that is set by the Ministry of Commerce which relates to Commercial Registration. Applicants must direct any questions relating to Commercial Registration to the Ministry of Commerce.

Applicants for ISP licences should, in addition, familiarise themselves with present the current obligations to connect to, and exchange certain traffic at, the Bahrain Internet Exchange.

Technical, Quality of service and other requirements

1. DELIVERY OF THE SERVICE:

The Licensee shall be responsible for installation, testing and commissioning of all its equipment to provide the service.

2. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

ISPs shall use recognised Internet Protocols. The equipment used by a licensed ISP shall conform to any Interface and Protocol requirements laid down by TRA, from time to time.

Current Interface Requirements

(i) Subscriber Access

- 2 wire access over PSTN for modem interface
- 2 wires dial up access on ISDN Basic and Primary rate
- interfaces DSL access

(ii) Leased Line Interface

- 64K, N x 64K or 2.048 Mb/s, N x 2.048 Mb/s Leased lines.
- Frame Relay.
- X.25
- ATM

3. QUALITY OF SERVICE:

The quality of service over Internet should conform to the guidelines published by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

4. IP ADDRESS, DOMAIN NAME:

It will be the responsibility of the licensee to obtain IP addresses, domain names etc. from the established authorities (e.g. ICANN).