



DRAFT

URCA ANNUAL PLAN

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1. Introduction

The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) presents its Annual Plan 2026, which outlines the organization’s strategic objectives for the year in order to fulfil our statutory and policy obligations to foster a sound regulatory environment that promotes fairness in competition, allows for innovation in the sector under our remit, the protection of consumer rights, and optimizes the national development of The Bahamas. The Plan is guided by the legislative framework of the URCA Act, 2009, the Communications Act, 2009 (Comms Act), the Electricity Act, 2024 (EA), and the Natural Gas Act, 2024 (NGA), as well as the Electronic Communications Sector Policy and the National Energy Policy 2025-2030, (NEP).

URCA will continue to operate under the guiding principle that while we regulate sectors that are different, they are intrinsically linked to national development and therefore a synergistic approach must be taken. Our 2026 approach will focus on the broader strokes of operational efficiency and value for money for all stakeholder, while drilling down in sector specific needs to not only meet statutory mandates and policy objectives, but continue to build a regulator that operates at a world-class standard for the rapid advancement of the communications and energy sectors, with the many actors and aspects of modern life they touch in mind.

Our plans for Electronic Communications, Electricity and Natural Gas are meant to maintain a competitive, fair environment that drives innovation and protects the interests of all stakeholders.

URCA remains committed to the bedrock mores of ethics, transparency, accountability and sound corporate governance, maintaining our regulatory independence, engaging more deeply with all stakeholders and demonstrating the role that URCA plays not only in The Bahamas, but in the world on The Bahamas’ behalf.

1.1 Structure of the Annual Plan

URCA’s role in the development of The Bahamas has been critical over the past 15-plus years. We have overseen dramatic change by being unafraid to be bold. Together, URCA’s strategic goals, forward-leaning initiatives, and focused operational priorities continue to embrace that boldness by charting a path toward strengthening the economic and social fabric of The Bahamas. Our plan is designed to deliver utility services that are not only resilient and efficient, but genuinely inclusive, ensuring that every community benefits from a modern, reliable, and future-ready national infrastructure. The following sections outline how these efforts will come to life:

Section 2: URCA’s regulatory strategies for fulfilling the objectives of the Comms Act, EA, and NGA, with a focus on critical initiatives for 2026, that will continue to inform the broader priorities for the two following years.

Section 3: Broad priorities for 2026 and 2027, outlining the medium-term direction for URCA’s activities and contributions to sector development, as well as the planned projects for 2026, including updates on ongoing initiatives from 2025.

Section 4: Key performance indicators (KPIs) for measuring progress in 2026, ensuring accountability.

Section 5: Our proposed 2026 budget to support the fruition of URCA’s objectives.

1.2 Responding to this Draft Plan

URCA invites comments and submissions from members of the public, licensees, and other interested parties on the contents of this Draft Annual Plan for 2026. The consultation process will include one round of responses, with the timeline and steps outlined below:

- **Deadline for Submission:** The deadline is 5:00 PM on 6 February 2026.
- **Publication of Results:** URCA will publish the Statement of Results and Final Annual Plan by 30 April 2026.

As part of this process, URCA will host at least one stakeholder forum during the consultation period to present the Draft Annual Plan and gather input from key stakeholders, including licensees, government agencies, and civil society. This forum is tentatively scheduled for **March 2026**.

1.3 How to Submit Comments

Written submissions or comments on the Draft Annual Plan should be addressed to URCA's Chief Executive Officer with the subject line: "**URCA Draft Annual Plan 2026**." Submissions can be made via:

- **Email:** info@urcabahamas.bs

Copies in addition to those emailed can be submitted via:

- **Hand Delivery:** URCA’s office at Frederick House, Frederick Street, Nassau
- **Mail:** PO Box N-4860, Nassau, Bahamas

URCA urges stakeholders across every sector to contribute their insights and carefully consider the proposals put forward, recognizing that collective input is critical to shaping a regulatory agenda that advances The Bahamas.

2. Strategic Outlook for 2026

Since its establishment in 2009, URCA’s mandate has grown significantly – from regulating the Electronic Communications Sector, then the Electricity Sector, and most recently the Natural Gas Sector. With each expansion, URCA has not only kept pace but has helped redefine what effective, future-focused utility regulation can look like.

Having introduced sweeping reforms to the electricity framework, overseen unprecedented advancements in the natural gas sector, and helped steer the development of a modern National Energy Policy in 2025, URCA embarks on 2026 with a renewed sense of purpose. We intend to be a driving force in the transformation of every sector we regulate. Our work to build a technologically advanced national communications coverage plan has already begun, and in the coming year we will accelerate this critical effort.

At the same time, URCA will deepen its role on the international stage, strengthening engagement with global partners to ensure The Bahamas remains aligned with emerging best practices and positioned to benefit from the next generation of utility technologies.

Throughout this period of rapid evolution, URCA remains anchored by its vision of becoming “a globally respected regulator, championing the interests of people in The Bahamas and of the sectors we regulate,” and by its mission of “Improving Lives Through Effective Utility Regulation.” These guiding principles shape our commitment to leveraging the synergies across energy, communications, and natural gas to deliver smarter interventions, better regulatory outcomes, and a higher quality of life for all Bahamians.

2.1 Building Resource Capacity and Transitioning Leadership

With sector director posts filled, URCA entered 2025 with a deliberate focus on strengthening its internal capacity by onboarding both seasoned experts and highly qualified emerging professionals across all regulated sectors. This investment in talent is central to building the modern, future-ready regulator envisioned in our strategic direction. We intend to be a regulator equipped to anticipate technological shifts, respond to national priorities, and lead transformative change.

A critical part of this renewal is restoring stakeholder confidence in URCA’s ability to drive national development. Achieving this requires not only sound strategies, but also the people capable of executing them. After a period of leadership instability that challenged this

confidence, URCA has prioritised stability, capability, and continuity in its organisational structure.

In the final quarter of 2025, URCA advanced this effort by launching the search for a new Chief Executive Officer, as our current CEO prepares to conclude his tenure. We expect to welcome the successful candidate within the first six months of the new year, following the approval process. This leadership transition marks an important milestone in URCA's ongoing evolution and reinforces our commitment to strong, credible, and accountable governance.

Having rebuilt the foundation of its leadership team in 2023 and 2024, URCA will continue strengthening its human resources throughout 2025 and into 2026. The organisation remains committed to cultivating an agile, technically strong, and forward-thinking team capable of navigating the complex intersections of energy, natural gas, electronic communications, and evolving national policy objectives. This team will help steer URCA toward its vision and ensure that the regulator remains aligned with the needs of a rapidly advancing and digitally inclusive Bahamian society.

2.2 Crafting a New Strategic Vision

As we look toward 2026, our strategic focus will include developing a transformative multi-year strategic plan. This plan will be one that strengthens URCA as an institution while modernizing the sectors we oversee. This includes continued leadership development, deeper employee capability-building, closing persistent connectivity and service gaps, expanding our regional profile, and advancing meaningful international collaboration.

2.3 Strengthening Capability for a Modern, Island-Focused Regulator

URCA remains committed to cultivating a high-performance culture built on technical excellence and continuous improvement. In 2026, the organisation will deepen its investment in staff training, professional certification, and targeted upskilling to meet the rapid advancements across the electronic communications, broadcasting, electricity and natural gas sectors. Through expanded internal and external training, mentoring, and coaching initiatives, URCA will reinforce its recruitment, retention, and succession planning strategies. Emphasis will be placed on developing specialised expertise tailored to the unique regulatory needs of The Bahamas' archipelagic geography, including service delivery in the Family Islands, infrastructure resilience, and cross-sectoral regulatory proficiency.

2.5 Supporting Major International Initiatives

URCA continues to serve as the national focal point for The Bahamas at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), representing the country's interests in global telecommunications and ICT development. In 2025, the Government of The Bahamas committed to hosting the ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum 2026, a major international gathering that will bring global policymakers, regulators, and industry stakeholders to our shores to help shape the future of ICT policy. The Bahamas also announced its intention to nominate a candidate for Deputy Secretary-General of the ITU at next year's plenipotentiary conference in Doha, Qatar. This is a historic first for a small island developing state and for the Caribbean. In keeping with its mandate, URCA will support the government in these and other initiatives of international significance.

2.6 Final Thoughts

URCA's priorities for 2026 reflect its determination to regulate and revolutionize the nation's utility sectors, ensuring they become engines of national progress, economic resilience, and social advancement for every community in The Bahamas.

3. Priorities for 2026

As the sectors we regulate expand and shift to accommodate a more interconnected world focused on the sustainable development of industries built around technology and the common good, URCA too must remain adroit. Our 2026 Annual Plan is our commitment to utilising our resources for the most impact while providing service and value for money for all stakeholders.

3.1 Operations Priorities for 2026

In 2026, Operations will drive URCA's shift toward a more efficient, digitally integrated, secure, and sustainability-minded organisation. The Facilities, Information Technology, and Administration functions will work together to streamline internal processes, strengthen governance, and support cost-effective operations that reinforce URCA's regulatory mandate.

Facilities will move from refurbishment to optimisation of the upper floors at Frederick House, completing outstanding works such as HVAC balancing, fire suppression certification, and elevator upgrades to achieve full operational readiness in 2026. The team will evaluate a digital Building Management and Maintenance System to improve preventive maintenance, asset tracking, and energy use while introducing solar-assisted and other energy-efficient solutions. Compliance, contractor oversight, and safety performance will be strengthened through structured reviews and alignment with environmental and health standards.

Information Technology will advance the digital foundations needed for an integrated operating environment. The deployment of the Sage ERP solution, DocuWare for records and data governance, and a new HR information system will modernise workflows, improve compliance, and provide more reliable organisational data. Cybersecurity will remain a priority through stronger access controls, system hardening, and continuous staff awareness. IT will also support the launch of e-licensing and regulatory submission portals, upgrade telephony services, and begin shaping a data architecture that will allow these systems to evolve into a cohesive digital ecosystem.

Administration will continue modernising support services with a clear focus on value for money and transparency. The revised Procurement Policy will be embedded through digital tools that automate requisitions, evaluations, and contract management. Vendor oversight will be strengthened through a standardised scorecard, while the expanded use of the cloud-based inventory platform will improve real-time asset tracking, reduce waste, and support more accurate budgeting. Cost-management measures across utilities, fleet, and insurance will

reinforce financial discipline across Operations. These efforts will deliver greater efficiency, reduced operating costs, improved digital capability, stronger governance, and a more resilient internal environment.

3.2 Human Resource and Learning Priorities for 2026

URCA's goal for 2026 is to build a workforce that is sharp, confident, globally competitive, and ready to adapt to the fast-changing world of regulation and workplace standards. To get there, the Human Resource and Learning Department will continue improving how we train, develop, and support our people so that URCA can operate as a more seamless, efficient organisation where objectives and expectations are easier to follow and track.

We want stronger leaders, a healthier workplace culture, and staff who are fully equipped with the technical skills needed for a growing and evolving regulator. This means continuing leadership training, expanding opportunities for professional development, and creating clearer pathways for advancement so employees can grow with the organisation. It also means strengthening communication, recognising good performance, and making sure people feel supported and engaged in their work.

As URCA continues its digital transformation, staff will be trained to use new systems and tools that help improve efficiency and service delivery. The rollout of an updated Human Resource Information System and other modern HR tools will make processes smoother and allow employees to focus more on meaningful work instead of administrative barriers.

As URCA matures as an institution, we know that some of our long-serving team members will eventually transition out, taking with them valuable experience. To safeguard that legacy, we will place strong emphasis on knowledge transfer, structured handover processes, and learning opportunities that keep our people well-trained, forward-looking, and positioned to support the continued evolution of regulation in The Bahamas.

3.3 Corporate and Consumer Relations Priorities for 2026

The Corporate and Consumer Relations Department remains focused on strengthening URCA's national and international presence throughout 2026. CCR will play a central role in supporting The Bahamas' campaign for the ITU Deputy Secretary-General position and will coordinate national communication and stakeholder engagement for the World Telecommunication and ICT Policy Forum taking place in The Bahamas. Building on the momentum of 2025, CCR will continue expanding the Youth in ICT programme following the successful selection of Bahamian

participants as ITU Global Connect Youth Ambassadors. This expansion will ensure more young Bahamians are exposed to local and global ICT opportunities.

A general election will be held in The Bahamas in 2026. URCA has a mandate, and the regulatory guardrails in place, to make sure that the democratic processes of elections are enriched and not compromised by licenced broadcast content. URCA will focus on increased public education in the lead up to the election, and monitoring and compliance throughout the election, to live up to its remit under the Comms Act and the Code of Practice for Broadcast Content.

A major focus for 2026 is the continued redevelopment of URCA's website. This has been an ongoing project aimed at creating a more modern, service-oriented platform that supports the needs of consumers and licensees across every sector. The upgraded site will include integrated licensing and payment functions, improved consumer care features and, for the first time, dedicated outage reporting portals for all licensees. These portals will allow for more efficient submission, tracking and management of service interruptions and other sector reports. To ensure the platform is fully fit for purpose, several components will require thoughtful digital re-architecture and refinement as we move toward completion. URCA is committed to delivering the fully realised system in 2026.

CCR will also continue leading core organisational initiatives such as the annual Stakeholder Forum, the publication of the Annual Report, and broader nationwide engagement in the Family Islands. Consumer education, empowerment and protection will remain a key focus through sustained digital efforts, a National Cybersecurity Forum and expanded outreach in schools and communities.

3.4 Data Governance and Information Management Priorities for 2026

In 2026, the Data Governance and Information Management Unit will continue its emphasis on building a strong data management foundation that supports sound decision making and protects the information that underpins essential national services. The Unit will continue implementing URCA's Enterprise Records Management System. Strengthened metadata controls, updated retention schedules, and improved data quality practices will help ensure that information is reliable, traceable, and available when needed.

A key priority is reducing organisational risk by improving how data is collected, shared, secured, and preserved across the entire lifecycle. This work is increasingly important as cybersecurity threats grow more sophisticated and as regulators worldwide are expected to demonstrate they

are able to properly handle the information entrusted to them. The Unit will support this by enhancing privacy and security compliance and expanding workflow automation.

The Unit will also continue building internal capability through targeted training and through the activation of the Data Steward Network so that staff across departments understand their role in safeguarding URCA's information assets. As artificial intelligence expands into more regulatory and administrative functions, the Unit will help ensure that URCA maintains proper oversight and control of the data feeding these tools, preventing unintended bias and protecting the integrity of regulatory processes.

These efforts will support URCA's digital transformation, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen public trust.

3.5 Legal, Risk and Compliance Priorities for 2026

In 2026, URCA's legal risk and compliance priorities will centre on strengthening institutional resilience, advancing a strong regulatory compliance posture, and embedding a culture of proactive compliance across the organization. Building on URCA's evolving governance and risk maturity, URCA will further advance its pursuits to safeguard URCA's statutory mandate, decision-making integrity, and credibility.

A key priority for 2026 is the formal implementation of enterprise-wide risk and compliance framework. Legal and compliance accountability will be embedded across all sectors to ensure that statutory obligations, regulatory duties, and governance requirements are clearly owned, monitored, and reported.

URCA will conduct regular legal compliance audits and release resource tools to support reader assimilation. Collectively, these measures are intended to reduce the likelihood of legal and regulatory challenges and reinforce confidence in URCA's regulatory processes.

Enhancing enforcement and litigation readiness and managing litigation risk and associated costs is also a key priority. URCA will advance strategies to standardize case management while adopting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to support timely, cost-effective resolution of disputes.

URCA will also adopt a forward-looking approach to emerging legal and regulatory matters. URCA will proactively monitor legislative developments, policy reforms, and sectoral trends and expand industry engagements on legal and policy development issues.

3.6 International Relations Priorities for 2026

Aligned with its mandate to strengthen regulatory frameworks and position The Bahamas as an active contributor to global development across all regulated sectors, URCA will continue expanding its international engagement in 2026. As a small island developing state, The Bahamas must operate within global digital, energy, and natural gas policy environments that often do not fully reflect the realities of archipelagic nations with dispersed populations, climate exposure, limited economies of scale, and high infrastructure costs. For this reason, URCA will advocate for positions that respond to the needs of The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean while supporting national development priorities.

In the digital sector, URCA will continue preparations for the World Telecommunication and ICT Policy Forum 2026 by working closely with the International Telecommunication Union to support the national coordination process, technical engagement, and diplomatic activity associated with this major global gathering. Hosting the forum offers a significant opportunity for The Bahamas to contribute to international dialogue while benefiting from the expertise, exposure, and partnerships that accompany events of this scale. As part of this effort, URCA will continue its engagement with allies and partners through CITELE, the CTU, CARICOM bodies, and other regional forums to ensure that Caribbean perspectives remain unified and influential. These relationships will be particularly important as The Bahamas prepares for the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2026 and positions itself to make contributions that reflect national priorities and lessons learned from recent years of domestic and international work.

URCA will also broaden its representation in energy and natural gas regulatory spaces. With the passage of the Electricity Act 2024 and the Natural Gas Act 2024, The Bahamas has entered a new era that demands stronger linkages with international best practices, regional partners, and global institutions. URCA intends to deepen its engagement with the International Renewable Energy Agency and strengthen its participation in the Energy Regulators Regional Association, which The Bahamas joined in 2025. These partnerships will allow URCA to remain informed on developments in renewable energy integration, regulatory oversight for natural gas markets, resilience planning, network reliability, grid modernization, safety regimes, and the evolving global shift toward cleaner energy systems. Through sustained involvement, URCA will help ensure that The Bahamas stays aligned with forward-leaning regulatory standards while bringing home insights that directly support local sector planning and implementation.

Active participation in global and regional forums provides a two-way benefit. URCA contributes the national perspective of a small island developing state, and in return gains access to training, knowledge exchanges, and technical experience that can be applied to domestic regulation across the digital, electricity, and natural gas sectors. This engagement supports the development of a more sophisticated regulatory environment, encourages innovation, and helps ensure that The Bahamas remains equipped to address emerging technologies, consumer protection expectations, sector disruptions, and new regulatory models across all industries under URCA's remit.

To strengthen long-term national capacity, URCA will continue promoting pathways for Bahamian delegates to participate in international working groups and study groups, expand training opportunities for staff, and encourage exposure to global best practices. These initiatives will support the development of a skilled cohort of Bahamian professionals who can contribute meaningfully to regional and international governance in telecommunications, energy, and natural gas. Through these efforts, URCA seeks to advance national interests, build expertise within the local sectors, and ensure that The Bahamas remains well positioned to benefit from global developments while guiding its own course with confidence.

3.7 URCA General Priorities for 2026

General priorities focus on projects that improve operational efficiency, streamline internal processes, and encourage greater collaboration within the organisation. In 2026, they will include initiatives launched in 2025 as part of URCA's broader digital transformation strategy aimed at modernising workflows, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and responding to the evolving needs of the regulatory landscape.

3.7.1 Project Descriptions and Progress Updates

The general priorities for 2026 will centre on advancing URCA's ongoing digital transformation, with a particular focus on expanding the Integrated Electronic Document Management initiative and deepening the digitalisation of core operational processes. As this work now spans multiple departments and forms part of a wider organisational shift, the document management project will be incorporated into the broader operational digitisation programme rather than treated as a separate workstream. This integrated approach reflects the scale and maturity of the transformation underway, ensuring that systems, workflows, and information management practices evolve cohesively across URCA. In addition, preparation of the 2026 Annual Plan will

continue to guide strategic alignment across all units. Collectively, these initiatives support URCA’s wider commitment to building a regulator that is more efficient, transparent, and innovative in its internal operations and external oversight. Further details on these initiatives are outlined below:

- ***Continued Digitalisation of URCA’s Operational Processes.***

URCA’s digital transformation is an ongoing, multi-phase initiative that continues to evolve alongside technological advances and the organisation’s growing operational needs. Following the successful rollout of Phase 2 in 2025, which focused on digitalising key operational processes and streamlining internal workflows, URCA is now entering its third phase. This next stage will look beyond individual systems and begin shaping how digital transformation can be fully embedded across the entire organisation. As Phase 3 progresses, URCA will work closely with each department to identify best practices, align processes with modern standards, and determine where further digital integration will deliver the greatest value. Through this sustained, organisation-wide approach, URCA will continue to enhance efficiency, strengthen service delivery, and ensure it remains an agile and modern regulator.

- ***URCA 2026 Annual Plan.***

Section 41 of the URCA Act instructs URCA to publish an Annual Plan. The publication of the Draft Annual Plan marks the fulfilment of that requirement. URCA intends to publish the final version of its 2026 Annual Plan and the 2025 Annual Report by the end of April 2026.

Table 3.1 below outlines the key general projects for 2026, their timelines, and publication milestones where applicable.

Table 3.1: General Project Schedule

Project	Start Period	End Period	Consultation Publication Date	Final Decision Publication Date
Digitalisation of Operational Processes	T1-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A
Draft Annual Plan	T3-2025	T1-2026	T3-2025	T1-2026

3.8 Electronic Communications Sector Priorities for 2026

In 2026, the Electronic Communications Sector (ECS) regulatory team will continue advancing the objectives of the ECS Policy by building on the progress made over the past year and delivering on projects carried forward from 2025. URCA’s priorities will focus on strengthening spectrum planning, supporting technological innovation, improving service reliability across the archipelago, addressing evolving cybersecurity risks, and progressing key universal access initiatives. The regulatory agenda will also reflect the rapid global evolution of electronic communications technologies, including satellite connectivity, 5G, licence-exempt services, and emerging resilience standards.

To promote investment and innovation, URCA will continue its work on modernising the country’s regulatory framework, expanding oversight of mission-critical infrastructure and ensuring that regulatory obligations keep pace with technological change. This includes advancing frameworks that encourage efficient spectrum use, foster competition, support inclusive connectivity, and ensure the continuity and resilience of networks essential to The Bahamas.

3.8.1 Project Descriptions and Progress Updates

The 2026 workplan consists of major new initiatives alongside carryover projects that progressed in 2025 and require completion in the coming year. These projects address market developments, evolving stakeholder needs, and lessons learned from consultations conducted throughout 2024–2025. The descriptions of the projects and progress updates can be found below:

- ***Development of a National Electronic Communications Band Plan.*** URCA will develop a comprehensive National Band Plan that aligns with national spectrum priorities and policy objectives, supports regional harmonisation, and meets international obligations. The Band Plan will reflect developments in 5G, direct-to-device communications, IoT/M2M technologies, and other emerging services, and will serve as a core tool for objective, transparent and fair licensing decisions that balances commercial demand, public safety, innovation, spectrum efficiency, international coordination requirements, and The Bahamas’ positions in regional and global fora.
- ***Establishment of the URCA Regulatory Sandbox – Innovation Reef.*** URCA will establish “Innovation Reef,” a regulatory sandbox designed to allow controlled, time-bound testing of innovative electronic communications technologies and services. In the same manner that a reef supports the safe growth of new life, the objective of Innovation

Reef is to provide an environment where new and emerging electronic communications technologies, services, networks and solutions can be safely tested, refined, and developed before wider deployment. This framework will enable existing and prospective licensees to trial new solutions under a temporary licensing structure while mitigating risks to consumers and other operators. Innovation Reef will enhance regulatory certainty and promote a more vibrant, innovation-driven ECS environment.

- ***Regulatory Framework for Commercial Operations in Licence-Exempt Spectrum.*** URCA will develop a framework to govern commercial deployment in licence-exempt spectrum bands such as Wi-Fi and emerging 5GHz/6GHz technologies. The framework will clarify permissible uses, technical requirements, obligations, interference-mitigation practices and spectrum-pricing considerations so that these bands are utilised efficiently and transparently. The framework will define permissible uses, technical parameters, and licence conditions and obligations. It will also take into consideration national policy objectives, appropriate spectrum-pricing approaches, and the need to promote the efficient use of spectrum and effective interference-mitigation practices.
- ***Regulatory Framework for Submarine Communications Cable Systems.*** Given The Bahamas' heavy reliance on submarine cable infrastructure, URCA will develop a modern framework governing the deployment, operation, maintenance, resilience and protection of these systems. It will also address licensing considerations for submarine cable landing and operations, including requirements related to permitting coordination, environmental considerations, resilience standards, and incident reporting mechanisms. The goal is to strengthen national communication resilience and long-term infrastructure sustainability.
- ***Review of the Disaster Management Regulations for ECS.*** URCA will review and update the Disaster Management Regulations to reflect lessons from recent hurricane seasons, advances in terrestrial and satellite resilience, and emerging early-warning technologies. This update will clarify redundancy requirements, incident reporting, business continuity expectations and inter-agency coordination, particularly regarding the National Alert Warning System (NAWS). The updated framework will explicate existing licence conditions and support a more resilient electronic communications sector, with the aim of ensuring that electronic communications networks and services remain robust and responsive before, during, and after disasters.
- ***Development of an Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Exposure Regulations.*** URCA will introduce a regulatory framework aligned with international EMF exposure standards, addressing obligations, site-assessment criteria, and public information requirements.

This initiative will ensure the safe deployment of networks such as 5G and small-cell systems consistent with global best practice while clarifying licensee responsibilities for monitoring, and reporting, and demonstrating ongoing compliance. The resulting regulations will promote the safe deployment of electronic communications networks and services in The Bahamas, consistent with national policy objectives and international best practice.

Carryover Projects

- ***Guidelines for Cybersecurity of Public Electronic Communications Networks and Service.*** URCA recognises the importance of establishing clear guidelines to safeguard the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of public electronic communications networks and services. This project was temporarily paused in 2025 to ensure that the Guidelines are fully aligned with the emerging National Cybersecurity Framework and related national initiatives, including the National Cybersecurity Strategy. The work will resume in 2026 and will promote licensees' adoption of robust cybersecurity practices consistent with international best practice, strengthening resilience against cyberattacks and incidents, and mitigating risks associated with cyber vulnerabilities. The Guidelines will outline baseline cybersecurity obligations for licensees, including incident-reporting requirements and coordination mechanisms with CIRT-BS and other national entities.
- ***Review of the Network Quality of Service (QoS) Regulations.*** Work will continue on a comprehensive update to the QoS Regulations. The revised framework will incorporate modern performance metrics, measurement methodologies and strengthened compliance mechanisms for mobile, fixed, fibre and satellite services. This review responds directly to persistent concerns about reliability throughout the Family Islands. The updated framework will incorporate modern performance metrics, refined measurement methodologies, and strengthened compliance mechanisms while employing a technology-neutral approach.
- ***Review of Infrastructure Sharing Regulations.*** Deferred to 2026 to align with the outcomes of the 5G regulatory framework, this review will examine shared use of towers, ducts, fibre and other infrastructure. URCA will evaluate neutral-host models, mitigate anti-competitive risks, and ensure equitable access to essential infrastructure to support more efficient nationwide deployment of networks, including 5G. The review will also consider competition-related concerns, including ensuring fair access to essential infrastructure, preventing anti-competitive conduct in the provision of shared facilities, and maintaining a level playing field for all licensees.
- ***ICTs for Persons with Disabilities.*** URCA continued work on this project in 2025, following a comprehensive survey and comparative review of international best

practice. However, progress was delayed due to parallel regulatory workstreams. In 2026, URCA will advance regulatory measures to improve accessibility of ICT services for persons with disabilities, supported by further stakeholder engagement.

- Universal Service Obligation (USO) and Universal Services Fund (USF).** URCA has revised the completion timeline for the USO and USF projects to 2026. Throughout 2025, the scope and technical requirements of these initiatives expanded as related sector developments advanced, making it clear that the original schedule would not allow for the level of quality and long-term sustainability required. Significant progress was made during the year, including infrastructure assessments, site evaluations, stakeholder consultations, and the drafting of regulatory frameworks. These foundational efforts now position URCA to complete the work responsibly and effectively in 2026. When finalised, this workstream is expected to expand broadband access to underserved communities and reinforce URCA’s commitment to ensuring that all Bahamians, regardless of geography or income, have access to safe, reliable, and affordable communications services.

Table 3.2 below provides a clear and structured overview of the key projects planned for the Electronic Communications Sector in 2026 and 2027, along with their associated timelines and publication milestones.

Table 3.2: Electronic Communications Sector Projects and Anticipated Publication Dates

Project	Start Period	End Period	Consultation Publication Date	Final Decision Publication Date
Planned Carryover Projects¹				
Guidelines for Cybersecurity of Public Electronic Communications Networks and Service ²	T1-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A
Review of the Network Quality of Service (QoS) Regulations	T1-2026	T2-2026	T1-2026	T2-2026
Review of Infrastructure Sharing Regulations	T2-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026

¹ Planned Carryover Projects: These projects were identified in the 2025 Annual Plan or were Ad Hoc Projects originally scheduled for completion in 2025 or later.

² A specific timeline for this project is unavailable due to the dependency on a legislative framework being passed by the government. URCA expects this work to commence in 2026 but will shift accordingly.

ICTs for Persons with Disabilities	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Universal Service Obligation (USO) and Universal Services Fund (USF)	T2-2026	T2-2027	T2-2026	T2-2027
New Projects				
Development of a National Electronic Communications Band Plan	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Establishment of the URCA Regulatory Sandbox – Innovation Reef	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Regulatory Framework for Commercial Operations in Licence-Exempt Spectrum	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Regulatory Framework for Submarine Communications Cable Systems	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Review of the Disaster Management Regulations for ECS	T1-2026	T2-2026	T1- 2026	T2-2026
Development of an Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Exposure Regulations	T3-2026	T1-2027	T3-2026	T1-2027

3.9 Utilities and Energy Department Strategic Overview

The Utilities and Energy Department (UED) will enter 2026 amidst a moment of extraordinary change for The Bahamas’ energy landscape. With the passage of the Electricity Act 2024, the Natural Gas Act 2024, and the implementation of the National Energy Policy 2025-2030, URCA has taken on a broader and far more complex mandate for energy regulation than at any point in its history. In less than two years, the department’s work has expanded from regulating six licensees to overseeing 23 by November 2025. URCA has also undertaken to bring private cruise destinations that generate, transmit, and distribute electricity and operate electronic communications systems outside traditional regulatory frameworks into compliance. As far as the overall framework, new licences have mor recently been created for a suite of activities, including generation, system operation, natural gas importation, terminal development, and transportation infrastructure. A licence to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal on New Providence was also issued in 2025. This transformation is reshaping the national energy matrix.

In 2026, new power plants will begin construction and come online in New Providence and across the Family Islands, renewable energy systems will continue their rapid growth, and the construction of natural gas infrastructure will begin in earnest. These developments place significant demands on URCA’s resources. The department must now regulate a growing cohort of licensees, oversee complex cross-agency compliance obligations, and ensure that all operators

– both legacy and newly licensed – transition fully into the new regulatory regime. With licences that will remain in effect for decades, URCA must be prepared to oversee long-term obligations, monitor competition, arbitrate agreements, and protect consumers in a rapidly evolving sector.

To meet this moment, the Utilities and Energy Department must strengthen its internal capacity and strategically deploy external expertise. The technical, legal, environmental, and economic considerations involved in electricity and natural gas regulation require deeper specialization than the current structure can sustain. As such, 2026 will focus heavily on training, recruitment, advisory support, and institution-building to ensure the regulator remains credible, consistent, and capable of supervising an energy system undergoing profound transformation.

Electricity and natural gas are separate regulatory workstreams, each governed by separate legislation and licensing frameworks, but they operate under the shared umbrella of the Utilities and Energy Department. Both sectors involve energy production, distribution, and consumption across The Bahamas, and both require an agile regulatory approach anchored in safety, competition, reliability, and long-term sustainability.

3.10 Electricity Sector Priorities

The Electricity Sector (ES) strategy seeks to create value for consumers, licensees, and the wider economy. This aligns with the national policy objectives reflected in the Electricity Act 2024, which emphasize competition, safe and reliable service, affordability, environmental responsibility, and strong consumer protection. In 2026, the department will continue advancing these objectives while aligning sector oversight with the broader URCA strategic plan being developed for the year ahead.

As the number of licensed operators continues to expand, URCA’s regulatory focus will prioritize enhancing reporting and compliance mechanisms. This will be greatly facilitated by developing a portal on URCA’s website. We will also focus on improving the quality and accessibility of energy data, strengthening tariff oversight, and ensuring that emerging generation and distribution facilities operate safely and efficiently. The rapid growth of renewable energy installations, including large-scale solar facilities on New Providence and the Family Islands and expected increased uptake of off-grid systems will also require clearer guidance, updated rules, and improved coordination with other government entities. In addition to its ongoing regulatory work, URCA still has critical projects planned for 2026. Many of the projects will be carried over from 2025, and some will be discontinued, for the reasons explained.

3.10.1 ES Project Descriptions and Progress Updates

- ***APESL and BPL Consumer Protection Projects.***
URCA will defer the consumer protection work relating to the preparation of Consumer Protection Plans for Authorised Public Electricity Suppliers and the review of BPL's consumer protection plan and customer contract documentation. Initial scoping carried out in 2024 and continuing through 2025 indicated that several licensees require substantial guidance to meet their statutory obligations, and that consumer-facing policies across the sector remain uneven in quality and readiness. As the electricity and natural gas sectors develop priority will be given to establishing stable and effective oversight of the sectors. In view of these demands, the consumer protection projects will not carry forward as part of the 2026 work plan. URCA intends to revisit these initiatives in a future annual plan once the regulatory capacity and resources can support the development of these projects.
- ***Revision (Consolidation and Updating) Renewable Energy Frameworks.***
URCA initially intended to undertake a comprehensive revision and consolidation of renewable energy frameworks because international grant funding was offered to support the project. However, the offer for the funding was ultimately withdrawn due to factors beyond URCA's control. As URCA does not want the sector to bear the cost of funding this project at this time, this work will not be carried over into the 2026 Annual Plan. URCA remains legally obligated under the Electricity Act 2024 and the National Energy Policy to promote the expansion of renewable energy throughout The Bahamas. In 2026, URCA will continue working within the existing framework to broaden the uptake of photovoltaic systems in particular, support the expanded parameters outlined in the Act and the NEP, and strengthen public education efforts to encourage wider participation in renewable energy opportunities.
- ***BPL Fuel Tariff Review/Audit.*** The review of Bahamas Power and Light's fuel cost recovery mechanism, initiated in response to the company's 2022 announcement of a revised fuel charge, has progressed substantially throughout 2025. The objective of this project is to assess whether the fuel tariff complies with the law and applicable regulatory frameworks, and to ensure that fuel costs passed on to consumers reflect efficient procurement and operational practices consistent with URCA's consumer protection mandate. Following an initial round of bids in 2024 that exceeded the project budget, the scope was refined and the consultancy was rebid, allowing work to advance steadily in

2025. URCA expects the findings of the audit to be finalized and released during the first trimester of 2026.

- ***Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management. Energy Efficiency and Demand-Side Management.*** This project was integrated into the broader revision of the National Energy Policy, completed in 2025, which places significant emphasis on advancing efficiency measures across the sector. With the foundational work now largely complete, URCA expects to publish a public consultation on energy efficiency and demand-side management during the first trimester of 2026. This consultation will outline proposed approaches, regulatory expectations, and implementation pathways as URCA moves toward formalising a comprehensive framework in line with National Energy Policy objectives.
- ***Review And Revision of The Licensee Reporting Requirements.*** Work on improving the licensing process advanced through 2025. For 2026, timelines have been adjusted to align with the development of a dedicated digital portal on URCA’s website that will host licensee reporting tools. Once completed, the new portal will streamline applications, enhance transparency and support a more efficient and accessible licensing framework.
- ***Review of BPL Tariff.*** The Electricity Act 2024 requires Bahamas Power and Light to submit a tariff review application to URCA no later than 2027. In anticipation of this statutory obligation, URCA has made provisions in the 2026 Annual Plan and budget to assess the application. This ensures that URCA is fully prepared to undertake the necessary review in accordance with the Act and to evaluate any proposed tariff adjustments in a timely and comprehensive manner.
- ***Review of BPL Integrated Resource Plan (IRP).*** URCA has continued to closely monitor BPL’s obligations under its licence to develop an Integrated Resource Plan that outlines how the utility will meet the country’s growing electricity demand efficiently and sustainably. This project has been ongoing, and URCA has maintained active preparation for the plan’s submission. In the 2026 Annual Plan, provisions have been included to support a full assessment of the IRP should it be filed during the year, ensuring URCA is ready to evaluate the plan’s assumptions, projections and alignment with national energy objectives.

The critical timelines and expected consultation dates for these projects are outlined in **Table 3.3** below.

Table 3.3: Electricity Sector Projects and Timelines

Project	Start Period	End Period	Consultation Publication Date	Final Decision Publication Date
Discontinued Projects				
APEL and BPL Consumer Protection Plans	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Revision (Consolidation and Updating) Renewable Energy Frameworks	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carryover Projects				
Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management	T1-2025	T1-2026	T3-2025	T1-2026
Review and Revision of the Licensee Reporting Requirements	T1-2025	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
BPL Fuel Tariff Review/Audit	T1-2025	T1-2026	T1-2026	T1-2026
Gas Service Worker Licence Regulation				
Gas Service Worker Licensing Platform				
New Projects				
Review of BPL Tariff	T2-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A
Review of BPL Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)	T3-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A

Note: Discontinued Projects are those that were included in the 2025 but were not completed and will not be carried over into 2026.

3.11 Natural Gas Sector Priorities for 2026

The Natural Gas Sector strategy supports the introduction of a safer, cleaner, more diversified fuel source that complements the electricity sector and reduces dependence on legacy energy systems. With the Natural Gas Act 2024 now in effect, 2026 will be another foundational year as URCA operationalizes the licensing framework, reviews the first licences issued late in 2025, and develops the regulatory instruments needed to guide the construction and operation of terminals, pipelines, and distribution networks. Natural gas infrastructure will soon underpin major commercial and industrial energy needs. As such, URCA’s oversight must be robust, technically grounded, and supported by both internal and external expertise. This includes setting standards for market conduct, safety, tariffs, construction practices, and long-term operational compliance.

3.11.1 Project Descriptions and Progress Updates

In 2026, the work in the NGS will include the following projects:

- **Natural Gas Sector Public Education.** With natural gas facilities moving from development into construction and eventual operation, URCA will continue the public education efforts begun in 2025. In 2026, this work will focus on providing clear, accessible information about natural gas safety, regulatory oversight, consumer impacts and the role of gas in the evolving energy mix. As new infrastructure comes on stream, URCA will expand outreach and update educational materials to ensure consumers and communities are well informed and prepared for the sector’s growth.
- **Guidelines for the Regulation of NGS Tariffs.** URCA will develop guidelines to identify market inefficiencies, assess tariff breaches, and establish remedies in accordance with the Natural Gas Act. These guidelines will help ensure that consumers benefit from the introduction of natural gas while enabling sustainable investment in infrastructure development.
- **Gas Service Worker Licence.** To uphold safety and ensure professional standards, URCA will develop a Gas Service Worker Licence establishing minimum qualifications for individuals performing natural gas-related work. This will be executed in collaboration with external training and accreditation bodies to ensure high competency across the sector.
- **Review of Licence Applications.** The first natural gas licences were issued in the latter part of 2025. In 2026, URCA will commission an external review to ensure the licensing process is fit for purpose, aligned with best practices, and capable of supporting the long-term development of the sector.
- **Pipeline and Terminal Construction Regulations.** As construction commences on natural gas terminals and associated pipelines, URCA will develop detailed regulations governing engineering standards, safety requirements, environmental considerations, and compliance obligations. This project fills a gap left in the existing regulatory suite and is essential for safeguarding public and environmental interests during large-scale construction activities.
- The project's critical timeline and expected consultation dates for the NGS are outlined in **Table 3.4** below.

Table 3.4: Natural Gas Sector Projects

Project	Start Period	End Period	Consultation Publication Date	Final Decision Publication Date
Carryover Projects				
Public Education	T1-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A

Review of License Applications	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Guidelines for Regulation of NG Tariffs	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Gas Service Worker Licence Regulations	T1-2025	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026
Gas Service Worker Licensing Platform	T1-2026	T3-2026	N/A	N/A
New Projects				
Develop Pipeline and Terminal Construction Regulations	T1-2026	T3-2026	T2-2026	T3-2026

4. Key Performance Indicators for 2026

Section 41 of the URCA Act requires URCA to publish a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) against which it shall measure its performance during the forthcoming year in the Annual Plan. Tables 4.1-4.5 in this section identify the KPIs that URCA will use to measure its performance in 2026.

Table 4.1: Statutory and Regulatory KPIs

Statutory/Regulatory
Was the Draft Annual Plan & Strategy published before the end of the financial year? YES/NO
Was the Annual Report and final Annual Plan published within four months of year-end? YES/NO
Were Final Determinations published within one month from closing for comments on Preliminary Determination? YES/NO
Percentage of public consultations started within the period stated in the Annual Plan.
Time to publish results, decisions, and other regulatory measures after the close of consultation: 45-60 days 60-90 days >90 days
Consumer Complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of complaints received • Percentage of total complaints resolved • Average time taken to resolve complaints
Licenses issued within:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 days - individual licences • 45 days - class licences

Table 4.2: Finance KPIs

Finance
Cost of the Finance function as a percentage of total operating expenditure
Period-end cycle time (working days to close)
Year-end cycle time (working days to complete)
Forecasting accuracy
Cost of Licensee invoicing
Debtor Days
Number and Value of Creditor Notes and Adjustments
Long outstanding debt (>90 days) as a percentage of total debt

Table 4.3: Human Resource and Learning KPIs

HR
Cost of the HR function as a percentage of expenditure
Cost of HR function per team member
The ratio of employees (full-time equivalent) to HR staff
Average days for the full-time team member invested in learning and development per year
Cost of learning and development activity as a percentage of total payroll
Cost of advisors as a percentage of the total payroll
Percentage of roles filled by permanent and contract staff
Average lapse time (working days) from vacancy/advertisement occurring to the acceptance of an offer for the same post
Percentage of people in the role after 12 months of service
The percentage of employees who left the organisation during the year

Table 4.4: Information Technology KPIs

IT
The cost of IT functions as a percentage of total expenditure.
Organisational ICT spending (investment in ICT infrastructure hardware across the organisation)
Percentage of Team members that can access the network and system remotely

Table 4.5: URCA Organisation Performance Indices

URCA OPI
Strategic Development OPI
Governance of Regulations OPI
External Engagement and Organization Efficiency OPI

As detailed in Tables 4.1-4.5, URCA will continue to assess its effectiveness as it has in previous years by following these steps: (1) identifying and adopting suitable key performance indicators (KPIs) in accordance with statutory requirements and management best practices; (2) measuring and monitoring those KPIs; and (3) publishing the results in its Annual Report on operations and performance. In 2026, URCA will track its performance using the URCA Operational Performance Indicators (OPIs) and include them in the 2026 Annual Report, which will be published by the end of April 2027.

5. Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

This section sets out URCA's budget based on its target activities for the fiscal year 2026. It includes the level of remuneration to be received by the staff and non-executive and executive members of the Board in 2026.

5.1 Overview

URCA will ensure that it maintains the financial resources necessary to fulfil its regulatory mandate across the Electronic Communications Sector, the Electricity Sector and the emerging Natural Gas Sector. In keeping with Section 41(1)(a) of the URCA Act, the organisation will continue to fully account for its activities and demonstrate transparency, efficiency and value in the delivery of regulatory services to all stakeholders.

For the 2026 planning period, URCA's draft budget has been prepared as distinct budgets for the ECS, ES and NGS, consistent with Section 39 of the URCA Act and in accordance with Section 92 of the Communications Act 2009, Section 54 of the Electricity Act 2024 and Section 16 of the Natural Gas Act 2024.

The consolidated draft budget for 2026 is presented in Table 5.1 below alongside the budgeted expenditures for the two preceding years.

Table 5.1 URCA Draft Budget	BY-2024	BY-2025	BY-2026
Staff Costs	3,614,937	4,088,166	4,691,310
Non-Executive Compensation	349,000	202,000	202,700
Executive Compensation	532,363	590,734	596,906
Professional Services	1,251,600	2,023,401	1,063,000
Conferences, Training, and Travel	487,323	711,500	2,461,899
Regulatory Fieldwork	85,200	29,900	97,100
Premises Costs and Utilities	563,200	598,301	526,001
Consumer Education and Public Relations	147,500	319,500	246,800
Office Services	219,000	373,900	332,000
Information Technology	330,700	374,200	274,500
General and Administrative Expenses	1,639,900	1,210,501	1,325,700
Total Operations Expenditure (OPEX)	9,220,723	10,522,103	11,817,916
Depreciation	296,350	510,100	491,700
Total Operating Budget Recovered through URCA fees	9,517,073	11,032,203	12,309,616
Capital Expenditure	3,085,935	1,851,837	934,600

Overall, URCA proposes an increase of approximately 12% in its 2026 operating budget (excluding depreciation) compared to 2025. The key drivers of this change are outlined below:

- **Staff Costs:** Four (4) new positions are proposed to support URCA’s expanding regulatory remit, particularly within the Natural Gas sector, while also strengthening operational expertise across the Authority. Increases in base salaries, along with corresponding growth in employee benefits (health insurance, pension, and gratuity), result in a 15% increase in staff costs. Compensation for Executive Directors and Non-Executive Directors remains largely flat, increasing by only 1% and 0.3%, respectively, year over year.
- **Professional Services:** Budgeted expenditure for Professional Services (including Legal, Risk, and Compliance) is projected to decrease by 48% in 2026. This reduction is primarily due to regulatory projects being completed in-house or deferred. Where unutilized 2025 allocations can be applied to viable 2026 projects, these have been carried forward, generating cost efficiencies for the sector. Additionally, lower funding is required for Supreme Court matters in 2026.
- **Conferences, Training, and Travel:** Spending in this category is expected to increase by 246%, largely attributable to URCA hosting an International Regulatory Forum (the World Telecommunications Policy Forum) in mid-2026, as well as a Local Forum (the National Cyber Security Forum) later in the year. Despite these increases, the overall training budget shows a slight year-over-year decline, while still supporting ongoing staff development and succession planning initiatives.
- **Regulatory Fieldwork:** Expenditure on regulatory fieldwork is projected to increase by 225%, reflecting enhanced monitoring and oversight of regulated sectors, including the Natural Gas sector.
- **Premises and Utilities:** Budgeted costs for premises and utilities are expected to decrease by 12% year over year following the “near completion” of major repair works at Frederick House.
- **Consumer Education and Public Relations:** This budget category will decrease by 23% due to a temporary pause in certain activities driven by competing priorities. Funding remains available, however, to support the deferred 2025 brand audit and continued community outreach initiatives.
- **Office Services:** Office services costs are projected to decline by 11%, reflecting cost savings realized from the completion of Frederick House repairs and the cessation of certain previously outsourced services.

- **Information Technology:** The IT budget is expected to decrease by 27%, driven by a change in the outsourced LAN maintenance service provider and the review and replacement of productivity software licences with more cost-effective alternatives.
- **General and Administrative Expenses:** These expenses are projected to increase by 10%, primarily to support The Bahamas’ representation in an ITU campaign for a senior ITU position.
- **Capital Expenditure:** URCA’s capital expenditure budget is expected to decrease year over year following the conclusion of the Frederick House Infrastructure Improvement project. However, several major deferred projects – including the replacement of the elevator and generator – are scheduled for execution in 2026.

5.2 Electronic Communications Sector Budget 2026

Table 5.2 summarises URCA’s draft 2026 budget for its regulatory activities in the ECS compared to its budget for the preceding two years.

Table 5.2 ECS Draft Budget	BY-2024	BY-2025	BY-2026
Staff Costs	2,211,981	2,651,531	3,001,544
Non-Executive Compensation	204,723	118,149	92,056
Executive Compensation	283,435	310,418	271,084
Professional Services	547,545	794,368	937,120
Conferences, Training, and Travel	366,469	526,191	2,383,368
Regulatory Fieldwork	73,200	18,600	53,000
Premises Costs and Utilities	336,941	369,412	333,362
Consumer Education and Public Relations	87,800	188,308	201,233
Office Services	137,358	242,830	221,877
Information Technology	199,054	239,599	173,969
General and Administrative Expenses	691,917	528,943	919,910
Total Operations Expenditure (OPEX)	5,140,423	5,988,349	8,588,523
Depreciation	174,589	356,894	330,256
Total Operating Budget Recovered through URCA fees	5,315,013	6,345,243	8,918,779
Capital Expenditure	2,863,225	1,454,632	678,126

Further explanation of the expenses in the ECS budget is set out below:

- **Total Operating Expenditure (OPEX):** Total OPEX, excluding depreciation, is projected to increase by 43% in 2026 compared to the prior year. This increase reflects continued initiatives to advance the policy objectives of the Electronic Communications Sector (ECS).
- **Staff Costs:** Staff costs allocated to the ECS are projected to increase by 13%, driven by annual salary adjustments, associated employee benefits, and the onboarding of additional staff both within the ECS and across the Authority. In contrast, Executive and Non-Executive

Director compensation allocated to the ECS is expected to decrease by 35%, reflecting a reallocation of Directors' costs across the sectors regulated by URCA.

- **Professional Services:** Expenditure on Professional Services is expected to increase by 18% year over year. This increase is primarily attributable to the continuation of regulatory projects carried over into 2026, including planned reviews, and ECS-related litigation.
- **Conferences, Training, and Travel:** Costs in this category are projected to increase by 353%, largely due to URCA's hosting of an International Regulatory Forum in The Bahamas in 2026, as well as continued in-person participation in international conferences and staff training activities.
- **Regulatory Fieldwork:** Spending on regulatory fieldwork is expected to increase significantly, reflecting enhanced monitoring of spectrum licensees and continued oversight of the efficient utilization of mobile and fixed tower infrastructure.
- **General and Administrative Expenses:** General and administrative expenses, which include largely stable costs for international regulatory memberships and related activities, are projected to increase primarily due to URCA underwriting campaign-related costs in support of The Bahamas' candidate for the ITU Deputy Secretary-General position.

5.3 Electricity Sector Budget 2026

Table 5.3 summarises URCA's draft 2026 budget for its regulatory activities in the ES compared with its budget for the preceding two years.

Table 5.3 - ES Draft Budget 2025	BY-2024	BY-2025	BY-2026
Staff Costs	1,265,617	952,791	706,707
Non-Executive Compensation	138,513	58,095	59,050
Executive Compensation	182,037	157,468	173,888
Professional Services	393,755	684,687	(119,163)
Conferences, Training, and Travel	59,604	94,848	42,841
Regulatory Fieldwork	9,000	8,105	29,100
Premises Costs and Utilities	221,837	122,771	89,705
Consumer Education and Public Relations	58,200	70,800	18,135
Office Services	77,440	84,202	50,859
Information Technology	124,870	83,076	46,814
General and Administrative Expenses	938,858	663,462	379,174
Total Operations Expenditure (OPEX)	3,469,730	2,980,304	1,477,110
Depreciation	115,494	90,440	75,553
Total Operating Budget Recovered through URCA fees	3,585,224	3,070,744	1,552,663
Capital Expenditure	221,110	395,605	117,837

Explanations of changes in the major expense categories are as follows:

- **Total Operating Expenditure (OPEX):** Total OPEX, excluding depreciation, is projected to decrease by 50% in 2026 compared to the prior year. This reduction reflects operational efficiencies achieved through the shared utilization of existing resources within the Electricity Sector (ES) and the Natural Gas Sector (NGS).
- **Staff Costs:** Staff costs are expected to decrease by 26%, primarily due to the sharing of human resources between the ES and the NGS.
- **Professional Services:** Expenditure on professional services is expected to decline significantly, reflecting the deferral of certain regulatory projects and the completion of others without the need for external consultants. Where projects have been deferred, the associated budget allocations have been retained for future commencement, and where projects have been completed, the savings are being applied to support 2026 regulatory initiatives.
- **Conferences, Training, and Travel:** Costs in this category are budgeted to decrease significantly, notwithstanding continued investment in staff training and development in prior years to support long-term sector strategies.
- **Consumer Education and Public Relations:** Expenditure on consumer education and public relations is projected to decrease following the completion in 2025 of major stakeholder engagement initiatives related to the National Energy Policy and various tariff reviews.
- **General and Administrative Expenses:** General and administrative expenses are budgeted to decrease because of adjustments made to correct the overestimation of bad debt provisions included in the prior year's budget.

5.4 Natural Gas Sector Budget 2026

The Natural Gas Budget 2026 represents the next full year of this sector, compared to the full year budget for 2025. It should be noted that the budget for the Natural Gas Sector for 2024 represents only the last 3 months of the 2024 budget year, as reflected in the Addendum to the 2024 Annual Plan. The 2026 budget supports URCA's mandate to ensure that the natural gas sector operates in accordance with the National Energy Policies and international best practices.

Table 5.4 summarises URCA's draft 2026 budget for its regulatory activities in the NGS.

Table 5.4 - NG Draft Budget 2025	BY-2024	BY-2025	BY-2026
Staff Costs	137,339	483,844	983,060
Non-Executive Compensation	5,764	25,756	51,594
Executive Compensation	66,891	122,849	151,934
Professional Services	310,300	544,346	245,043
Conferences, Training, and Travel	61,250	90,461	35,689
Regulatory Fieldwork	3,000	3,195	15,000
Premises Costs and Utilities	4,423	106,118	102,934
Consumer Education and Public Relations	1,500	60,392	27,432
Office Services	4,202	46,868	59,264
Information Technology	6,775	51,525	53,717
General and Administrative Expenses	9,126	18,096	26,616
Total Operations Expenditure (OPEX)	610,570	1,553,450	1,752,283
Depreciation	6,267	62,767	85,891
Total Operating Budget Recovered through URCA fees	616,837	1,616,216	1,838,174
Capital Expenditure	1,600	220,468	138,637

Explanations of budget allocation for the NGS for BY-2026 for major expense categories are as follows:

- **Staff costs and non-executive compensation:** Significantly increased by 100% due to the inclusion of an allocation for new hires as well as the proportional costs of other sectors and support staff.
- **Professional services:** This category decreased by 55% due to regulatory projects being deferred to 2026 and other projects that were anticipated to require external consultancy being completed using in house resources. In these cases, the budgeted allocation will be used to defray the cost of new regulatory projects that are planned for 2026.
- **Conferences, training, and travel:** This budget allocation decreased by 61% as in the previous year there was an emphasis made to have staff assigned to the sector to participate in training opportunities and engage with international organisations through attendance at conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- **Consumer Education and Public Relations:** This budget allocation decreased 55% notwithstanding the continued need to pursue initiatives educating the public on URCA’s role as the regulator of the Natural Gas Sector.
- **General and Administrative:** Allocated costs increased significantly by 47% to include the membership costs of professional membership in international regulatory bodies and the proportional allocated portion of other general and administrative costs.

6. Summary of the 2026 Annual Plan and Next Steps

This Annual Plan for 2026 sets out a focused and forward-looking framework for URCA's work across the electronic communications, electricity and natural gas sectors. It brings together the strategic priorities, regulatory objectives and financial provisions required to guide the continued evolution of three vital pillars of national development. It builds on the progress of recent years while preparing the organisation, and ultimately The Bahamas – for the emerging realities of an increasingly digital, interconnected and energy-diverse future.

6.1 Strategic Outlook

URCA enters 2026 with a clear mandate to modernise regulation across the electronic communications, electricity and natural gas sectors, while strengthening The Bahamas' voice in regional and global arenas. The plan prioritises closing service and connectivity gaps across the archipelago, deepening international engagement with the ITU, particularly regarding WTPF-26, and other allied bodies, and embedding best practice in resilience, safety, consumer protection and innovation. A refreshed multi-year strategy and stable leadership will guide a regulator that is agile, island-focused, and capable of anticipating technological shifts and sector disruptions.

6.2 Organisational Priorities

Internally, URCA will press ahead with its digital transformation, expanding organisation-wide process digitisation, enterprise records management, and data governance to improve speed, transparency and control. Operations will optimise facilities and core systems; HR & Learning will build a sharper, globally competitive workforce through upskilling, leadership development and structured knowledge transfer; CCR will complete the website redevelopment with integrated licensing, payments, consumer care and sector reporting portals, and lead national outreach, elections-period content oversight and cybersecurity education. International Relations will convert participation in global forums into training, standards alignment and practical tools for local regulation.

6.3 Sector Priorities

In the Electronic Communications Sector, URCA will complete carryover projects and launch new ones, including a national band plan, an innovation sandbox, frameworks for licence-exempt spectrum and submarine cables, refreshed disaster regulations, EMF exposure rules, QoS

updates, cybersecurity guidelines, accessibility measures, and completion of USO/USF work. In the Electricity Sector, priorities include publishing the BPL fuel tariff review findings, consulting on energy efficiency and demand-side management, aligning licence reporting with a new digital portal, and preparing for BPL's tariff review and IRP assessments, while deferring lower-return projects to focus on core oversight. In the Natural Gas Sector, 2026 is designed as a further build-out year: sustained public education, tariff guidelines, gas service worker licensing, external review of early licences, and detailed pipeline and terminal construction regulations to ensure safe, reliable market development.

6.3 Budgetary Considerations

In the 2026 Budget Year, overall expenditure is projected to increase by approximately 12 percent, driven primarily by the addition of new staff positions to support growing responsibilities, expanded regulatory fieldwork, and The Bahamas' hosting of a major international forum. While staff costs rise to accommodate needed expertise, significant reductions are achieved in professional services, IT, office services, and consumer education due to greater in-house capacity, the completion of certain initiatives, and efficiencies gained from recent infrastructure upgrades. The budget also reflects a transition into full regulatory operations for the Natural Gas Sector and continued investment in energy sector oversight, while maintaining URCA's commitment to value for money, prudent financial management, and responsible planning as its regulatory reach deepens across three critical national utility sectors.

6.4 Stakeholder Consultation and Next Steps

This draft Annual Plan reaffirms URCA's regulatory commitments and is designed to spur innovation, strengthen resilience, and support broad-based economic growth across The Bahamas. The stakeholder consultation process, including timelines and submission guidance, is set out in Section 1.2.

To promote inclusivity and transparency, URCA invites stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the draft plan by February 6, 2026. Additionally, a stakeholder forum is planned for March 2026 to discuss the proposed initiatives and refine the plan based on the feedback received. URCA encourages your participation in this process.