

A new dawn in education – ICT enabler

The government of Vanuatu takes critical steps in ensuring universal access to internet and ICT in its schools

Responding to an unprecedented nationwide demonstration of interest and enthusiasm, the government of Vanuatu is set to announce the first candidates to receive ICT access, computer labs and tablets for schools throughout the country.

The Government’s Chief Information Officer, Mr Fred Samuel said “we received hundreds of applications, and now we have responded to them. The Government is proud to support this work; and we haven’t seen unity of purpose and commitment like this since independence. We have a long road ahead of us, but the first steps are critical, and it’s great to get started. We thank the Ministry of Education, Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) and the Australian Government, through its Governance for Growth (GfG) programme for its support and contribution”.



In an initial rollout that will affect nearly 9,000 students, teachers and education professionals, fifteen candidate schools have been identified to receive computer labs, and seven schools were selected to receive computer tablets. Three private sector bids to provide commercial internet café services to rural communities were also selected to support this initiative.

With financial backing by Australia’s Governance for Growth programme, the government’s Universal Access Policy (UAP) is set to begin reaching schools and communities in all six provinces. Even in its current pilot phase, this rollout is the largest of its kind in the country’s history.

This is a critical step in the implementation of the UAP, which states that 98% of the population will have access to broadband internet by the beginning of 2018. Introducing internet and communications technology, or ICT, into schools was first established as a priority when the National ICT policy was announced in late 2013.

Vanuatu has played a guiding role among Pacific island nations where telecommunications and internet are concerned. It continues to do so with this latest initiative. Divided into three components, the work is designed to provide the framework for what will effectively be a national ICT upgrade.

Candidates were evaluated based on their commitment and technical capacity, as well as by the potential for positive impact on their local community and the potential to learn critical lessons in this early phase. Selection was a painstaking and difficult process, but it was thorough, fair, independent and followed strict corporate governance arrangements and processes. Over 300 applications were received for the three programs, making it clear that there is a huge untapped demand for internet and computer-related services throughout the country.

“These are just the first recipients. They’re not the only ones, and they’re not the last,” said Mr Samuel. “We’re excited about the possibilities that these programs present, but we need to move carefully, and we need to act wisely to ensure that we get the best result possible.”

The following presents the list of selected candidates under each program.

Computer Lab & Community Centre (CLICC) program

1. Sarakata Primary & Centre School
2. St Patrick's College
3. Matevulu College
4. Torgil Vocational Training Institute
5. Sulua Center School
6. Lambumbu School
7. Lamap Community Schools
8. Ambaebulu Primary & Secondary School
9. Nandiutu Bilingual Junior Secondary School
10. College de Walarano
11. Tafea College / Lycee de Tafea
12. College d'Orap
13. Lycee Sanite Anne
14. Arep Primary & Secondary School
15. Eles Center School

Tablets for Students (TFS) program

1. Venie Mataipevu School
2. Merei Center School
3. Matevulu College
4. Epi High School
5. Arep Primary & Secondary School
6. Ambaebulu Primary & Secondary School
7. Lycee Louis Antoine de Bouganville

Internet Café Support (ICS) program

1. Tukunoamauri
2. Nali Enterprises
3. Ituani Infomesen Senta

A further survey and interview will be conducted with each candidate prior to the program implementation.

BACKGROUNDER

Previous announcements concerning these projects:

http://www.trr.vu/attachments/article/390/more_than_300_submissions_to_its_ict_programs.pdf

The first, the Computer Lab and Internet Community Centre (CLICC) program, provides funds for computer facilities in participating schools. The computers can be used by staff, students and, importantly, members of the local community. This program builds on valuable lessons learned from previous universal access work, and expands its reach to under-served schools and communities across the country.

The second, Tablets for Schools, is a pilot program designed to pioneer the use of low-power, low-cost computer tablets in rural and remote schools. Vanuatu's needs and conditions are unique, and it's necessary to understand how we can best bring ICT to our most remote communities. The technological challenge ranks among the toughest in the world. By taking advantage of the state of the art in computing and wireless internet technology, we can leapfrog past more developed countries, bringing the benefits of technology to those with limited electrical power and resources.

The third program is known as Internet Café Support, or ICS. It provides grants to private sector operators who want to provide commercial internet access to their local community.

These programs are being delivered by the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR). This office has been designated by the UAP to manage the implementation of universal access rollout, and by law to administer the Universal Access Policy Fund, which is designed to support the provision of telecommunications services to under- and un-served parts of the country. By seeding demand for internet services in rural and remote areas, the UAP Fund will expand their impact and sustainability in areas outside of the main municipal areas.