



Community Telecommunications Grant Information

Introduction

The Government of Vanuatu's Universal Access Policy (UAP) has seen the development of telecommunications infrastructure stretch to cover 98% of the population. However there are still areas that encounter difficulties in obtaining a reasonable service due predominantly to factors such as population and geographic location, the so named unserved and underserved areas.

The Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) collects levies from the local telecommunications licensees as part of a Universal Service obligation. These levies are held in trust in the Universal Access Fund (UAF) whereby they can be used for the development of telecommunications infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of Vanuatu subject to the Government approved UAP Policy Directions and in line with Part 4 of the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulation Act of 2009.

Part 4, section 19 subsection (4) and (5) of the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulations Act, 2009 (the Act) states that:

"Any person may voluntarily contribute towards the UAP Fund and such person may specify that such contributions be applied in a specific manner", and

"Funds received pursuant to subsection (4) must be deposited into the UAP Fund and applied only in the manner specified, if any"

This section therefore allows for any person or organisation to voluntarily contribute to the Universal Access Fund (UAF) account and to specify how those contributed funds are to be used.

The TRR has, over the past years, injected funds into the UAF trust account. The TRR injected funds are for two purposes:

1. To provide financial assistance and support to TRR in its management and the running of the UAP/Universal Service Projects;
2. To assist with other projects/matters determined as such by TRR, linking to the appropriate and legally sound administration, management and provision of telecommunications/ICT Universal service projects or initiatives, and/or Universal Access projects initiatives within Vanuatu.

In line with the TRR Act, and the arrangements made and signed off, by the Authorities concerned (the Hon. Minister responsible for Telecommunications, Hon. Minister for Finance and the Regulator). The funds injected into the account are ring fenced to support UAP initiatives that will provide access and connectivity to communities and citizens of Vanuatu.

Considering the conditions provided, the TRR wishes to encourage local communities to consider telecommunications projects or initiatives that may assist the development of the local community both economically and socially.

Purpose

The TRR is establishing a Community Telecommunications Grant (CTG) whereby projects that considers and includes telecommunications and ICT development within respective communities may be financially supported by the TRR voluntarily contributions to the UAF account. These grants must also be supported by the community to enable sustainability of these projects and must not be seen as a once off handout for development, with communities required to contribute a portion of the funds prior to any grant consideration.

Generally, these grants will be for one off activity which must be completed within 12 months and do not require ongoing financial support from the TRR.

What TRR will Fund

The TRR will, in accordance with its UAF Financial Handling procedures, allocate a maximum of Vt3, 000,000 each year to provide Community Telecommunications Grants specifically for the development and implementation of telecommunication and ICT infrastructure, services or training to develop and support the community and local economy.

Multiple grants will be available with no single grant to exceed a maximum of Vt1, 500,000.

TRR will fund an established organisation or area council approved and united community only and will not fund individuals.

You Define Your Community/Organisation

TRR looks to you to identify and define your community or organisation. This could be a geographic community; a community that is being recognized by the provincial local area council; it could be a community of common interest or a community of cultural identity.

You Define the Issue that's Needs to be Addressed

TRR does not prioritise any specific issues and are instead open to projects that address all sorts of community needs as long as the common theme is one of telecommunications, ICT, access and services.

Projects can be at various stages of the thought and implementation process including identifying the need, increasing collective understanding of the issue, generating ideas, or testing and implementing solutions.

Eligibility

To be eligible for grant funding an organisation/community must:

- Be not-for-profit;
- Be Incorporated or have evidence of help and/or support from an incorporated organisation;

- Be open to the general public, inclusive and not discriminatory;
- Be commencing the Project after the Grant Commencement date – money can only be used on future expenditure not on money already spent;
- Provide an in kind contribution of at least 25% of the value of the project budget;
- Appropriate (100 and over) number of population the project will cater for.

Ineligibility

The TRR will not provide grants for:

- Projects that duplicate existing services or programs;
- Project that seek funds for day-to-day operational expenses, such as rent and staff wages;
- Projects that seek funds to cover the cost of capital works and equipment;
- Projects that do not meet the identified priority needs of the community;
- Projects that have commenced prior to Grant Announcement date;
- Commercial organisations/sole traders;
- Fundraisers or general donations to charities;
- Political parties or activities that are overtly political in nature;
- Religious activities or activities that are overtly religious in nature;
- Government agencies/departments;
- Individuals.

Selection Criteria

The TRR will utilise a broad criteria for selecting grantees. Within this criteria are a number of elements as described below that will need to be addressed by your proposal;

1. *Fit with Philosophy*

- Does the project use inclusive, collaborative and resourceful processes to pursue an innovative solution to a community challenge?
 - a. Inclusive: meaningfully engaging key stakeholders - thoughtfully identifying those needed to create the intended change and, whenever possible, including those directly affected by the problem.
 - b. Collaborative: a true joint effort, with partners willing to share ownership and decision-making as they pursue a solution together.
 - c. Resourceful: using existing resources and assets creatively to make the most of what a community already has.
 - d. Is the process likely to lead to a community innovation - a breakthrough in addressing a community need that is more effective, equitable or sustainable than existing approaches?

2. *Implementation*

- Is the budget realistic and appropriate for the project defined?
- Is the project plan thoughtful, realistic and does it address the identified community need?
- Does the applicant have the capacity to execute the work effectively or have a plan to meet the needed capacity?

3. *Impact*

- Is the project likely to make a significant, sustainable difference, now or in the future?
- Will the project inspire or inform others?

4. *Additional Considerations*

- Size of community (100 and above).
- Size of applicant organisation.
- Size of grant request.
- Demographics of communities served.
- Type of issue addressed.

Selection Process

There are two stages in the TRR's CTG selection process.

1. *Initial Review.* The TRR will evaluate applications and select finalists. We will communicate our decision via phone and email approximately four to six weeks from the date the applications close.
2. *Finalist Review.* A phone call interview with finalists to discuss details of the application. TRR may also request additional information during this stage. TRR then makes its final decision and notifies the applicant.

For most applications, we estimate the entire selection process – from the time we receive the application to when we make the final decision to award a CTG – will take three months.

How to Apply

Applications for the Community Telecommunications Grants open on the 1st of February each year and close on the 31st of March the same year, or upon allocation of funds available. Applicants are welcome to apply at any time during this period via our online application system or call the TRR for assistance. We strongly encourage all applicants to do the following before submitting an application.

- Review the selection criteria with your community partners.
- Learn more about the work of the TRR.
- Set up a phone call to discuss your proposal with a TRR team member. The TRR team is also available at CTG@trr.vu or call us on +678 27621.

The TRR uses an online application system and understand that this may present a barrier to some applicants, however the applicable files are available for download and can be obtained from the TRR office. The TRR will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate your particular needs on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us to discuss your specific circumstances.

Working with Community Grantees

The TRR hopes to build a supportive and collaborative relationship with community grantees by:

1. *Working Together*
 - TRR will create a grant agreement based on your proposal, including an agreed upon timeline for the project and use of funds.
 - TRR will be responsive and direct in our communication with you, and will be available to you throughout your grant term. TRR hopes to build a relationship that is supportive when you want us to be, without being in your way. We want you to be able to focus on what you do best. TRR is hopeful for the best and beneficial outcome of the project.
2. *Learning and Evaluation*

- TRR want to know if we're making a difference, and will ask you to participate in our evaluation of the Community Telecommunication Grant Program. We will use what we learn together to improve this grant program over time.
- We will ask you to share key lessons learned (successes as well as challenges) during our meetings and as part of your interim and final grant reports. Portions of these reports will be shared publicly on the TRR's website.
- We acknowledge that not all grant projects will lead to a community solution. And, in fact, sometimes the path to a solution includes unexpected or undesirable outcomes. Learning from these moments is an important part of creating new community solutions, and we look forward to doing that with you.
- We'll invite you to participate in TRR sponsored events for grantees to meet one another, share the stories of your work and learn together.

3. *Sharing Your Story*

- TRR would like to publicly recognise the good work that grantees are doing. We will ask you to provide basic content about your organization and project for the TRR's website.
- We may request that you share periodic, informal updates for the TRR to use in online media promotions.

Require Further Help

For more information, or to talk with someone in the TRR Team, email us at CTG@trr.vu or call us on +678 27621.