Engaging Rural Youth in Cultural Rights Activity in Vanuatu

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I. INFORMATION OF THE IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION

Organization submitting the project proposal: Further Arts

Status of the organization: Youth-led research institution/organization/entity

Statutes document:

Year of creation of the organization: 2000

Examples of implemented projects:

Further Arts utilises a number of existing advocacy, media and research networks, by linking with key organisations with which we have strong associations, to support nascent youth associations that have arisen in part out of previous projects that we have implemented over the previous ten years. Examples of these projects include:

Voices for Change - 'Voices for Change' is a project between Further Arts and Youth Against Corruption Vanuatu. The project aims to: build the capacity of these local indigenous youth driven charitable associations through training, salary support and the set-up of an office space; improve youth and community participation and engagement with social, economic, political and environmental issues through art, culture, music and multimedia; and, develop production skills in young people to organise and produce events and multimedia content for broadcast on national television and community media.
**TEKS Program** - 'TEKS Program' is a project of Further Arts and Canal Studio that supports the TEKS Unit to build a strong foundation to undertake its key activities in the field of traditional knowledge and wisdom transfer, and cultural development. The project involves supporting young people in rural communities to organise mini-arts festivals, and for kastom performance groups to travel to the major cultural events in Port Vila and Luganville. It also is focussed heavily on producing multimedia content for broadcast on national television and in community media.

Other projects include:

*Women in Music*

*Music Bridges*

Further Arts has in recent years also ventured into the policy area, actively engaging international and local networks with government in Vanuatu to be contribute to bringing about the successful drafting, approval and gazetting of The Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 (Vanuatu) with a strong representation of local artist’s and creative producer’s contribution. This was the culmination of more than ten years of work, advocacy and lobbying. The Act was assented to on the 29th of December 2000 and came into force on 8 February 2011 (upon publication in the Government Gazette). Notably, prior to the Act Vanuatu did not have local copyright legislation in place.

Further Arts recent projects have grown in large part out of the approach by the Youth Against Corruption (YAC) association to request the Fest’Napuan music festival to host a themed event for last year’s festival, called Unite and Fight Against Corruption. Thus the clear value of linking the effort to engage youth in policy and governance issues with music and creative networks was shown to be a powerful tool in engaging young people in the governance discussion and participation. Further Arts assisted through its networks to deliver audiovisual documentation of the event, and technical advice. Last year, Further Arts conceived and produced a themed event at the Fest’Napuan music festival called Women in Music, to promote the participation of women in the regional music industry.

**Main Resource Person for the project:**

*Main resource person name:* Mr/Ms Sarah Doyle

*Main resource person title:* Operations Manager
Age: 25

**Deputy Resource Person for the project:**

*Deputy resource person name:* Marcel Meltherorong  
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**Website of the organization:** [https://www.facebook.com/FurtherArts](https://www.facebook.com/FurtherArts)

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**II. PROJECT PROPOSAL**

**Executive summary:**

The project addresses the specific theme of Social Inclusion through the framework of equity for rural and remote indigenous young people in terms of their cultural rights.

This project is designed to support the Traditional Entertainment and Kastom Support (TEKS) Unit in Santo, Vanuatu, to build a strong foundation to undertake its key activities in the field of traditional knowledge and wisdom transfer, and cultural development. TEKS Unit is a grassroots indigenous-led movement of Further Arts working alongside the Lukaotem Gud Santo Festival (LGSF) in Luganville, Santo, the second largest music and cultural festival in Vanuatu, as a creative hub for cultural promotion and development. TEKS was set up after the 2011 edition of LGSF due to the clear need to provide more support to kastom performance groups. It has received seed funding and administrative support from Further Arts since early 2012. TEKS Unit uses alternative locally-based approaches to cultural resource management through the promotion and preservation of important traditional wisdom practices including dances, music, songs, and stories, and connecting these with contemporary music and dance; and traditional artistic creations such as carving, weaving, painting, drawing and fabric art.
The TEKS Program aims to support the engagement of youth and communities with their unique kastom and culture in ways that are conducive to cultural heritage management, creative cultural expression and the promotion of quality traditional cultural products. It will do so by working primarily with identified rural villages in the Northern provinces of Vanuatu that are actively maintaining and transmitting traditional knowledge and wisdom to younger generations through events like Mini-Arts Festivals (MAFs). Through this program TEKS will: provide necessary support to the MAFs; provide ongoing assistance to develop unique traditional performances for exhibition in major cultural festivals; and, work with a local production crew to create videos and multimedia content that the communities can use for promotion, marketing and broadcast throughout Vanuatu and abroad. Through these activities, the grant will provide a vehicle for local custodians to present their intangible cultural heritage and thereby contribute significantly to cultural renewal and the use of the traditional Melanesian economy as a platform to engage with the cultural sector of the global economy. In particular, this program is committed to building a strong foundation for participatory grassroots cultural development in Vanuatu by providing the opportunity for indigenous people to develop and exhibit their practices in respect of customary land and values. Furthermore, young people are directly targeted through the production of accessible and appealing resources to stimulate enthusiasm about their traditions and cultural heritage.

Long term

Our vision is for TEKS to continue bolstering itself as a movement dedicated to promoting and preserving kastom, and for it to develop healthy relationships with local and national tourism bodies and cultural centres so that they are equally informed of the realities, needs and visions of the cultural activities and communities they support.

Our desired outcome for the communities in Santo, Gaua and Ambrym is for them to be inspired and experienced in hosting MAFs to successfully promote and market their important traditions and cultural heritage throughout Vanuatu – much like the iconic success of Nagol (land diving) on Pentecost, the Rom dances on Ambrym, and the Leweton Cultural Village in Santo inclusive of the famous Women’s Water Music (hailing from Banks islands). These groups are nationally and even internationally recognised, and have generated increasing amounts of revenue from the expression of their cultural heritage on terms that are owned, managed and dictated by themselves. Some of these experiences have been problematic with questions arising about authenticity, and tensions developing between indigenous systems and the tourism industry. However, TEKS’ and Further Arts’ ongoing assistance
towards the successful Leweton group has shown how strategic partnerships between established organisations and local communities thriving in their traditional cultural activities can create a positive impact at the local, national and regional scale. It therefore becomes important for other communities to learn from Leweton’s experience, and to develop their own pathways that are stronger, more empowered and more enriching for us to learn from.

The cornerstone of TEKS’ approach is to enable communities to be self-sufficient with their own extraordinary resources without being relying heavily on external funding or management. Through this innovative and sustainable locally designed strategy, TEKS works for the benefit of the artists, musicians, performers and custodians to assist in shaping their already vibrant and incredible heritage as an original product, therefore improving the conditions for sustainable cultural management.

**Short term**

This program directly benefits the five host MAF communities through the success of their festivals, and the preparation of kastom groups for larger performances in the hope that they will be exposed to opportunities to tour at regional and international scales, such as the Leweton Cultural Group have experienced through Further Arts connections with major cultural operators, agents and managers in Australia.

Communities will also strengthen their ability to promote intergenerational understanding, and shared knowledge and cultural diversity between different island groups. In particular, young people throughout Vanuatu will be inspired through modern technologies and festivals to follow the road of their traditional cultural identity, and may better understand how to manage this as an integral part of the modernising landscape.

At the industry level, we desire to improve stakeholders’ understanding of the relationship between kastom, tourism and art, acknowledging culture as a powerful vehicle for positive and sustainable development, and for promoting a healthy collective consciousness between people, and with their land.

**Main type of intervention:** Support for/promotion of youth-led action

**Main theme:** Social Inclusion

**Objective(s) of the project:**
The objectives of this project are linked to two of the three Axes of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth for 2014-2021. In particular, the objectives of this project are aligned with these two Axes:

1) Capacity development for the transition to adulthood; and
2) Civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation

The project is primarily focused on Youth Capacity Development and Youth Engagement for vulnerable and marginalised youth in the rural and remote areas of northern Vanuatu, a developing Pacific Island country.

The purpose of the TEKS Program is to promote appropriate management and development of traditional cultural expressions in Vanuatu by supporting existing networks, organisations and initiatives working within the field of cultural development. By using a sensitive and progressive approach informed by research in the field of decolonising methodologies and alternative indicators of wellbeing, the value and incidence of kastom performance will be increased as traditional wisdom and knowledge transfer is enacted and locally-driven efforts are centred on celebrating the diverse cultural heritage of the Vanuatu archipelago.

Therefore, the overall objective of the program is to increase the reported knowledge, practice, and understanding of traditional wisdom, “as measured through ones understanding of traditional stories, dances, songs, and games passed down for generations”. This will be achieved by designing actions that strengthen the competencies and skills of rural and remote youth so as to provide pathways for integration of the youth and their knowledge of traditional wisdom into contemporary social, economic, and political life.

This will be aided by the expertise of the TEKS unit in working with rural communities on the islands of Gaua, Espiritu Santo and Ambrym to develop culturally-appropriate product to stimulate local cultural economies and, in particular, to engage young people in their diverse cultural heritage.

It is critical for traditional wisdom to be supported in both rural and urban environments, not as isolated areas but interconnected due to patterns of mobility, exchange and relationships. For example, by firstly supporting the structures that generate kastom performance groups in rural villages and communities to develop and maintain their traditional practices, these groups can then be brought into urban areas to share displays of cultural expression and also transfer traditional knowledge to urban communities, especially urban youth, in a format that privileges the expression of rural voices. The TEKS project will enable this through two primary means: providing support and funding for rural
communities to organise Mini-Arts Festivals (MAFs) to promote kastom performances and practices; and, encouraging and facilitating live performance of kastom groups in urban areas at major festivals and events. These primary activities are simultaneously consolidated and amplified through a key aspect of the project: multimedia production and broadcasting.

Promoting and preserving cultural practices is important to maintain the cultural heritage of Vanuatu, and continuously passing on this traditional indigenous knowledge to present and future generations. This program develops the cultural industries, as a primary and vital tool to address the issue of cultural heritage loss and devaluation.

**Implementation strategy:**

There are four main activities in the TEKS program, described below.

1. Developing the infrastructure for the TEKS program

   The TEKS program outlined in this proposal is based on the vision of TEKS (Traditional Entertainment and Kastom Support) to “find new approaches to re-integrating the respect of kastom values back into our society”. TEKS objectives include:

   • Scouting and identifying new or existing cultural activities
   • Encouraging the revival of disappearing kastom practices including traditional knowledge and wisdom activities
   • Assisting in the development and promotion of our kastom inheritance
   • Working with all communities and groups to achieve the above
   • Targeting areas initially within Luganville and throughout SANMA province, and then extending to the northern provinces or MALAMPA, PENAMA and TORBA.

   • Creating opportunities for other Canal Studio Unit projects through TEKS productions
   • Creating other platforms other than the major cultural festivals in Vanuatu for its productions

   Part of the TEKS plan is to build its capacity with relevant and experienced personnel; develop new activities with existing communities; hosting Mini-Arts Festivals in its areas of work; and also to improve productions and quality creative product to showcase community traditions including arts and craft displays during major cultural festivals to generate sustainable income solutions for those communities.

   This grant will provide seed funding to enable TEKS to undertake the above through salary and project support, and administrative support to Further Arts to assist in the management of its program.
2. Support to the organisation and delivery of MAFs: Salav (Gaua), Lonwolwol (Dip Point), Port Olry (North-East Coast Santo), Hokua (North-West Coast Santo), Fanafo (Central Santo)

The aforementioned communities have been identified to host MAFs drawing on their rich and diverse traditional cultural practices. Mini-Arts Festivals (MAFs) occur every year on various islands in Vanuatu. Many of these kastom events and festivals are traditionally tied to the seasons, promoting the biocultural diversity of the land and people. They are also important in promoting indigenous knowledge transfer, especially in communities where these traditions and cultural practices are becoming neglected or poorly transmitted to the younger generations. The idea of organising MAFs in these identified communities comes out of their existing celebrations and activities to further develop their traditional practices for the purpose of reinvigorating and revaluing traditional wisdom at the local and national level and especially encouraging young people to participate; to sustain the community’s cultural creative economy and provide a marketable product; and, to enhance their exposure for further opportunities.

TEKS will work with five identified communities to organise and deliver MAFs for their communities. Funding support will be granted to each community based on their specific needs, however, TEKS aims to emphasise a non-dependent approach in which communities are encouraged to use traditional and locally available resources without relying too much on outside funding. This ensures that MAFs are authentic and that communities develop their resilience through learning and drawing on the resources of their immediate natural environment and people.

3. Kastom performances at major festivals: Fete de la Musique, Fest’Napuan Music Festival and Lukaotem Gud Santo Festival

By partnering with the major cultural festivals in Vanuatu, this program will facilitate the inclusion of more kastom performance and cultural expression in these events. Since the major festivals take place in the urban areas of Luganville and Port Vila, they draw large local and international crowds, providing an effective platform to promote cultural heritage through creative expressions, particularly for the dominant young urban demographic. This activity involves working closely with kastom performance groups to prepare them to effectively and professionally display their wisdom practices for this larger scale.
4. Production of traditional wisdom video and multimedia content for broadcast

This activity is overarching throughout the program to reinforce the development of communities’ traditional practices and products by producing accessible and appealing video and multimedia content for broadcast on television and online.

The TEKS Unit works in parallel with the Production Unit of Canal Studio (also known as Manbush Productions) and the Further Arts local production team to produce content used for promotion, research, reporting and broadcast. In the past and recently, Further Arts has been involved in a number of significant production activities and achievements including:

- Becoming a Consulting Organisation to the Asia Pacific Screen Academy Awards (APSA)
- Producing an internationally renowned film: Lon Marum
- Partnering with Wantok Music Foundation to produce the Leweton Women’s Water Music DVD
- Supporting the Namatan Short Film Festival in Vanuatu and assisting Manbush Productions to become a finalist of the competition
- Playing a key role in ACP Cultures projects, Southplanet and Music Bridges to collect data in the Pacific and assist in the development of online portals to connect creative and cultural industry professionals throughout these regions
- Represented alongside Fest’Napuan on the development committee of the community access TV station, KAM TV, broadcasting throughout Vanuatu
- Working closely with Wan Smolbag Theatre and Youth Centre to organise and promote events, film screenings, and youth media training workshops
- Providing representatives to WOMEX (World Music Expo), AWME (Australian World Music Expo) and Sounds Aotearoa (in New Zealand) and developing the capacity of local people to represent Vanuatu at these events

Drawing on Further Arts expertise in popular and innovative media production and Manbush Production members, a local production crew will be established for this program to utilise the best mediums to reach the broadest demographic, and particularly designed to appeal to young people for the purpose of contributing to the notion of making traditional culture and kastom ‘cool’ again. This will be a collaborative process between the production crew and local communities to ensure that appropriate and quality content is produced, which is then distributed through several channels including KAM TV, radio programs, mobile media and technology, and online media sites. Creative and
innovative use of these technologies has enormous potential for breaking down the existing information and communication barriers, with community media playing a key role.

**Beneficiaries:** Rural Youth

**Implementing organization(s):** Further Arts – See information on organization in Section I.

**Institutional partners:**

The TEKS program leverages and strengthens the Vanuatu Cultural Centre’s Fieldworker framework that engages across diverse communities in Vanuatu considering it important to be able to share and discuss traditional wisdom between islands and at the national level. By elevating this dialogue through broadcast media, the TEKS program will support the idea of ‘a nation having a conversation with itself’.

**Project duration (months):** 24

**Timeframe:**

The implementation of the TEKS program begins in February 2014 in preparation for MAFs: the Salav Festival on Gaua island on the 30th April, shortly followed by the Lonwolwol commemoration event at Dip Point in West Ambrym on the 5th-7th of May. TEKS have already initiated planning and preparation with the communities involved in organising these festivals, but by February will need to be able to travel and communicate more regularly with them. A local production crew will be set-up and ready by this time to begin preparing to document and produce quality video and multimedia content from the festivals.

In mid 2014, the production crew will work on post-production of the content from the first two festivals, and the TEKS Unit will continue working closely with the three proposed communities in Santo: Hokua, Port Olry and Fanafo to plan for their MAFs. These will take place in the months between July-September according to the seasonal celebrations and preferences of each community. A kastom performance group will also be prepared for participation in Fete de la Musique in June. From August to September, TEKS will continue to develop the product of identified kastom performance groups from the program communities to prepare them for exhibition during the major festivals, Fest’Napuan in Port Vila and Lukaotem Gud Santo Festival in Santo during October 2014. Throughout the program, the local
production crew will be developing video and multimedia content for local and national broadcast and distribution. The program will be repeated in 2015

**Overall budget:** (US$) 220,000

**Budget Breakdown:**

Conferences, meetings $10,000 each for Funding for 10 MAFs = $100,000  
Training seminars, courses $ Media Training workshops = $25,000  
Fellowships, study grants $0  
Consultants $ Trainers =$15,000  
Supplies and equipment $ Audio Visual Equipment $15,000  
Publications, translations, reproduction $ Production of DVDs $25,000  
Miscellaneous (please specify) $ Travel $40,000

**Monitoring, reporting and evaluation:**

Monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken throughout the program at the level of activities; their expected results; and, the desired outcomes outlined above. Apart from the completion of stated activities and their objectives, we will know whether the project had produced results through a number of mechanisms drawing on observations and feedback on:

- The response and experience of program participants (including community members, kastom performance groups and festival organisers), and increased interest and requests for further development of cultural activities  
- New opportunities arising within Vanuatu and overseas for cultural groups to perform or distribute their products (such as through multimedia and video content)  
- Increased interest by young people to engage with their cultural heritage as shown through local youth programs and organisations  
- Developing new relationships or strengthening existing ones with local and international cultural bodies

This will be a participatory process by engaging in reflection and discussion with participants to share their experience of the activities and program both during the process and post-implementation. These qualitative accounts will be analysed by program staff to inform monitoring and evaluation
reports, and also used for reiterative learning towards shaping and reinforcing the vision of TEKS and Further Arts.

**Supporting documents:**
- VfC-YACV Activist Training Summary 2013.doc
- Video script and editing training - report.docx