Concept Note

Title	**Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System (PACRICS)**
Organisation(s):	• **Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)** • **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**
Theme:	**Theme 1: Affordable Access – Domestic Connectivity in the Pacific**
Speaking Duration:	**15 Minutes**
Background and Justification:	Not until recently have the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), under the auspices of the Pacific Plan Digital Strategy, successfully secured total funding of AUD$ 2 million from the Government of Australia through AusAID for a project called Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System (PACRICS) to establish the rural Internet connectivity that will provide an operational, reliable and low-cost utility which has the potential to link any / all rural and remote communities in the Pacific to local and global Internet communities. The project has successfully secured satellite bandwidth (backbone) using the GE-23 satellite over the entire Pacific Ocean area with adequate bandwidth capacity for at least 24 months for all sixteen pilot sites (it is now claimed that the capacity is scalable up to more than 100 sites). The satellite coverage includes American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. The project aims to provide local communities in remote areas and/or outer islands in the Pacific with Internet connectivity which is affordable, sustainable, reliable, always-on, low-powered and therefore can use solar power source, low maintenance work, and with the possibility for remote programming and/or support so that highly trained technicians need not be stationed at remote community sites. So far, the SPC's PACRICS has set up 15 pilot sites of which 10 sites have been activated while 8 sites are carrying traffic. In December 2008, a total of 7 public good sites (two sites in PNG, four sites in Kiribati, and one site in Tuvalu) are operational and free bandwidth is available for total 80 sites in 2009. In addition, 30 commercial sites have been ordered (according to PacTel's report). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnerships with the Servei de Telecommunicacions d Ándorra (STA) and the Department of Broadband Communications, and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), Australian Government as well as in cooperation with the SPC has also established eight commercial sites in Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga.
Objectives:	The main objective of the project is to enable sustainable usage of telecommunication/ICT related business and services by providing access and enhancing local capacity through development of rural/remote network infrastructure and establishment of Computer Information Centres (CICs) in remote areas and/or outer islands of the Pacific Island Countries.

	It is also an objective of the project to build/enhance human capacity for local communities and individuals of harnessing the power of ICT to improve their quality of lives and to create employments.
Scope:	The scope of this project is to establish 100 RICS sites in remote, rural community and/or outer islands in the Pacific enabling access to the Internet for email, web browsing and searching, and to share images, videos, text, maps, links to portals and other Internet sites. The PACRICS Project will establish 16 fully funded Pilot Sites and 84 partly funded or subsidied Public Good sites. All sites will have free bandwidth until the end of 2009, to allow time to develop sustainable operation models The sustainability model will be based on multi use of each RICS station, with a combination of Government services, Commercial uses and Community development Other add-on services such as voice over IP (VoIP), disaster early warning systems, radio broadcasting and video conferencing will also be integrated.
Expected Outcome:	The aim is to develop an infrastructure based on the deployment of Computer Information Centres that will provide basic telecommunications/ICT services and applications to facilitate easy access to government services such as health, disaster preparedness and education. The same infrastructure will have the ability to offer limited additional services to users who require personalized facilities that go beyond those provided on a community basis. The medium to longer term commercial spin off from this offering will allow the community centres to be sustainable in the longer term. In particular, the project outputs will be: (i) Rural or outer island communication infrastructure is developed and 100 Computer Information Centres are established for access to information including emergency/disaster management; (ii) The use and awareness of ICT services and applications is enhanced by capacity building and by the delivery of suitable services and applications taking into account the particular needs of each community.
Potential Partners:	• SPC and Aus Aid have partnered to run the project. • Pactel won an open tender to provide equipment and services to support the PACRICS project • ITU has supported the project to establish a number of Community Information Centers (Telecenters) • Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) This proposal invites other partners to join the PACRICS project to expand the services provided. International experience shows that most Community Information Centers take 3-5 years to reach sustainability and funding is sought to allow additional centers and for extended period of support for such centers
Project Timescale:	The PACRICS project commenced in late 2007 and is due to finish in Dec 2009, however it has been slow to implement the pilot and public good sites. Funding is sought to extend the project after the initial period of 2009.
Budget (optional):	The Pilot sites are fully funded. Public Good sites have free bandwidth to the end of 2009, but must purchase the site equipment as shown below Commercial sites can be purchased directly from Pactel at the shown rates.

Pactel Price list: (Sept 2008) Discount are available for bigger order

Equipment Purchase (1 to 4 Units)

- USD 3,600 (1x Andrew 1.2m Antenna + 1x SkyEdge Pro including 2 Watts SSPA + PLL Type LNB & 2x30 m RG6 cable)- plus shipping or USD 4,600 with a 1.8 Antenna
- USD 6,200 Solar Power equipment (for SkyEdge PRO only) optional, (1 X Solar power unit 260W - 420 Amp)

Activation fee

- One time USD 525.00

Service fee

Downlink / Uplink	Monthly Service Fee
128k / 64k unlimited	USD 195.25/month
256k / 128k unlimited	USD 333.50/month
384k / 128k unlimited	USD 419.75/month
512k / 256k unlimited	USD 618.00/month
Other (please specify)	