



COVID-19 Economic Response Plan

SMART Economy Initiative

Update, as at February 2023

Background

The SMART Economy Initiative (SMART) is a key measure under Phase II of the Government's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan. The aim of this \$2 million initiative is to provide a mix of grants and tax credits to support commercially-viable business ventures that will provide new or scaled-up innovative ICT applications and services to businesses and consumers. This will help drive a more productive, complex, and diverse economy that is more dynamic and resilient to changing circumstances and shocks.

SMART Economy commenced in July 2020, and Stage 1 applications closed on 29 January 2021 as the initiative approached full subscription.

Stage 1 applications

A total of 88 stage 1 applications were received over the period from July 2020 to 29 January 2021 with a total grant value request of \$6.8 million. All Stage 1 applications were assessed by 18 February 2021 with 30 applications with a total grant value request of \$2.1 million, approved to move to the Stage 2 process.

Stage 2 applications

Of the 31 Stage 2 applications received, 28 were approved for SMART grant funding. Individual grants range from \$7,000 to the maximum \$100,000, with an average grant of \$74,335. Own contributions (direct & in-kind) range from \$25,000 to \$443,800, with an average own contribution of about \$114,000.

The highest proportion of the approved Stage 2 applicant businesses are in the Information and Communication industry (32 per cent), followed by Arts, Recreation, Other Services (20 per cent) and Professional, Administrative (16 per cent). About 72 per cent are small businesses (<\$300,000 gross turnover per annum).

Update Reports

MFEM release an update annually, for a period of five years. Follow up of progress is ongoing as businesses are required to report quarterly.

SMART Economy Grants – Updates

- [SCO Rarotonga Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Cook Islands Business Hub

Proposed Venture: The Cook Islands Business Hub "The Hub". This is a new concept to develop a professional ecosystem. It's a place for Cook Islands' Businesses, aspiring young professionals, and Foreign businesses to collaborate and cultivate the future of Cook Islands' professional services in a growing Cloud Business environment. The Hub will be a physical office space that will accommodate 20 workstations. SMART support will both expedite this plan at time when Cook Islands needs business support the most, and enable us to promote The Hub to a wider audience.

SCO Professional Pathways employees are young Cook Islanders recruited directly out of the graduating Year 13 classes at Tereora College. They are paid full time salaries (above minimum wage) to fulfill outsourcing services. SCO also fully funds a bachelor degree from Massey University NZ (completed part time via distance learning), study resources and study leave. This ensures that our young professionals can obtain both Tertiary education and practical experience.

Project Update: SCO Rarotonga - In 2022 SCO took on another three professional pathways team members from Tereora College. This takes the total number of Professional Pathways members to 8. The first 2 members are expected to graduate in 2024.

Outsourced income coming in from New Zealand has increased in 2022. However profitability is still a concern as we have increased hourly wages and had increases in Electricity costs.

SCO has been looking to recruit new staff. This has been advertised both in the Cook Islands and to New Zealand however due to labour shortages, there has been almost no interest in the offer. This does hinder the potential growth of SCO.

We are still looking at partnerships and uses for the space at other times, particularly in the outsourced call centre or digital design space. However labour resources still remain to be the major issue.

Business Hub - The Business Hub has remained free of charge since its opening in December 2020. The current premises is up for lease renewal in 2023, therefore depending on these negotiations and continued increased demand for the Hub we may need to start introducing a usage charge.

The Hub has been utilised by various businesses, Website Creators, Artists, Online Lecturers and Remote Workers. The Hub's reliable internet, and friendly business-like environment has been appreciated by many. We believe that there is a greater pool of potential use of the premises and scope for its expansion if it was marketed alongside other benefits for remote workers to make Cook Islands their home.

- [Cook Islands Pacific Pearl Merchants T/A Bergman & Sons, Bergman Gallery](#)

Proposal Title: Cook Islands Black Pearl and Contemporary Art Virtual Initiative

Proposed Venture: The Cook Islands Black Pearl and Contemporary Art Virtual Initiative will deliver a high level, virtual e-market including exhibitions, sales and auctions of Cook Islands Black Pearls and Contemporary Art to a worldwide audience via twin websites with e-commerce and real time, interactive capability. Our delivery and marketing method will also encompass a complete social media platform centered on Facebook, Instagram and a comprehensive strategy of digital advertising including display ads, video ads, search engine marketing (SEM) and email marketing.

Project Update:

Website: The Bergman Gallery has joined Artlogic (artlogic.net) a London/NYC based organisation that hosts some of the top galleries in Europe and the USA. This is a complete image revamp that will position the gallery brand to a new international audience. The new website is expected to go live as of 01.03.23. Content is currently being loaded. It will provide a whole new experience for our brand with 'on the wall' and 'augmented reality' features on works for sale along with new format exhibition records of shows and works. This achieves our earlier stated goal to reinvest in our website's look and feel which had become dated and out of sync with international market expectations.

Additional:

- Continued Bergman Gallery social media postings - FB & Instagram.
- Regular gallery website updates to continue until new website launch.
- Increase in client list from Venice art fair appearance, Aotearoa Art Fair appearance, and Bergman Gallery exhibitions in Auckland.
- Continued gallery awareness in the New Zealand and Australian market place.
- Continued advertising opportunities with New Zealand and Australian based art media.

Cook Islands Black Pearl

- Online sales portal complete.
- Continued acquisition of pearl harvests.
- New jewellery design in production
- Social media campaigns in development.
- Website sales referrals.
- Pearl auction: remains in developmental phase, dependent on increased quality and numbers. Potential for online distribution. On-line sales platform under consideration.

- [Southern Cook Islands Shipping Company 2020 Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Prototype Autobarge

Proposed Venture: The scope of this project is to build and test a prototype small autonomous and remote controlled barge of 5 tonne cargo capacity capable of traveling between the islands of the Cook Islands. The prototype "Autobarge" will be small enough to enter the harbours and dock at all outer islands. It will also be capable of traveling to a southern group island up to 3 times a week carrying palletised cargo and has the potential to supply fresh agriculture produce back to Rarotonga.

Project Update: Foam arrived. Polyurethane rigid foam sucked into cavities around and under hold. Shipping delays and manufacture delays in making the gearbox and arrival of engines. Spent time welding down floor of hold under which was place expanded foam and sucking foam under forward hold.

Due to labour shortages on the island and the return of tourists I started working full time operating Atiu Villas.

Staffing problems finally resolved since last quarter. Engines finally arrived. Work has started on installing engines. Ordered propellers, shafts and bearings to fit to engines.

- [Flowx Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Porting Flowx to Apple

Proposed Venture: To port Flowx, our Android weather app, to Apple thereby doubling our market. To port software, is to adapt existing code for use in another operating system. As part of this venture we will move our existing Flowx company from New Zealand to the Cook Islands. We are optimistic that with the success of this proposal, Flowx can contribute to the development of an ICT industry in the Cook Islands and be an example to Cook Islanders (and the world) of what can be done in the Cook Islands.

Project Update: The Flowx Apple app was submitted and accepted onto the Apple TestFlight beta testing platform, which allowed us to have up to 10,000 testers on the minimum viable product. At this early stage, we have kept the number of testers low with 30 testers. After a month of testing there are minimal bugs remaining and zero crashes. We will continue to run testing for the next 3 months. We are still looking for a professional Apple developer to add polish to the app but this is not required for the remaining development and release. By the end of the next quarter the aim is to have a product submitted or ready for submission for full release to the App Store. We will add subscriptions following this release.

- [Akau Film](#)

Proposal Title: Akau Aerial Surveying

Proposed Venture: Launch international level aerial surveying services in the Cook Islands using the latest UAV and software technology.

The service provided would be faster and significantly more accurate surveying of large areas of land, with the ability to export the results in a multitude of formats, including accurate 3D modelling to be imported straight into an architect's or engineer's design applications.

Project Update: John has made trips to NZ for further training for commercial drone operations and has now been Part 102 certified by the CAA. This has allowed for negotiations for preferential permissions with the Ministry of Transport here in regards to drone operations close to airports and some permissions beyond what is allowed under the Part 101 framework.

Akau was also recently in NZ as a consultant to Kiwi Rail who are now looking at doing aerial surveys to speed up recovery work after the floods and cyclone that has affected large parts of their network.

Back in the Cook Islands, baseline maps have also been done for vulnerable areas of extreme interest like Avarua harbour and Avana foreshore.

Akau is looking at now expanding these into the southern group as opportunities arise.

- [ICT Nexus Limited](#)

Proposal Title: ICT and IoT Infrastructure for SMART-Islands

Proposed Venture: ICT Nexus Ltd. will set up horizontal infrastructures for ICT and Industrial IoT in the Cook Islands, introducing a Long-Range, Low Power IoT network, based on LoRaWAN® in Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the first phase, then all remaining islands in the second phase.

LoRaWAN® is a protocol that enables the connection of a specific customer sensor to the Internet, featuring high-speed, secure data transmission, with low energy consumption over long distances. We will provide a scalable IoT network service and platform to enable enterprise-grade solutions and vertical cloud-based applications for businesses, organisations, education and government.

Project Update: We have installed 7 Indoor and 8 Outdoor gateways around Rarotonga, including Avatiu Harbour, Avatiu Valley, Takuvaine, Avarua, Tupapa, Matavera, Turangi, Avana, Totokoitu, Taipara, Papua, and Ngatoo. These installations provide coverage for our current projects.

Our agreement with a local company to install our gateways on their poles has been put on hold due to our inability to cover the cost without having secured projects and work for cash flow.

We have set up office premises, and two directors are working there permanently. We have sufficient stock to deliver projects and have ordered some excess to cater for the global shortage of equipment/parts. Managing internet connectivity costs has been a significant challenge.

Providing New Access to the Domestic Market for Various Applications and Opportunities to Utilize the IoT Network

We received our stock of gateways, devices, and power meters in 2021 and have sufficient stock to deliver projects, although the project uptake has been slow. Presentations with government departments have not materialized into projects just yet due to budget restraints and lack of funds for new projects. It has been difficult to get meetings with some government ministries, and we have decided to change our approach and focus on raising awareness and lobbying key people to get a foot in the door.

We completed a Water Level Tank Monitoring project with a private sector client, and the data showed that there was a leak somewhere on the property. After further investigation and engaging a plumber, a leak was found in one of the walls of the property, which has since been fixed. This has saved the client \$200 per month in power bills because the water pump is running less.

We have secured the supply of water for one water meter to To Tatou Vai.

GHD (Te Mato Vai project) engaged ICT Nexus Ltd to provide the communications aspect for the project, including providing devices and capability for data collection and accessibility to that data via an online platform for the 10 water intakes. Our part of this project was completed in December 2022. We are monitoring the intakes, flow and production of water, pressure, and have set up a complete SCADA system on top of this for all 10 water metering stations. We are also monitoring the main pressure of the main ring in TKV and the roundabout at Avatiu Harbour, intakes at TKV, and the tanks are monitored by tank level and residential water meter. Additionally, we are monitoring some public water stations, such as the Avatiu Meeting House.

We have completed a 3-month project with the Airport Authority Cook Islands to monitor their Water Tank Levels at one of their facilities. We have 3 months' worth of data and are waiting for confirmation of the date/time to meet with them and discuss the data results and what they mean. It is one thing to have data available and another to know what to do with that data to improve things.

We have secured a project to install CCTV cameras at one location for EMCI. This was to monitor king tides at the time.

We are currently working with a private sector business/client on a Building Automation project that includes Energy Monitoring, Air Quality Monitoring, and will be expanding to Gas Metering (for Aircon systems).

- [ManaNet](#)

Proposal Title: ManaNet

Proposed Venture: Internet Service Provider (ISP) in the Cook Islands while prioritizing Rarotonga and Aitutaki. This company will then provide the following services: internet services to

individuals/businesses/government/education/health, wifi hotspots, streaming digital TV (Netflix, Amazon, etc.), corporate networking/support, data centre and cloud services, Internet of Things (IOT), IP Telephony/VOIP, and Digital Security.

Project Update: The office has been renovated and set up. All the telecom equipment has arrived in Rarotonga. Te Aponga has agreed to run fibre on their power poles but we are still waiting for installation details, maintenance and pricing, terms/conditions etc. Finalising a deal with TAU on pole use is a key success factor for the business.

- [Project Five Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Esports Centre

Proposed Venture: Project Five is developing a professional esports centre with the goal of bringing the esports world to life in the Cook Islands. The increase of live esports tournaments and viewership has driven the need for well-equipped venues for gaming fans to congregate.

Project Update: Project Five Esports Arena has been operational for nearly two years and has encountered its share of opportunities and challenges:

The membership pattern experiences seasonal fluctuations, resulting in a significant drop in the number of participants at the esports arena during the "low" season when there are fewer visitors to the island. As a result, there is a substantial decrease in income to cover operational costs.

The increased cost of electricity had a huge impact on operating cost, so we're having to relook at budgets and increasing hourly rates to cover these increases.

One of our key strategies has been to explore partnerships and sponsorships with corporate entities that share our vision for promoting esports in education. We recently reached out to Vodafone with a proposal for a partnership to deliver our esports arena to schools. While we were hopeful that this would lead to a successful collaboration, we have not progressed any further than we hoped. Nonetheless, we remain open to the possibility of future partnerships and are actively seeking out other potential partners.

In the meantime, we have been working on other initiatives to promote esports education in schools. We are pleased to announce that we will be running a coding camp during the upcoming school holidays as a pilot project for school demonstration. This camp will provide an opportunity for students to learn coding skills and apply them in the context of esports. We hope that this will generate interest and enthusiasm for esports education among students and educators alike.

Currently, coaches from the United States are working with a couple of gamers on Rarotonga to improve their skills, with the hope that they will be able to compete with teams from other countries.

- [Accounting Made Easy](#)

Proposal Title: You Can Do It!

Proposed Venture: Website/Application that can be used to facilitate and empower micro, small to medium sized businesses to access online tax templates that can assist with filing their own monthly tax calculations and obligations

Project Update: Registrations have climbed to 93. A total increase of 13 businesses from March 2022. 44 Sole Traders, 8 Partnerships and 42 Companies (includes our own business registered on the cashbook).

AME have spent time with each of our active customers to ensure customer satisfaction and helping them with understanding for example, the difference between a VAT and Non-VAT transaction. In the last nine months we are pleased to see the quality and quantity of entries improve in our cashbook. This is a good indicator that businesses are learning that understanding their accounts and putting in the time gives greater financial management and overall business satisfaction.

Since AME has become a member of the Business Link Pacific Network, the team is pleased to have been able to assist 26 businesses on Rarotonga and Aitutaki. Giving greater access to our services at significant discounted rates. Of these businesses, 19 are registered customers of YCDI Cashbook. This program allowed us to assist local businesses to our Cashbook and provide business advice furthering their education and understanding on how to run a successful business, and how using the YCDI Cashbook as a primary tool.

AME has taken on an intern, a Tereora College school-leaver with NCEA Level Accounting and are pleased to train her on the mechanics of the cashbook. Should this be successful, we will continue to look towards taking on another intern mid 2023.

- [Nesia Limited \(88fm\)](#)

Proposal Title: ICT Radio/Video/TV/Podcast/App Online Solution

Proposed Venture: New Television Channel/Network, delivered via 2 methods. 1. MoanaTV (Vodafone) 2. Brand New Application. Primary content will be real-time music, music videos, and the ability to produce Podcast material daily. Local Entertainment, Social Media, Current Affairs, Magazine style content will also be produced.

Project Update: Finding new business has been a real struggle, as customers are reluctant to do any new advertising. We are continually trying to find new creative ways to do advertising campaigns for clients. With the new direct flights being announced for both Sydney and Hawaii, this is great news which will no doubt generate the economy and encourage clients to do more advertising.

- [Dive Rarotonga 2018 Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Dive Rarotonga Online

Proposed Venture: Online store to expand the sale of diving related products and our customised merchandise to a worldwide market. We already operate a successful website for the business, but would like to develop a separate online store to incorporate more widespread retail into our business plan.

The products we would introduce on the Online store will include the full range of diving and snorkeling equipment from reputable Scuba manufacturers, along with videos outlining servicing techniques, product reviews and product comparisons, as well as online teaching support for customers. As well as Scuba Diving equipment, we will offer a range of equipment for freediving and underwater photography.

Project Update: There was a delay in the design of the website after a lack of interest from providers. We have since gone with a local provider and after some delays working with them, the website is now live with a few bugs to be fixed. I have populated the site with products and ANZ have also signed off their payment gateway, so that is now functional. I will make the final payment for the website once the sign off meeting is completed but will try to negotiate that down because of the delay.

Stock is now on hand from all suppliers. US, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Pakistan and Dubai.

Generic Scuba equipment continues to be sourced from existing suppliers, with whom I have worked alongside for some time and Dive Rarotonga is the Cook Islands distributors and service centre for Scubapro, Mares and Suunto, all global high end manufacturers.

- [Czechmate Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Diagnostic and Certification of Copper and Fiber optic networks

Proposed Venture: Diagnostic and certification services for current and new copper and fiber optic installations and networks, also provide advanced analysis and auditing services for old installation and newly build data cabling plants.

Project Update: We have been providing certification services on a full scale, using the devices and knowledge we gained thanks to the SMART grant in our day-to-day work. In addition to this, we have also been providing regular IT and Communication trainings and certification courses in cooperation with Comms Learning New Zealand.

Our company has been delivering regular courses to our local contractors, government sector, and private businesses. The main objective of these courses is to improve the knowledge and installation practices of our local IT and Communication technicians.

We are now providing certification courses for other countries in Oceania, including New Zealand with scheduled future courses in Australia and Singapore. These courses are provided under the umbrella of Comms Learning New Zealand, and Czechmate LTD is now listed as an official partner. Our director, Martin Stetka, is also listed as an official member of the Comms Learning tutor team.

<https://www.commslearning.co.nz/partners-charities/>

<https://www.commslearning.co.nz/about-us/>

As an example, we have successfully delivered an online copper cabling course to the technical team of Vodafone Solomon Islands.

We have also scheduled a certification training for an army base at Palmerston North at the end of the month to train 12 professional soldiers in copper cabling and fiber optic installation. This training will be done virtually over Zoom, and we will utilize our new fiber optic connection to our office.

Furthermore, another training for an army base at Rolleston in New Zealand is scheduled for May, and this will be done in person by Martin Stetka of Czechmate LTD and Andy Edwards of Comms Learning New Zealand. Martin will also take a FOA certification exam to become Fibre Optic Association's (FOA) certified instructor.

- [Araura TV & Radio](#)

Proposal Title: Aitutaki Digital TV Network

Proposed Venture: Araura TV & Radio role is basically to educate and inform. We are proposing to digitise our Television network.

The product will be delivered to our audience via 4 channels

1. News - Public notices, Health Education Environment and other campaigns International news
2. Spiritual well-being - a channel for religious sermons and strengthening our christian morals
3. Sports and Entertainment - local and International events

4. Tourism and commerce - 24hr looped programming identifying where to dine, tours etc interspersed with stories of interest about Aitutaki, legends, how to make ika mata etc...

Project Update: Our broadcast equipment is performing very well and now have 6 channels broadcasting 24 hours a day. We estimate 500 homes have moved to the new digital platform.

Advertising Revenue streams have still not been realised as originally expected due to COVID.

A 2nd transmission unit and antenna tested and ready to install on top of Maunga Pu – awaiting approval from Vodafone. Have requested separate power supply and we may install our own mast to avoid further delays.

We have approached several advertisers in the private sector and in the Public sector – we have received confirmation from 4 advertisers to come aboard. Production of their ads is currently underway.

We finally received the contract to mount an antenna on Vodafone mast at Takapora (the existing antenna) and I expect a duplicate contract to mount the 2nd antenna on Maunga Pu.

- [Trustees & Fiduciaries \(Cook Islands\) Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Digital Marketing and Delivery of New Trust Product

Proposed Venture: Propose maximizing use of online digital marketing for launch of a new trust product, making the best use of latest digital marketing technology (both hardware and software) and the new fiber optic service now available in the Cook Islands.

Project Update: In December 2021 the International Relationship Property Trust Act was passed by Government. This was an act that was developed by T&F together with the support of FSDA.

The following activity has been completed since then:

1. Articles published in the STEP Magazine and CEO Insight.
2. A dedicated platform on our new website - <https://trusteescookislands.com/cook-islands-international-relationship-property-trust/>

Using the following Constant Contact (mail out platform), Vimeo, Buzzsprout (Podcast), LinkedIn and Facebook, we created and continue to upload marketing content to promote the new trust and the Cook Islands jurisdiction as an innovator of new trust products.

Created a sample Trust Document that all Trust Companies on Rarotonga can use with their clients to establish these trusts.

T&F has also created content and held education seminars with CSB Bank and other trust companies to assist them in their learning on the product. T&F also created a legal webinar and have delivered it to in-house law firms in the US to deliver education on the new product. This is ongoing and forms a part of our marketing strategy on product awareness.

Reuben Tylor attended and presented at the STEP Asia conference in Singapore to launch the new trust product to the Asian market. And will be attending and presenting at the STEP Adelaide seminar in March 2023 to launch the new trust product to the Australian market.

We have a balance of funds still remaining that we intend to use for the following:

1. April 2023 – videography for more video's on the new product
2. Digital marketing – continue with promotion plan for the rest of 2023.

- [Mana Living Concepts](#)

Proposal Title: Manini E-Commerce Development

Proposed Venture: Online retail store and implementation and training of the associated supply chain and operational aspects of digitizing shop front for local clothing brand Manini Wear. Developing a SMART shop gateway to expand sales to Pa Enea and international markets.

Project Update: Key Milestones

1. PayPal, Afterpay payment functions activated
2. Developed relationships with more Social Media influencers
3. Video Content on website
4. Engaged a local digital social & content agency to assist with images/marketing
5. Imagery for Socials improved and less work for owner.
6. Increased Sales locally with visitor's market due to website reach in NZ
7. Warehouse & logistics in operation based in Auckland
8. Inhouse capable website management & updates
9. Uptick in online sales with Afterpay option online

Successes:

1. ANZ NZ account established & Stripe Payment Gateway interfaced with website
2. Afterpay, PayPal account established
3. Production, supply chain much more efficient and strengthened
4. Shipping process much more productive/economic out of NZ
5. Digital Media Marketing making inroads internationally
6. Product range is stronger and well received
7. Website store updated with better cart and imagery
8. Better understanding of market position & online functionality
9. Using third party international payments system to pay OS suppliers (reduced TT cost)
10. Customer base expanding to wholesale opportunity in Fiji and NZ.

Challenges:

1. Tweaking digital marketing components (insta, facebook etc) requires ongoing attention and is high management
2. Cash flow not enough to keep stock up
3. Maintaining advertising & optimum digital marketing affected by cash flow issues
4. Freight costs remains a major issue impacting COG
5. Production costs have increased affecting COG
6. Online sales have been sporadic (maybe due to NZ economy)
7. Local internet connection, speed and stability
8. Accessing low interest finance
9. General operation costs increasing due to supply side cost increases
10. Workload on GM increasing, need to find skilled staff and funding for business growth

11. Budgeting, production planning, stock level forecasting, cashflow

- [Sky Lounge Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Cybersecurity Cook Islands - Breaking Barriers

Proposed Venture: As the country's first cybersecurity entity, we plan to tap into the vast US market in order to more rapidly generate money to provide rewarding employment and training to local Cook Islanders. We want to hire local people who are committed to the vision of propelling Cook Islands to a new level of technological excellence. And that is why we ask for this SMART grant funding; to help buoy the nation onto a level playing field in the digital world.

Project Update: Research continues for latest trends in cybersecurity including latest threat vectors, to provide customers with relevant updates.

Industrial Control Systems was added as a new area of interest. In looking at new ways to generate business income, we are now shifting to develop assembler code to monitor sensors, etc. for Industrial Control Systems. Marketing those products to tech companies will be the next step.

- [Futureproof Enterprises Limited](#)

Proposal Title: International Website and Sales Expansion

Proposed Venture: Expanding our business operation to other Pacific Islands. Initially Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and American Samoa. To do this, we will be creating a new website for each country with the capability to handle multi currency payments, multi country shipping costs, multi country customs clearance, tax and delivery options.

Project Update: After many more hurdles than anticipated, we are finally ready to launch the Samoan website on Friday 20th Jan. Staffing has been the major problem as well as a change in the logistics provider in Samoa after the test run went very poorly. After completing the last two test runs very smoothly, we are happy with our new logistics supplier to Samoa.

Focus is on Facebook/Instagram and advertising templates are set up and have started for the launch date.

We've had over spend on budget for staffing. With the labour market so tight here, we've had to suck it up and pay a lot more. We'll continue to cover the shortfall. We've found a more innovative way to manage staffing expenses on the website admin which has reduced the costs significantly going forward.

The Fiji site will further blow out our budget but we've committed to it and have already started work on it. We'll be looking to launch this in March.

- [Sabati CI Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Indigital Art

Proposed Venture: The IndigitalArt website and App would be the first of its kind with numerous avenues of visual art services – nurturing indigenous artists and their creative works. This approach can advance cultural practices, sustain artists careers and financially benefit the creative industry locally and internationally. A digital platform for Cook Islands Indigenous Artists to reach a broader market and gain exposure within the international art scene. Help nurture emerging & established artists to develop and sustain their careers.

Project Update: There was a bit of delay with the website payment portal, organising the acceptable information, meeting the criteria has proven to be very difficult. But the website is now complete and ready for uploading, have done a trial. Working on specific areas of art with artists this has been slow co-ordinating time, availability with international arts is consuming.

During the trial – had a few problems and had to trouble shoots but also wait for website developer. The original developer’s contract has finished. His assistance is limited.

I have made 5 sales this year from local artists, tried to push it through website but had complication through the payment portal.

New activity;

Kids with disabilities art experience – through Nukutere College, Every Monday morning from 8.30am – 10am. Full year term. This will be run through the website as community involvement. The goal is to have a half year open studio and then an end of year exhibition.

Three exhibitions coming up; Fresh Gallery – collective indigenous artists Fresh Gallery June, KWDA exhibition and Vaka Eiva Paddle show CI end of year.

- [ExplorePay](#) – now changed name to Smartie

Proposal Title: ExplorePay recently changed to Smartie

Proposed Venture: A website & mobile app called ExplorePay. ExplorePay is the first fintech built specifically for the Cook Islands community with the goal of expanding across the South Pacific countries. ExplorePay tackles the limitations of our standard banking systems by providing a disruptive service that delivers an easy-to-use, low friction, secure and instant mobile payment platform.

Project Update: In September 2022 we made the decision to rebrand the business to “Smartie”, SmartPay, SmartFood, SmartRide, SmartStay, SmartCheckout, SmartWeb etc. The opportunity to work with this new concept allows the business to naturally align with themes such as smart tech, smart phones, smart living etc. This new “Smartie” branding, will allow us to build a safe, strong & fun marketing campaign in line with our fintech products and services, ensuring that customers enjoy a great engagement experience. With regards to an eventual name change of the company, we are currently in discussions with our accountant and legal advisors what should be our best approach going forward. A final decision is yet to be made. We will update this situation in due course.

Also this month we had the opportunity to meet with the CKI Tourism CEO and team to present a product demonstration. Discussions revolved around the potential for some future collaboration in particular with our SmartStay affiliate portal and SmartCheckout payment gateway to support their Tourism website and therefore supporting local accommodators, operators in the Cook Islands.

We also met with the Tourism Industry Council (operators from private sector) where we covered exactly the same topics and content as discussed with the Tourism Ministry. Again very positive reaction from the members present.

- [XIIK Studios](#)

Proposal Title: XIIK Creative Academy

Proposed Venture: Xiik Studios is a Rarotonga, Cook Islands based creative technology audio/visual communication firm and education provider that utilize creative/digital technology to provide a range of

products and services. Xiik concentrates on a variety of creative tech functions with a core focus on 3d animation/graphics education and training courses. The targeted students are high school graduates for Xiik's education services and targeted customers are established small- to medium-size companies for Xiik's 3d services and other audio/visual communication services.

Project Update: The business continues to evolve. The Academy has found a permanent space online via our new website, from which people can download graphic design courses.

<https://creativeacademy682.gumroad.com/>

A few weeks ago BTIB approached us to put together a proposal to gain funding for an online gaming project which we have done. We have recognised now that the timing of this project may not coincide with the activities that we have planned already for 2023 so we will have to make a decision on whether we will head the project or not. The online school part of our enterprise is our primary purpose. Our goal for setting up the business – aside from earning an income - was achieving a positive social impact on our community.

December has been a busy month. We were approached by Creative NZ to be part of their Moana Digital pilot program which partners pacific artists with artists in New Zealand to complete a creative project of any kind during a four week time frame.

A few Cook Islander artists were chosen as well as artists from all over the Pacific. I partnered with my daughter. We are the only artists who have completed the project and it will be streamed on The Coconet Tv which is the biggest digital for pacific content. We are also currently working on a collaboration with Tokelau illustrator Moses Villiamu who is an established artist who resides in New Zealand.

Because of the interest our work has gained internationally we are seriously considering making film projects full-time and releasing courses after completion of each project. This means that students will be able to see and learn the full process of what skills are needed.

The money we have made this year has been reinvested into new equipment and maintenance of current equipment. This is necessary to provide digital products of the highest quality.

Internet continues to be an issue and is our biggest obstacle. We understood when we started our company that this would be the case.

We have lost a lot of business because of our telecommunications issues here in the islands. We recognised this very early on made up for it by sending our content by USB stick to the pa enua and internationally. This is a less-than-efficient way of communicating with our clients and customers.

- [Turama Photography](#)

Proposal Title: Digital Content, Marketing solutions website and e-store

Proposed Venture: Innovative digital content, marketing and social media solutions for both local and international companies. This proposal aims to maximize the benefits of the Manatua Cable service by creating a new website e-store platform where clients can purchase high quality digital content and marketing strategies via live or prerecorded workshops. Specifically focusing on businesses around the world who are now pivoting their services, products and sales to a rapidly growing global on-line market to combat the impacts of COVID on the global economy.

Project Update: Since our last report we have seen our best month of revenue since pre COVID. We continue to see demand for our live stream products for both domestic business and tourism-based applications. Our new online E-store print gallery is now live where anyone in the world can purchase

images of the Cook Islands for personal or commercial use. The prints are now auto fulfilled from professional printing labs all over the world shipped directly to the customers eliminating the need for us to freight to and from the Cook Islands. You can view the new shop here:

<https://Zemanandco.pixieset.com/printgallery/>.

We have confirmed a job for early next year with Intercontinental Hotel Group about a large project for their Fiji location. We are very excited about bring them on as a client and providing them with services only made possible because of our SMART grant funding. Moving into the 2023 financial year we are anticipating continued growth in our digital marketing solutions products as well as the e commerce print shop mentioned earlier.

- [Cook's Island Bus Passenger Transport Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Smart Ticketing

Proposed Venture: We aim to be able to provide a better service to our customers by taking advantage of newer technology, which will put us on same level that you could expect from public transportation in larger countries. Upgrading our Electronic Ticketing System will allow for the use of RFID/NFC Cards (like the AT Hop and Snapper Cards in NZ), Online Payments and PayWave. We will also be able to provide live scheduling, tracking and bus capacity alerts making catching a bus that much easier.

Project Update: As from May 2022 we have had the TransportMe Ticketing System fully operational for Ticketing, SmartCard Usage and reporting.

The SmartCard System is now fully functional for locals and residents of Rarotonga. We are still in the process of working out a product for the visitors market.

The Tracking System is fully functional through the TransportMe Passenger App. This information has been marketed towards all users, locals and visitors. The Tracking System has been the star of the show and has been reflected in the amount passengers that can be seen using it when waiting for the bus.

We are in the process of integrating it with Google Maps via the Transit Programme.

We have resolved the issues surrounding the online payment portal. SmartCard users are now able to top up and manage funds using the App.

Currently we have not been able to make any progress with Contactless Payments. We have spoken with BCI and BSP regarding the matter of being able to accept EFTPOS Transactions on the bus using our Electronic Ticketing System. We have been informed by both banks that this is an area they are currently working on but are unsure of when this will be possible. We look forward to working further with our local banks to achieve contactless payment on the bus.

- [Tau'i Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Sense IT

Proposed Venture: Tau'i's aim is to drive the adoption of IOT sensors in the business and residential community to enable better life and business decisions based on accurate and relevant data generated from the physical environment.

Project Update: Tau'i has been collaborating with a number of government agencies, including Climate Change Cook Islands, ICI, Internal Affairs, with a device installed in Aitutaki and waiting on confirmation of which islands need to be installed first for each agency. Met with and presented to a few individuals

and businesses who were wanting our emergency button device. Collaborating with Vodafone which Islands the gateways need to be installed. Did some marketing training and purchased the next round of devices for new customers, although they did take longer than expected to arrive. 2023 we have set up our goals and have started of the year with a good start as we have a big project coming up.

- [Angle Photo and Video Cook Islands](#)

Proposal Title: Cook Islands Digital Media Content

Proposed Venture: Angle Productions would like to create an e-Commerce Website to sell Cook Islands Stock Footage online in the format of still and video imagery for content creators to purchase and download anywhere in the globe.

Project Update: Throughout 2022 it has been a challenge getting the website up and running within budget due to a rise in prices with web developers. So made the decision not to formalize the contract. As we have experience in web-development and coding we decided in the best way forward (albeit slower, but more cost effective) was for us to develop the website ourselves.

October and November 2022 we began discussions with local bank BSP to set-up our payment gateway for e-commerce. This has proven successful. The processes are easy, e-commerce will come straight into our local account and the cost of setting this up is a fraction of original cost.

We have a domain name secured. Building of the site is in progress and we are on target for a soft launch in July 2023 targeting the Rarotonga Bicentennial Event. Fully functional and operating by November 2023.

Currently we are looking to finalise in the next 2 months which internet service provider to go with for better upload speed once the website is fully functional (either Vodafone or Kuki Net).

- [Maritime Cook Islands Limited](#)

Proposal Title: Online Registry System for Maritime Cook Islands

Proposed Venture: MCI will develop a new, cloud based, on-line registry system. The system will hold data about all vessels registered on the Cook Islands Ship Registry and will process this data in order to issue certificates to clients in respect of their vessels and employed seafarers once compliance has been validated.

Project Update: UpVise system went live at the end of the second quarter 2021. The old MARCI system was closed down on 14 August 2021. Enhancement of the UpVise system is ongoing – a number of new initiatives are in the pipeline. The benefits of the system are being realised by users. Six systems are now integrated into a single system.

The controls which are built into the system are giving the Fleet Managers much more control over the activities of the Agents and surveyors.

The fact that invoicing is one of the gates that have to be passed through before a certificate can be issued has simplified and improved the charging for services rendered.

Electronic certificates have meant that we do not need Agents to issue certificates on our behalf. In 2022 our Gross Profit % increased by 2.4%. Electronic certificates also mean that we do not have to spend money on couriers.

In spite of the system cutting agents out of a number of revenue streams for them – they have embraced the system as it is much more simple and intuitive than our old system and much faster – it also works very well on mobile devices. Surveyors in particular have taken to the system as it saves them time in completing their reports. The survey reports are now much more standardised making them easier for MCI staff to check and sign off on.

- [Ora Fiduciary \(Cook Islands\) Limited T/A Ora Partners](#)

Proposal Title: Building a Blockchain Future – Smart Trust Pilot Project

Proposed Venture: The Pilot project will develop a "Smart Trust" platform, a platform that will enable the introduction of digital technology to existing Trustee business not just in the Cook Islands, but on the global stage. This platform will have an immense economic benefit for trustee companies, banks, law firms, accounting firms, money managers and other related financial services firms.

Project Update:

- Continued development of investor pitch.
- Identifying business case and development of revenue model
- Retention of local consultants (Angelo Aspris and Alan Taylor) to peer review pitch document and provide feedback.
- Changes to the pitch document as a result of those recommendations
- Review of platform by Ora Fiduciary staff, with feedback to tech team

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