



Changing Faces Women's Leadership Seminar Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs

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Oahu ♦ Maui

Draft Action Plan

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“Growing Digital Education at Apia International School”

Issue/Problem Statement

The digital divide between the education sector in developed countries and Pacific Islands continues to widen. Samoan secondary schools still focus on “chalk and talk” delivery of traditional curriculum. There is limited or no: ICT use; Internet access; ICT literacy; or ICT subjects. Many Samoan schools do not achieve minimum quality of learning standards and science and technology teachers are scarce. While donor-funded ICT equipment is found in secondary schools across the country, these resources are underutilized, largely due to few teachers with ICT skills and little value ascribed to ICT. As a result, Samoan high school students are not adequately prepared for life in a modern, changing and interconnected world.

Apia International School (AIS) was established in 2019 to deliver a modern educational paradigm where technology is at the heart of learning across all subjects. The School’s vision is to provide world-class education for high school students in Samoa where distance is no barrier. Students bring their own devices to study at online correspondence schools. AIS provides a supportive learning environment with a student community and teacher supervision. Students undertake “real world” subjects together including Samoan studies, sport and visual art, to connect with their community.

AIS commenced operation in January 2019 with 4 students. It has limited finances and relies on a small group of dedicated volunteers and tutors paid a modest per diem. Limited equipment has been sourced from donors. Previous donor funding applications have been rejected on the basis that the school was a new start up. The ability to attract more students is hampered by overseas correspondence schools’ enrollment categories based on citizenship or residency.

Steps taken to address these issues include recruiting an Australia volunteer who is an ICT teacher (commencing July 2019) and sourcing a donor-funded satellite dish with 2 years’ internet connectivity. The board is also engaging with Australian and New Zealand Government representatives about opening international student categories at their state-funded online schools.

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Mission & Project Description

Remove access and financial barriers to grow Apia International School and provide an enhanced digital education environment for its students.

The project will achieve this by:

1. Developing a 3 year strategic plan to support a sustainable and strengthened operation.
2. Identifying and recruiting additional board members to strengthen governance.
3. Sourcing donor funding to procure learning equipment and related resources.
4. Partnering with governments and education providers in Australia and New Zealand to remove access barriers for international students at online high schools.
5. Developing a marketing strategy to reach out to potential students and increase enrollment

These outcomes will benefit existing and future AIS students and staff, and indirectly benefit the broader Samoan community. This project is innovative as it meets the Samoan community's strong need for better educational outcomes and improved ICT literacy in high school graduates.

Personal Role

My role is to lead the project implementation as AIS Board Chair, alongside other board members, AIS staff and new volunteers. The project will expand my existing role, which has focused on set-up, to take on more strategic issues. I bring my passion for digital education, empowering young people and a better future for the Pacific. I will also bring to the role my corporate governance skills and 15 years' experience in ICT and telecommunications policy, regulation and implementation in the Pacific.