



**Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The College of the Marshall Islands and
The National Training Council**



1. Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) sets out the terms and understanding between the College of the Marshall Islands (“CMI”) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands National Training Council (“NTC”) to collaborate on a range of initiatives designed to strengthen technical and vocational education (“TVET”), also referred to as Career Technical Education (“CTE”), in the Marshall Islands.

This MOU recognizes the previous and successful collaboration between CMI and NTC and seeks to build on this partnership by working in a more strategic and collaborative manner.

This MOU, while not a legally binding contract, constitutes a statement of intent that CMI and NTC will work in partnership and good faith, at all levels of our organizations, to achieve the objectives specified in this MOU.

2. Background

CMI and NTC understand that education and training are shared responsibilities that require the collective, committed, and mission-focused effort of schools, higher education institutions, national and local government, the private sector, communities, parents, and civil society organizations.

There are a number of significant challenges to the effective delivery of TVET in the Marshall Islands which require a more collective and strategic effort as summarized below:

- The almost exclusive focus on academic education in secondary schools over the past few decades, combined with the lack of a national TVET strategy (since 2014) or Education Sector Plan has led to a heavily restricted and fragmented TVET delivery system.
- Similarly, following the closure of the CMI Gugeegue Campus in 2003, few TVET programs have been available at the postsecondary level.
- TVET programs are not systemically informed by good labor market data, which means they do not necessarily respond to the priority training needs of employers, so a more demand-driven approach is required.
- The lack of a standardized and international TVET accreditation system makes it difficult for students to provide evidence of competencies and articulation into more advanced studies in the Marshall Islands and abroad.
- TVET has not been able to keep pace with technology and its impact across all economic sectors.

- The lack of suitable training facilities, the high cost of specialized equipment and supplies, and the shortage of qualified trainers are major constraints to the delivery of TVET in RMI.
- Low literacy and numeracy rates impede students' ability to meet course entrance criteria or complete course requirements.
- The predominant public attitude that TVET is "second class" or inferior to academic education is impeding the supply of interested students.
- The high unemployment rate and limited jobs available in the formal sector mean that TVET programs also need to focus on preparing students to be entrepreneurs.
- RMI employers have expressed strong concerns about poor work ethics and believe more focus on work readiness training is required (NTC Strategic Plan, p. 5).
- TVET is primarily provided in Majuro and, therefore, not as accessible to students living on other atolls, so increasing the range of livelihood and skills based training in the outer islands is essential.
- More men than women enroll in TVET courses, and training has focused on male-dominated occupations like carpentry, welding and mechanical trades, so increasing gender equity in TVET is essential.

Against this backdrop, CMI and NTC recognize the need to work in new and innovative ways to enhance the quality and diversity of TVET options available for Marshallese and to better support economic and social development in the Marshall Islands. In this regard, the NTC Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 states: 'it is essential that NTC work in close collaboration with the CMI and the USP to develop a coordinated approach to addressing the priority training needs of the nation' (p. 10).

Similarly, CMI's *METO: Education Master Plan 2019-2029* requires that CMI, as part of its economic and community development goal, "Develop and implement a collaborative strategy to meet the workforce training needs of the community" and "Develop strong partnerships between CTE programs and local businesses and industries" (p. 25).

CMI and NTC support the integration of TVET education in the upcoming National Education Sector Plan, and recognize that career planning and skills training must commence during primary and secondary schooling and continue through the provision of life-long training and re-training options for adults.

CMI and NTC believe that this MOU will support the implementation of the new Education Sector Plan and provide a sound basis for exploring new ways of working collaboratively for a more effective TVET delivery system in the Marshall Islands.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to identify how CMI and NTC will work together over the next three or more years¹ to strengthen TVET in the Marshall Islands using a multi-faceted strategy.

¹ The current NTC Strategic Plan covers the period 2019-2021 while the upcoming CMI Meto Education Master Plan covers the period 2019 - 2029. As such, this MOU will be formally reviewed in mid-2021 to

This MOU seeks to expand the existing relationship between NTC and CMI beyond one of funding one-off training initiatives to a more strategic partnership approach aimed at redressing the fundamental constraints to effective TVET as outlined in the previous section.

This MOU recognizes that both agencies have different functions and strengths and will contribute in different ways to the partnership which will evolve over time. It also recognizes the need for ongoing review of the terms and provisions inherent in this MOU and the need to maintain a firm commitment to resolving any issues that may arise in the implementation of this partnership.

The specific objectives of this MOU and the partnership between CMI and NTC are:

- i) To increase the interest and participation of Marshallese young people in TVET;
- ii) To provide TVET in high demand occupational skill areas using innovative and customized approaches;
- iii) To articulate TVET pathways for Marshallese students to enable progressive skills development and attainment of higher qualifications;
- iv) To build the capacity of Marshallese TVET instructors through gap targeted training, mentoring, and certification;
- v) To build the capacity of Marshallese counsellors and youth workers to undertake employment readiness training, and
- vi) To identify lessons learned and best practice approaches through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives.

4. Implementation of Activities

These objectives will be achieved through the implementation of several activities as summarized below. The role of CMI and NTC in planning and carrying out these activities, along with the budget, timeline, and M&E framework will be negotiated and agreed by the partners as the basis for developing the project document and contract.

i) Increase the interest and participation of Marshallese young people in technical and vocational education

To increase the supply of TVET students, CMI will conduct regular vocational enrichment programs in the community through the local government and schools and publicize the successful outcomes of graduates of TVET programs. CMI will also begin developing partnerships with secondary schools to offer highly visible Early Middle College courses in the high schools. NTC will make use of its communication channels such as its radio show, social media, and website to publicize the successful outcomes of TVET programs.

In addition to these activities, this MOU will support a new initiative called the “TVET Foundation Program”. This program builds on the success of the 2019 CMI-NTC “Boot Camp” by expanding to the outer islands targeting younger students, and creating pathways to further training and work experience such as Job Corps, internships etc.

evaluate the overall effectiveness and impact, and to assess the relevance to the future work of both organizations as the basis for continued partnership.

TVET Foundation Program

The TVET Foundation Program is designed to “kick-start” the streaming of TVET students in secondary schools (as per the upcoming Education Sector Plan) through a targeted awareness, recruitment, orientation, and skill training program for selected high school students in Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit, and Wotje.

This Program will involve:

- ✓ Designing and delivering high-interest TVET orientation sessions combined with collecting data on TVET occupations of most interest to students, both male and female;
- ✓ Identifying prospective TVET students by school principals/administrators;
- ✓ Designing and delivering two-week “Mini Boot Camps” for identified high school students during school break to: introduce occupational trade clusters (i.e., construction, retail, maritime) and provide hands-on learning teach life skills, and provide career counselling. These camps will also strive to instill a sense of pride in vocational occupations (i.e., “Carpenter in Training” tee-shirts, visits to industry, media exposure, completion certificates, etc.);
- ✓ Designing and delivering “Boot Camp” training for Mini Boot Camp graduates in their preferred trade cluster following Grade 12, design of which will be informed by the evaluation results of the 2019 CMI/NTC Boot Camp. Boot Camp students will also complete the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) Program;²
- ✓ Providing assistance to Boot Camp graduates in securing work experience through NTC/private sector supported internships, attending Job Corp, etc., and/or articulating to more advanced trades training (see Objective 2).

These activities will be repeated on a two-year cycle to enable proper monitoring and evaluation including the integration of lessons learned from year one. Mini boot camps will include trade clusters of interest to both girls and boys and will be held in Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit, and Wotje.

The boot camp program will be guided and supported by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from NTC, PSS, CMI, and USP.

ii) Provide technical and vocational training in high demand occupational skill area using innovative and customized approaches

Skills Training

To enhance the occupational skills of Marshallese and support articulation from entry level to more advanced training, CMI will provide or arrange TVET training in high demand occupations. Demand will be determined through NTC-CMI consultation with industry leaders and up-to-date labor market information. Supply will be assessed by surveying high school students and unemployed youth. Training curriculum will be customized in response to the competencies required by Marshallese employers,

² The NCRC Program offers an assessment-based credential that can contribute towards college credits. Students are assessed based on the following 4 levels: Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze. The NCRC measures and certifies the essential work skills needed for success in jobs across industries and occupations.

student characteristics, and the upcoming national qualifications framework. Training programs will focus on short-term, skills acquisition and competence and involve work experience and life skills training.

CMI, NTC, and other relevant entities will contribute to the development of the RMI Qualifications Framework and develop stackable credentials to enable TVET trainees to enhance their qualifications. Further, CMI and NTC will work in collaboration to identify suitable training facilities.

iii) Articulate TVET pathways for Marshallese students to enable progressive skills development and attainment of higher qualifications

TVET Mapping

This activity responds to the need for clearly articulated TVET options and pathways that students, parents, school staff, employers, and employees throughout the country can understand.

This initiative assumes that if prospective students were more aware of the benefits of TVET training (i.e., increased employability) and the range of technical and vocational training options available to them, they would be more likely to take up these opportunities whether in the Marshall Islands, the Pacific region, or the USA. NTC, PSS, CMI, and USP will work together to develop a TVET Road Map that shows entry points and articulation pathways for a range of occupations for use in career counselling. This activity will also support the development and implementation of the upcoming Education Sector Plan and national TVET Strategy.

iv) Build the capacity of Marshallese TVET instructors through gap targeted training, mentoring, and certification

TVET Training of Trainers Program

CMI will design and implement a Train the Trainers program for skilled Marshallese who display the ability to conduct TVET training. This activity will include:

- ✓ Providing mentoring on teaching philosophies, pedagogy, and andragogy to assist the trainers in their delivery;
- ✓ Using CMI's existing regional partnerships to identify non-Marshallese trainers when there are no appropriately qualified Marshallese trainers/instructors available;
- ✓ Developing "Recognition of Prior Learning ("RPL")" policy and procedures to allow Marshallese TVET instructors to further their skills and qualifications; and
- ✓ Certifying Marshallese trainers who show interest and potential in the delivery of TVET programs.

NTC will assist CMI with this program by identifying local individuals with the interest, aptitude, and experience to become certified TVET trainers.

v) Build the capacity of Marshallese counsellors and youth workers to undertake employment readiness training

National Career Readiness Certification training (“NCRC”) Program

In response to the need to improve work ethics and bolster employment readiness, NTC and CMI will collaborate to increase the number of qualified Marshallese NCRC “Educators” and “Administrators”. An “Educator” is someone who undergoes formal training in a holistic understanding of teaching strategies that advance students’ abilities to successfully master the core skills needed for College and Career success. An “Administrator” is someone who coordinates the test and has an active understanding of the testing policies and procedures.

This activity will involve:

- ✓ Training a select number of Marshallese who hold positions as school/college counsellors, youth workers, and employees (including NTC Employment Preparation Program staff) to become certified Educators and Administrators.³
- ✓ Providing job readiness training to students and unemployed young people, customized to the Marshall Islands context.
- ✓ Developing an “NCRC Educator and Administrator Peer-Group” to enable sharing of lessons learned and support professional development.
- ✓ Provide refresher training on new policies and practices for NCRC.

vi) Identify lessons learned and best practice approaches through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives.

The success of this MOU and the activities it encompasses rests with the commitment of both organizations to: i) ensure high quality monitoring and evaluation throughout implementation; ii) use M&E results to identify lessons learned and best practice approaches, and iii) apply this learning to improve the effectiveness of all initiatives supported under this agreement.

CMI will ensure all training programs are carefully monitored and evaluated by tracking trainees’ learning outcomes and level of course satisfaction. The parties will share responsibility for assessing career outcomes through the use of Tracer Studies and Focus groups at six-month intervals following completion of training programs.

It is recognized that both parties have different but important roles to play in M&E and applied learning which will be outlined in the project document monitoring and evaluation framework.

5. Contribution of the Parties

- NTC will commit funds for training, staff time, administrative support, and M&E.

³ Educators and Administrators are also known as Trainers and Proctors

- CMI will commit to the provision of trainers, curriculum development, teaching and learning materials, and M&E support.
- Additional funds required to implement this MOU will be sourced through an agreed fund raising strategy.

6. Reporting

The responsibilities of both parties for reporting on the progress and outcomes of implementation will be detailed in the project document. Reporting will involve a series of regular interactions at operational level (Dean of Adult and Continuing Education ↔ NTC Program Manager); management level (Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs ↔ NTC Director); governance level (CMI President ↔ NTC Board of Directors); and the Minister of Education.

Given the innovative and ground-breaking nature of this initiative, it will be important to involve key stakeholders from the Public School System, USP, and the private sector in an advisory role. As such, an Advisory Committee will be established to provide strategic leadership and support to the project management team.

7. Duration and Date of Effect

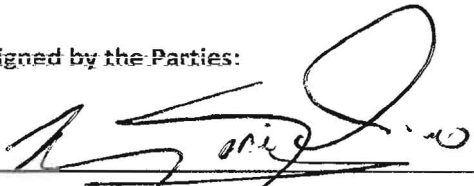
This MOU shall become effective upon signature of the authorized officials from the College of the Marshall Islands and the National Training Council and will remain in effect until December 2021, at which time it shall be reviewed for possible extension. Either party may terminate this MOU by written notification signed by the appropriate official of the institution initiating the notice. Such notification must be received by the other party at least six months prior to the effective date of termination.

8. Contact Information and Signature of the Parties

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Signed by the Parties:



Theresa Koroivulaono (PhD)
President, College of the Marshall Islands

Date: 12.16.19



Julius Lucky
Director, National Training Council

Date: 16 Dec. 2019