

e-Sri Lanka Telecentre Development Programme

Operations Manual

(Working draft)

Colombo

24 February 2004

Table of Contents

I. Programme Overview.....	1
II. Implementation arrangements.....	2
2.1 VGK Establishment.....	2
2.2 e-Learning, Training and Educational Support.....	3
III. Implementation Plan.....	4
3.1 Announcement.....	4
3.2 Awareness Campaign.....	4
3.3 Official Discussion of Programme.....	4
3.4 Installation of VGKs.....	4
IV. Description of Telecentre Furnishings and Services.....	5
4.1 Equipment and Software	6
4.2 Locale and security	6
4.3 Software and Content	6
<i>Administration and User Monitoring.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>User e-mail accounts.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>VGK Portal and Networking Software.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Local Content</i>	<i>8</i>
4.4 Connectivity.....	8
4.5 Training.....	8
V. Institutional Requirements.....	8
5.1 VGK Operators.....	8
5.2 VGK Support Institutions (VGKSI)s.....	9
5.3 VGKSI – VGK Operator Consortium.....	10
5.4 Community Support and Local Partners.....	10
VI. Summary of Subsidy Awards, Benefits and Obligations.....	10
VII. Evaluation of Proposals.....	11

I. Programme Overview

e-Sri Lanka's Telecentre Development Programme - called VGK, for Vishva Gnana Kendra or "Global Knowledge Centers" - aims to empower the population in rural areas of the country through affordable community access to information and communication technologies. Telecentres will be progressively established in rural areas during project implementation, starting in the South and in the North East, where connectivity will be provided through the RTN's established with project support. A parallel distance e-Learning and training and educational activity will complement VGK establishment.

The programme's predominant target are residents of small rural communities (e.g. farmers, rural youth) residing in small towns with between 2,000 and 5,000 people. The programme will also provide parallel distance e-learning and basic computer literacy training services to a broader population that also includes urban and periurban disadvantaged groups: e.g. students, small and microenterprises, women, disabled and marginalized groups.

The Telecentre Development Programme is expected to produce the following benefits for the target group: i) availability of affordable basic communication services (voice, fax, email and internet access), office services (printing, copying, scanning) and community information in rural and disadvantaged areas; ii) enhanced access and quality of social services (e.g. public services online, distance education); iii) access to private sector services online; iv) e-commerce and information on employment and opportunities for improved entrepreneurship (e.g. through online technical assistance, and expanded input and output market networks); v) mobilization of local knowledge and support to local industry development; vi) empowerment of target groups through community driven development.

To achieve these benefits the following outputs will be produced: i) network of 200 Telecentres in small rural communities of the country providing low cost access to ICTs; ii) a network of 8 distance e-learning centers furnished with a video interactive room, a computer laboratory and a small playback room as well as content, will help build local capacity among support institutions and provide long distance training to telecentre operators and users; and iii) an extensive programme to train Sri Lankans in basic computer skills (e.g. along the lines of the International Computer Driver License curricula), and to enable rural schools to improve the cost of rural education through the use of ICTs in support of their academic programmes. The SAF will complement these activities through financing of grassroots innovative initiatives, local content and community development projects that make effective use of ICTs.

The programme's component parts are as follows:

VGK Establishment and Operation (5 years)

- Connectivity subsidy
- Investment in equipment and software
- Management support

e-Learning, Training and Educational support

- Distance Learning in Pilot VGK Network
- Teacher training and subsidies to rural schools to enable use of VGKs in support of academic activities
- Training vouchers to expand computer literacy

II. Implementation arrangements

ICTA will retain overall coordination responsibility for planning, programme management, ensuring compliance with agreed policies and guidelines, and overall quality assurance. Additionally four other types of institutions will be involved, (1) VGK operators, (2) VGK Support Institutions, (3) a Managing Agent for the voucher scheme and (4) an independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

2.1 VGK Establishment

The VGK programme's primary focus is on rural communities with a population of no more than 5,000. To provide minimum conditions conducive to sustainability, the location of the sites have the following characteristics: a minimum population of 2,000; presence of a secondary school with at least 300 students; reliable supply of electricity through the grid; and proximity to a fixed market center with at least 15 wholesale vendors.

To help establish and sustain the telecentres over an initial period the programme will fund the equipment and software requirements of the telecentre, and will pay a declining subsidy for connectivity over the first 4 years of operation and the management services of the VGKSI. The prospects of VGK sustainability will be further enhanced by parallel funding available to users under the Training activities of the Programme

Aspiring VGK operators will partner with qualified VGKSI during the bidding process and, if selected, will be contracted with joint and several responsibility for running the VGKs over a 5 year period. The linkage between the individual VGK operators and the VGKSI is needed for two reasons. Firstly, VGKSI will complement local entrepreneurial abilities with the organizational, managerial, marketing and content development skills of large NGOs and commercial enterprises. Secondly, VGKSI will act on behalf of the ICTA to ensure the 5-year service obligations are fulfilled in every target community. The equipment will remain the property of the ICTA during this 5-year period and if, for instance, a local VGK operator fails to perform satisfactorily, the VGKSI may terminate its agreement and seek another local partner in the community to help provide the required services.

VGKs may be operated by a local entrepreneur, an NGO, or the manager of a local public service agency (public library, local school, community center). A local agency of the executive branch of government (e.g. a municipality) may give support and participate in a VGK partnership, but may not be the local VGK partner-operator. A determinant of the technical quality of proposals will be the extent to which they incorporate partnerships with several local and reputable NGOs, firms and institutions, as a means of aggregating demand for telecentre services, but the responsible parties for VGK operation will need to be a partnership of a single local firm, NGO or agency, with a qualified VGKSI.

The ICTA has pre-selected through a competitive process eight institutions that are helping the agency popularize the programme and establish pilot VGKs in urban areas, and are considered capable (pre-qualified) to give managerial and technical support to the VGKs. These institutions, together with others that will be invited to bid and may also, during the tender process, demonstrate having the necessary requirements, will together make up the potential pool of VGKSI.

To ensure that all of the selected rural communities are served (i.e. avoid "cherry picking" by the VGKSI), and to foster the development of content that services networks of neighboring communities with common interests, the selected VGK locations are being grouped together into clusters, each made up of about 4 to 10 VGK sites. A public open tender process will invite potential consortia of VGKSI and VGK operators to present their bids to provide pre-established service and content obligations over the 5-year implementation period. For each cluster,

those bids that meet the necessary technical obligations and require the least subsidy, will be selected for implementation.

2.2 e-Learning, Training and Educational Support

The distance/e-learning activities (DeL) included under the Programme will help raise the skill levels of a broad spectrum of the population at low cost. Four VGK centers established at the end of 2003 in urban centers outside Colombo (i.e. in Jaffna, Embilipitiya, Nuwara Eliya and Kurunagala) as well as four distance/e-learning facilities that the Government of Sri Lanka will pilot: in two universities (i.e. Jaffna University and South Eastern University, Oluvil campus), in the National Education College in Hatton and at the Chamber of Commerce of Matara. Some video facilities at the SIHRN Secretariat in Killinochchi will also be added to form part of this pilot network. DeL activities for the pilot network will be managed directly by the respective organizations selected to execute the sub-programme.

The Telecentre Programme will also help expand the use and clientele of VGKs rapidly and, simultaneously, enhance secondary education in rural communities, by providing for teacher training and enabling the use of the VGK facilities by local school authorities.

Once a small telecentre has been established, its greatest challenge will be to secure the productive use of the facilities as soon as possible. This is particularly challenging during the morning hours, as these tend to be the low-use time.

Under the programme a local VGK operator will be able to approach the school administrator and offer the use of the VGK facilities for educational purposes, during up to 4 hours in the morning every school day. The value of the subsidy to the school would be equal to the cost of those four hours, discounted by about 20% to keep the value of the subsidy in check and to account for the lower commercial value of morning computer/Internet time.

In order to qualify for the school subsidy, the school administrator will need to: i) make sure that one of his teachers is properly trained (for which funding is also provided under the project), ii) secure written endorsement from the local parent teacher association. Once these two conditions have been satisfied, the school administrator may apply for the school subsidy from the ICTA, channeling the paperwork through the local VGK operator and the VGKSI. The value of the subsidy to the school, would be paid directly to the operator, every 6 months, upon certification by the school administrator and the parent teacher association that the agreed upon VGK services have been received.

The process would be the same during the second and third year, except that the value of the subsidy will decrease. By then the operator will be in a better position to run the telecentre, and the school administrator and the parents will be better able to assess the value of VGK services to the school's educational programme. At this stage the operator can either offer to cover the difference himself or herself, or tell the school administrator that the school will need to meet the subsidy shortfall.

A voucher system will also be established to provide clients of the VGK operators and other telecentres throughout the island with a cost supplement to encourage utilization. The management of the voucher scheme will be out-sourced to a Managing Agent, contracted through the ICTA procurement and finance unit. The vouchers will be geared to pay primarily large scale basic computer Internet skills training, to expand awareness of the value of ICTs in the population. By expanding the network of Sri Lankan users the value of the network will increase rapidly and significantly.

The vouchers will be (a) non-transferable, (b) have a fixed value per unit of service close to the lower segment of the market price and (c) be retractively paid, only after the training service has been completed.

Some of the Programme's training services may be provided, on commercial terms, by the e-Learning network established with Programme support

An independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit will monitor implementation progress and undertake periodic evaluations of the VGK operation, the activities of the VGK Support Institutions and the Managing Agent of the voucher scheme. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit will report quarterly to the ICTA. Certification of compliance of the VGK 5-year service contracts will be outsourced by this Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

III. Implementation Plan

The Programme will be implemented in stages.

3.1 Announcement

A complete version of this Operations Manual, and a corresponding draft service contract between the ICTA and the VGKSI-VGK Operator consortia will be posted in ICTA's web page, as soon as it has been approved by the VGK Work Group and the ICTA Board. An announcement will then be issued, inviting comments on the proposal from the public, and enabling the posting of these comments publicly in the ICTA web page. The period for posting these comments will be limited to 3 weeks from the time the Operations Manual is first posted.

3.2 Awareness Campaign

Simultaneously with the posting of the Operations Manual in the e-Sri Lanka web page, an awareness campaign will be launched with support from the pre-selected VGKSI. The purpose of this campaign will be to introduce the Programme to interested communities and institutions (e.g. potential VGK Operators and VGKSIs), and to leave behind with interested parties in the community several hard copies of the Manual.

The occasion will also serve to invite all interested parties to Official Discussion meetings that follow, under ICTA leadership.

3.3 Official Discussion of Programme

Formal meetings conducted by the ICTA will be held in 19 District capitals. These meetings will serve the purpose of presenting the details of the programme, entertaining questions and making clarifications as needed.

It is at these meetings that the tender process for the first set of 100 VGKs will be launched.

3.4 Installation of VGKs

All equipment and furnishings provided on a non-reimbursable basis by the Programme will be procured directly by the ICTA. ICTA will inform each representative of the selected VGKSI-VGK operator consortia, the specific period where the equipment will be delivered at the pre-agreed location.

Once delivered, it is the responsibility of the VGKSI – VGK Operator consortia to install the equipment and begin providing the VGK service.

IV. Description of Telecentre Furnishings and Services

Table 1 presents a summary of the equipment and services that will be provided by every VGK, and the contribution that is to be made by the VGKSI – VGK Operator.

Table 1. Equipment, Software, Furnishings and Services to be Provided by Each VGK

Item	To be provided by:	
	ICTA	VGKSI-VGK Operator
Equipment		
4 computers – Intel Pentium IV 933 Mhz	X	
256 Megabytes RAM	X	
20 Gbytes hard drive	X	
Sound card	X	
Network card 10/100 MB	X	
Mouse P2 and Sinhalese or Tamil keyboard	X	
CD Reader 52X	X	
Floppy disk drive 1.44 Mb	X	
Speakers	X	
15" Monitor SVGA Color	X	
Power unit with ATX Technology	X	
Small videocamera connected to the PC		
One of these computers will be equipped with a CD Writer	X	
The 4 computers will be installed in the VGK premises and connected to a local area network, that enables connection to the Internet and the sharing of files and information.		X
Telephone equipment and billing system (2 lines) - Voice over IP	X	
Fax/photocopy/scanner (with scanning speed less than 9 seconds and minimum resolution of 600 dpi)	X	
Air conditioning equipment sufficiently powerful to service the VGK		X
Powerpoints, connection cables, routers and UBS		X
Software		
Linux operating System	X	
Open Office Software – or similar Office Suite installed		X
pdf document reader installed		X
Videoconferencing software installed (linked to videocamera provided)		X
Chat software installed		X
ICTA-sponsored group interaction software installed		X
Web page editor installed		X
Web browser (Netscape, Mozilla or other Open Source)		X
Telecentre administration software		X
User monitoring software		X
Local content portal of VGK		X
Locale and furnishings		
Suitable space (20 m ² per computer) air conditioned with security precautions.		X
Desk and chair for each computer installed		X
Sanitary facilities		X
Ease of access and other accessories for persons with disabilities.		X
Services		
e-mail accounts for every VGK user		X
Training Plan for users, operators and VGK staff		X

4.1 Equipment and Software

Every VGK will be furnished - at a minimum - with a predetermined set of equipment and software. The equipment and software provided by the ICTA will be made available to the selected VGKSI-VGK Operator consortia on a non-reimbursable grant basis.

Every proposal from aspiring VGKSI-VGK Operator consortia must clearly recognize that the equipment support provided by the Programme will belong to the ICTA during the five-year duration of the service contract agreement to be signed, and that this equipment may be removed either by the VGKSI acting on behalf of the ICTA, or by the ICTA directly, if the conditions of service are not fully met or if an inappropriate use of the facilities takes place. At the end of the 5 year period title for the equipment will be transferred to the VGK Operator.

The total value of the equipment and software subsidy to be made available for use by each VGK is estimated at: US\$ 5,300.

4.2 Locale and security

Every proposal will include a clear description of the physical facilities (e.g. using pictures or architectural drawings) VGK in the cluster for which the proposal is presented.

The premises for each VGK will require a minimum of 20m² of space for each computer workstation, plus appropriate sanitary facilities, ease of access for persons with disabilities, and security features and precautions taken to protect the equipment from theft or misuse.

4.3 Software and Content

Administration and User Monitoring

The VGKSI-Operator consortium will be responsible for installing in every VGK operation monitoring and user registry Open Source software that facilitates:

- VGK administration, covering the automatic logging of telephone calls (place, duration, price) and computer use by every machine in the VGK by the VGK Operator.
- the registration of users and the gathering of basic data of value for monitoring use and facilitating client service, including sex, age, place of residence (village or GN), type of service used, frequency and length of usage of VGK services, browsing preferences, client satisfaction.

Once the VGK-VGKSI consortia have been selected, the ICTA will encourage cooperation across consortia, on a voluntary basis, to share some of the open source software to be installed.

User e-mail accounts

Every VGK user will be able to have his own separate e-mail account, clearly linked by the domain address name to the particular VGK he frequents. Aspiring VGKSI – VGK Operator consortia will need to specify in their proposals the way in which this service is going to be implemented.

VGK Portal and Networking Software

The ICTA will establish a partnership with a consortium of national and international institutions to provide for the development of an Open Source **Community Portal and Networking Software**.¹ This Portal and Networking Software will enable the ICTA to establish and host its own VGK portal to serve the networking and local content posting needs of the e-Sri Lanka's VGK community (all VGKs, VGKSI, and VGK users).

The proposed Community Portal and Networking Software will have characteristics similar to those of www.DGroups.org, but with the following **additional** features:

The software will be developed using Open Source software.

The software will enable the use of Sinhala and Tamil languages and the corresponding standard fonts, aside from English, as optional languages of communication between users.

The Community Portal and Networking Software will make it possible for different institutions using the software to have their own distinct unique Portal *shell* or *skin* with its own logo and banner. The software will offer user-administrators, during installation, 5 optional skins, each providing for a different way of arranging the logo and banner, and the location within the portal of the different sections and subsections.

The software will also allow at installation the option to have as many as 50 distinct separate sections within any of the 5 chosen skins, each made up with 10 distinct subsections or less (presented as menu options within each section). For any given Portal, the number of separate sections and subsections will be determined by the Administrators as they set up their individualized system, through parameters entered through the installation interface. The software will also include a simple to use form, that enables Site Administrators to add content in each of these sections or subsections in the form of web pages, links or documents.

The software developed should be easy to use and run directly and independently by individual user groups, requiring no intervention of Bellanet, ICTA or any other institution. Institutions will be allowed to download the Software developed, provided they fill out a registration form describing the institution and its objectives for using the software. A simple installation interface will be part of the development, along with a companion user's manual in Sinhala and Tamil.

The software will enable several discussion topics (at least 10) within a single skin or Portal, each of which may be addressed separately by Group members via e-mail or through the portal itself (similar to the way Dgroups presently allows for members to be part of different Dgroups). Document posting via e-mail should also be enabled.

The Community Portal and Networking Software software developed will also provide a separate section for chatting by one or several registered group members simultaneously, through a Web page interface included in the system.

During a transition period, while the Community Portal and Networking Software is under development, it is proposed that Dgroups meet the local interaction needs of the VGKs.

¹ One possibility is a partnership with Bellanet. Under such a partnership, e-Sri Lanka would profit from the extensive experience with Dgroups. In turn, the international donor community would benefit from the e-Sri Lanka's contribution to the development of an Open Source portal with added capabilities. Future versions of the software would be supported and maintained by Bellanet. Bellanet would make the software and any future versions freely available for use by the international community, with due credit given to the e-Sri Lanka initiative for its contribution to the development of the software.

Local Content

Using the Community Portal and Networking Software developed under the Programme, each VGK will have its own unique portal, which will allow VGK users to set up their own individualized web page (affiliated to the VGK portal as a subfolder of the individual VGK portal), and establish their own discussion group if desired.

The VGK portal will also have an entry point to the Sri Lanka Government portal and to services provided under the e-Government initiative.

4.4 Connectivity

The VGKs will be serviced with a connection speed of at least 128 Kbps (probably higher, and subject to upgrading if the need arises). At present, the estimated cost of this connectivity is US\$ 200/month over the 5 year duration of the VGK service contract.

The selected VGKSI-VGK consortia will be eligible to receive a connectivity subsidy over the first 4 years of the service-contract, that declines in value according to the following schedule: 100%, 100%, 66.67%, 33.33%. Presently, the estimated value of this subsidy, is US\$ 7,200.

4.5 Training

Every aspiring VGKSI – VGK Operator consortia will need to present as part of its bid, a training plan covering VGK Operator and staff, and VGK users.

Training to users should cover all of the basic skills required for effective use (elementary computer operation, word processing, spreadsheet, Internet browsing, etc.) as is provided for under the curriculum for the International Computer Driver's License.

The Training Plan for users may make use of the Training Voucher program and, where pertinent, make effective use of any content and possibilities for training available through Distance e-Learning activities (available either through the Programme or otherwise).

The training program for operators should cover the basic skills necessary for proficiency in the use and maintenance of the equipment.

V. Institutional Requirements

5.1 VGK Operators

VGK operators may be individuals or organizations. In order to be selected as a VGK operator, an entrepreneur or postulant organization will need to meet the following **minimum conditions**:

- i) Local VGK Operators may be an entrepreneur, registered NGO, or a local public service agency (public library, local school, community center). A local agency of the executive branch of government may participate in a VGK partnership, but may not be the lead institution responsible for locally managing VGK operations. A determinant of the technical quality of the proposal is the extent to which it incorporates as partners several local and reputable NGOs, firms and institutions, as a means of aggregating demand and generating local enthusiasm behind the initiative. But the ultimate responsible party for operating the VGK must rest on a single firm, NGO or agency. A local branch of a large national institution may be the lead VGK Operator (e.g. school,

post office or a branch library), provided that the financial and administrative management is local. Monies collected need to be managed locally.

ii) Local VGK Operators must have been working in their present capacity as either entrepreneurs or not for profit service organization, for at least six months prior to the submission of the proposal.

iii) The lead operator must be a bona fide resident of the pre-selected GN (Annex A) where it is proposed to establish a VGK. This applies to an entrepreneur, or, in the event that the proposal is presented by an institution, the registered manager, or local leader of the organization which is to be responsible for VGK operation must be a bona fide resident of the GN.

iv) An existing communications shop Operator may apply to be a VGK Operator, but it is important that any new VGK established under the programme does not compete unfairly with existing entrepreneurs. Accordingly, no new VGK may be set up in the within 2 KM of any telecenter or communications shop that might be already present in the community.

5.2 VGK Support Institutions (VGKSI)s

VGKSI)s should be formally registered organizations that meet the following minimum criteria²:

- i) At least 1 year of successfully running financially self-sustaining operations.
- ii) At least 6 months of experience in the field of information technology, in an area pertinent to the programme's requirements.
- iii) Capability to provide comprehensive support to VGK operators on managerial, technical and logistical issues to help them establish and operate the VGK.
- iv) At least 6 months of operational experience in the dominant District of the cluster for which the proposal is being submitted.

The capability requirement (item iii above), will be determined through an evaluation of aspiring VGKSI)s, in reference to the following criteria:

- Management & Organization Capability - 20 points
- Business Capacity & Client Relations - 20 points
- Community Development - 15 points
- Technical Expertise & Support Capability - 20 points
- Logistical Support - 10 points
- Financial Capacity - 15 points

Only institutions with scores higher than 60 points will be regarded as satisfying this criteria.

Ideally, VGKSI)s should also have a successful record of well managed assistance programmes in support of low income communities. They should be willing to work with local VGK Operators under a business plan that promotes local entrepreneurship and ensures majority participation of local VGK operator in decision-making and revenue sharing.

² Eight organizations selected during an earlier stage of the programme meet the first three of these criteria.

5.3 VGKSI – VGK Operator Consortium

The local aspiring VGK Operators will be encouraged to team up with suitable VGKSI, either from those in the list of prequalified candidates or with any new VGKSI candidate one that meets the requirements of the Programme.

Aspiring VGK Operators may also choose to run the VGK directly, without VGKSI support, under two possible circumstances:

- i) the aspiring VGK Operator himself qualifies as a VGKSI and meets the attendant requirements (specified in section 6.3); or
- ii) the aspiring VGK Operator is willing to forego the equipment subsidy in which case he will have to provide it himself, and is in a position to meet all of the VGKSI criteria, except for with regards to capability to give support to other VGKs (i.e. item iii in Section 6.3).

5.4 Community Support and Local Partners

Proposals are expected to present supporting documentation that shows support from local community and partner organizations. This may include for example letters of intent from local secondary school officials that they intend to participate in the teacher training programme.

Participating public service agencies (e.g. library administrators, school officials) may present similar letters to more than one postulant consortium, in a show of support for the Programme. What is important is to determine whether aspiring VGKSI – VGK Operator consortia will take advantage of the opportunity to serve schools through the telecentre and thus provide an important service to the community.

VI. Summary of Subsidy Awards, Benefits and Obligations

The VGKSI – VGK Operator Consortia that are selected will benefit from:

Benefit	Estimated Value (US\$)
Equipment for use during 5 years, and eventually transferred after 5 years to VGK Operator	5,300
Connectivity subsidy , over a 4 year period, declining in value: 100% Years 1 and 2; 66.67% in Year 3 and 33.3% in Year 4.	7,200
Management – Supervision Fee , to be received over 5 years as follows: 25% upon VGK establishment, 14% in year 2, 3 and 4, and a final payment of 33% upon satisfactory operation of VGK over 5 year period.	Subject to Least Subsidy Competition Award
Demand support sub-programmes:	
Teacher Training and School subsidy (declining in value during first 3 years)	Maximum value if used: US\$ 4,200
Voucher Programme	Unspecified
ICT Innovations	Unspecified

In turn, the VGKSI – VGK Operator awarded the service agreement contract, will assume responsibility for keeping the VGKs open in the respective GNs, during a period of 5 years providing the specified services.

VII. Evaluation of Proposals

Each postulant VGKSI-VGK Operator consortium will be requested to submit two separate envelopes by a predetermined date. Envelope A will contain the consortium's technical proposal, with all the attendant annexes showing that it fulfils the technical criteria specified in Table 2. Envelope B will contain the consortium's financial proposal, which will include a subsidy request from the Programme.

Proposals will first be evaluated according to minimum criteria. Those proposals that meet the minimum qualifications will then receive a technical score.

Only those proposals with a technical score of over 50 points will be considered. From those proposals scoring 50 points or more, the one requesting the least subsidy (Envelope B) will be selected and awarded the subsidy.

In the event of a tie, defined as a difference of less than 10% between the lowest and next to lowest subsidy requested, the technical score will be the determining factor in the selection, and the requested subsidy will be awarded to the technically stronger of the two "tied" proposals.

Table 2: Proposal Score Card

Minimum Criteria that must be met for a proposal to be considered valid		Mark with X if criteria is met	
A	Service Specifications		
	Proposed hours of service to the public, which should not be lower than 50 per week, and should include at least 8 weekend hours.		
	Installation, design of premises, furnishings, security, software, content, training and e-mail proposals, as indicated in Section IV of this Manual.		
B	VGKSI Minimum Qualifications		
	At least 1 year of successfully running financially self-sustaining operations.		
	At least 6 months of experience in the field of information technology, in an area pertinent to the programme's requirements		
	Capability to provide comprehensive support to VGK operators on managerial, technical and logistical issues.		
	At least 6 months of operational experience in at least one of the GNs that make up the cluster.		
C	VGK Operator Minimum Qualifications		
	At least 6 months of successfully running financially self-sustaining operations.		
	Suitably qualified Operator (see requirements in Section 5.1)		
Technical Criteria that Enhance Quality of Proposal		Maximum No. of Points	Score of proposal
In order to qualify, a proposal must achieve a technical quality score of at least 50 points. The total technical score will also be used to break a tie (defined as less than 10% in the difference between the lowest and next to lowest subsidy requested)			
D	General Features of Proposal	10	
	Description of proposal (clarity and thoroughness are rewarded)	5	
	Implementation plan for establishing the VGKs, and projected duration of installation period. Implementation should not exceed 3 months within a cluster, but the implementation plan should also be realistic.	5	
E	Service Features of Proposal	20	
	Quality and thoroughness of Training Plan.	10	
	Quality and thoroughness of content and software proposals	10	
F	Institutional Strength of VGKSI-VGK Operator Consortium	20	
	Community support for the establishment of the VGK under the leadership of the postulant VGKSI-VGK consortia (e.g. letters of recommendation and support from community leaders and grass roots organizations that are active and respected in the cluster)	10	
	Record of experience of postulant VGKSI in successfully providing well managed assistance programmes in support of low income communities	10	
G	Business Plan and Sustainability	50	
	Extent to which proposed business plan promotes local entrepreneurship and ensures majority participation of local VGK operator in decision-making and revenue sharing. This should include revenue sharing arrangements provided for services projected for the immediate horizon and for those that may be introduced in the future.	30	
	Projected cash flow for each VGK in the cluster, and conscientiousness and diligence shown in preparing these projections. Expected costs to be incurred (investment and operating) will be specified as well as rates to be used for various services provided, showing that they are in compliance with the specifications stipulated in the tender documents. These projections should be based on a clear plan for maintaining the equipment and for providing technical assistance and support to local operators, using a balanced combination of distance e-training and face to face training.	10	
	Quality and potential value of other VGK services to be provided.	5	
	Indication of the extent to which the proposal will take advantage of other revenue generating opportunities enabled by e-Sri Lanka's Telecentre Development Programme (teacher training, school support and voucher scheme). Good articulation with Programme is rewarded.	5	