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Community-Based Education and Training: Creating Pathways into the Music Industry for Youth

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1. Contextual Background

The FReeZA¹ program is an initiative of The Office for Youth, Department of Victorian Communities (Victoria, Australia). The program is designed to engage youth in their own communities by providing funds for the development and delivery of local live music events (bands, dance parties, and cultural events) for people aged 12-25, in a drug-free and alcohol-free environment. These events provide an opportunity for young artists to perform to an audience of peers, in an event that is planned and delivered by a committee of young people from the local community. Funding is provided to a sponsor (provider) that coordinates the local committee and provides mentoring services. In 2003, there were 69 FReeZA Committees in metropolitan and regional Victoria, delivering over 450 events to audiences totalling more than 160,000 people (FReeZA, 2004).

In 2004, the Office for Youth announced a new initiative, FReeZACentral, that would build on and complement the existing FReeZA program. FReeZACentral provides a more structured approach to youth training and aims to support and encourage young people, including FReeZA central committee members, to manage and deliver music events that may create pathways to employment and training in the music industry. The new program has three interconnected component stages:

- skills development, delivered through a program of intensive workshops;
- exposure to the music industry, delivered through a mentor program and master classes; and

- participation in event organization and management, delivered through a series of music and cultural events conducted as a tour across the state (Office for Youth, 2004).

The program will operate in eleven regional and metropolitan communities and aims to assist these communities in embracing diversity by supporting and promoting the positive development in youth via practical, high level experience in the music industry. By expanding opportunities for youth participation, FReeZACentral will improve experiences of, and pathways between, education and employment. The final stage of the program, the statewide music tour, will be a celebration of both the personal and community benefits ensuing from the entrepreneurship and creativity of youth.

This paper is organized as follows. Section Two provides an overview of the consortium members that will develop and deliver the program. Section Three outlines the three key components of the program—workshops, mentoring, and intra-state music tour. Section Four outlines the project management structure (including a youth-focused steering committee), quality assurance, and continuous improvement through action research, and a scoping study of training needs that will help shape the program. The action research project will proceed over the next two years and form the basis of an academic study and report to the Office for Youth examining the community capacity building achievements of the FReeZACentral program.

2. The Consortium

The project funding and management was put out to competitive tender, and will be delivered by a consortium inclusive of the business, education, and community sectors. This consortium brings together Australia's foremost independent commercial music industry entity, the Mushroom Group of Companies through its marketing and development arm Mushroom Marketing; not-for-profit agency The Push, Inc., a leader in providing youth-focused and managed music events; Victoria University (VU), a dual sector institution and leader in educational pathways which provides music industry education and pathways from certificate to degree level; and the Victorian Council of YMCAs, providing a presence for FReeZACentral in urban and regional communities through their network of YMCA facilities in 120 communities across the state. This consortium is built on a common interest in supporting young people to explore path-

ways to education and employment in Victoria's thriving music and related industries.

The Push receives existing funding from the Office for Youth, to help administer the FReeZA program via a fee for service event management service to the 69 FReeZA committees. The Push maintains a twelve-member Youth Advisory Committee to ensure that events are youth driven and enables the organization to more effectively target its programs and provide more meaningful outcomes for young Victorians. The Push holds a series of "Push Summits" providing an opportunity for young people involved in FReeZA Committees to gather from across the state to review the program and plan new initiatives. The Push also coordinates *Push Start*, a band competition that is managed by FReeZA Committees. This competition consists of 46 heats and 9 regional finals. The final round of competition is held as part of an event known as *Push On*, a major outdoor all-ages festival held annually in Melbourne.

Mushroom Marketing has over twenty years experience in all aspects of the Australian Music Industry. It is the marketing arm of The Mushroom Group of Companies, supporting all the key business units within the group. Mushroom Marketing has a major responsibility in concert planning, development, and promotion, assisting in the delivery of hundreds of tours around Australia, including alcohol-free, all-ages events.

The Mushroom Group is well placed to provide a comprehensive network of industry mentors across the breadth of music industry sectors, including record company operations, music publishing, touring, booking agency, merchandising, and artist management. The Mushroom Group has been a strong supporter of work-integrated learning and has provided such opportunities to hundreds of young Victorians. Mushroom has been a strong supporter of the VU music business degree, providing industry adjuncts delivering lectures, and mentoring undergraduate students. The VU music business internship program provides students with vocational training and mentorship by experienced professionals. The effectiveness of a mentoring and work-integrated-learning program in providing vocational pathways, is evidenced by the many VU undergraduate students who have undertaken internships at Mushroom, many of whom have subsequently gained full-time employment within the publishing, booking, and touring units of the group.

Victoria University (VU) is recognized as one of Australia's most innovative universities and is a leader in music industry education, training,

and research. VU is a dual-sector university offering both Higher Education and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) courses to more than 50,000 students. The Faculty of Business and Law is home to Australia's first music business degree (Bachelor of Business—Music Industry) and the Masters degree in International Music and Entertainment Business. The Faculty also offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Event Management. At the TAFE level, VU offers certificate and diploma level courses across the three key streams of music education: performance, technology, and business. VU is a leader in developing course pathways, providing students the opportunity to progress from certificate to degree programs. Music industry staff have delivered numerous training programs, seminars, and conferences tailored to specific needs.

Teaming with Victoria University's eleven campuses, the consortium is strategically placed both in Melbourne's central business district and throughout Melbourne's western region, including outer suburban campuses at Melton, Sunbury, and Werribee. Many of VU's over 3,000 staff members are highly qualified in the disciplines of music business, technology, and performance, as well as event management, financial management, small business training, research, and program evaluation. VU's innovative music business programs combine both academic and vocational training utilizing a mixture of academic teaching staff and industry practitioners. The latter provide valuable insights into the day-to-day operations of a range of music enterprises and are important role models for students.

3. FReeZACentral Program Structure

Each stage of the program is designed to provide a cumulative learning experience for young participants that will equip them with the confidence, knowledge, and skills to deliver a large-scale music event, and ultimately a springboard to educational and vocational pathways. The program culminates in a tour around the state at five regional and metropolitan locations. The event itself provides a work-integrated learning experience under the tutelage of industry mentors.

Training Workshops

The first stage of the program is a series of music industry workshops delivered in each of the eleven designated regions. To ensure the interests of youth participants are paramount, a comprehensive scoping study is currently being undertaken by VU staff to identify young people's training

needs and interests in each region. The results of the survey will inform the construction and design of specific workshop modules across five core training areas: performance, financial management and budgeting, event planning and marketing, safety management, and technical production. VU training modules will be selected from either TAFE or Higher Education programs and will comply with National Training Quality Framework or University assessment standards respectively. FReeZACentral training workshops will offer innovative training materials and projects designed to engage young people in short workshop programs. The approach will be one of engaged learning. Music business teachers and instructors at VU have developed a range of innovative pedagogical strategies and didactic materials that are designed to both challenge and stimulate. The workshops will incorporate a range of pedagogical approaches providing a unique mix of scholastic and vocational training, the latter utilizing an extensive network of industry professionals and guest lecturers. Learning modules will be interactive and feature Australian case studies and group projects linked to the FReeZACentral tours. VU will offer existing and new online self-paced learning modules to program participants, providing a pathway to certified training modules and programs.

Importantly, participants will have the opportunity to become enrolled students of VU, undertaking an approved TAFE subject selected from within the numerous certificate level music business, performance, and technology programs. Participants will receive a VU student card with all the usual concessions and benefits available to Victorian students and can use facilities like libraries and computers on any VU campus. A consequential benefit, that will optimize educational pathways, is the opportunity to apply internally for VU courses and modules, rather than applying as externals via the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC). At the completion of the workshops, participants will receive a *Certificate of Participation* identifying the specific modules that comply with certified units of competencies within existing TAFE certificate programs. This can be used to obtain partial credit if participants chose to proceed to formal training programs.

Participants will also have the opportunity to obtain an additional VU accredited training module (after completion of the accredited workshop stage) via involvement in the master classes and tour components of the program. This will be undertaken as project-based work incorporating the mentoring activities and project teams formed to deliver the statewide music tour. Many participants may have disconnected from the mainstream

educational system, and this innovation promotes recognition of young people's achievements in their communities, and will no doubt contribute to all participant's sense of self-worth.

Mentoring and Master Classes

Of the 500 participants in the workshops stage of the program, 50 will be selected for the Master Class/Mentorship stage, with representatives from each geographical region. In addition to individual performance in the workshops stage, participants selected for this next stage will have demonstrated their interest in developing their careers in the music industry through involvement in FReeZA committees, other training projects, work experience, or through their own music practice.

A range of music industry mentors will be selected from, and nominated by, consortium members. In addition to having substantive qualifications and expertise, mentors will be sufficiently qualified to support young people to plan and deliver each leg of the FReeZACentral tour and to assist young people to develop skills in their areas of interest. A component of the quality assurance program will be a mentor induction program, conducted by VU. This will ensure that mentors are clear about their individual responsibilities in dealing with young people and that they act as positive role models in a non-judgemental supportive manner.

As well as our industry mentors' involvement, a major innovation will be the inclusion in this component of a peer-based mentor program, matching VU undergraduate and graduate music industry students with FReeZACentral participants. By working with mentors from their own age-cohort, the peer-based mentoring program will provide participants with contemporary role models and seek to engender an increased confidence and motivation. It is hoped that this will inspire participants to undertake more formal TAFE and/or university education. VU will develop FReeZACentral specific projects and programs for music industry interns to satisfy the final requirement of the music industry degree program. The internship program is a period of supervised work with an industry mentor in the latter's workplace. This will provide the consortium with access to a pool of talented and highly motivated graduates working on a wide range of FreeZACentral activities.

FReeZACentral Tour

The FReeZACentral Tour will deliver a live music event in five regions across Victoria, in a combination of ticketed and free events. The consortium has developed links with established community festival and all-ages concert promoters, and will endeavor to integrate specific legs of the FReeZACentral tour with established music and cultural events across the state. Importantly, a number of stand-alone all-age music events will be delivered in communities that do not normally have access to all-day music festivals. The tour schedule will be determined after consultation with the local FReeZA committee and other community members to ascertain the viability, need, and local interest in hosting a FReeZACentral tour. Mushroom Marketing will play a leading role in providing tour support services, drawing on the expertise and resources of the Mushroom Group.

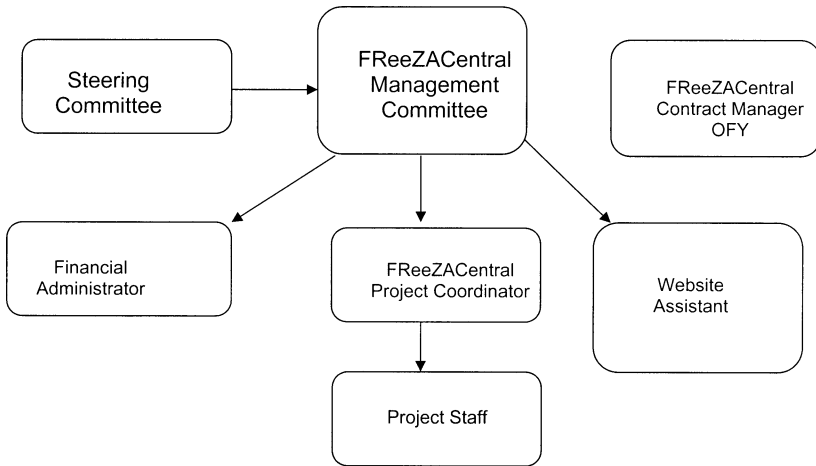
Music Industry personnel working on each leg of the tour will have the responsibility of mentoring FReeZACentral participants working in project teams on specific tour-related tasks. This will ensure that practical, experiential learning activities are built into the planning and operation of each music showcase. Project teams will be formed around participants' interests and the five key learning areas outlined in section two. Each team will work on one element of organizing and delivering a music event, under the tutelage of industry mentors. This project based, work-integrated learning will form the basis of accredited VU training modules should participants chose to take advantage of this additional opportunity.

At each leg of the tour, at least ten young participants will be drawn from the local community hosting the event. These participants will be recruited from the FReeZACentral program itself, local schools, and from local FReeZA committees. Master Classes conducted by industry professionals will also be held before each tour event, open to both FReeZACentral participants and young people from the host community.

The utilization of experienced music industry mentors is a vital component of the FReeZACentral program. Its potential in identifying the next generation of music industry professionals is also important. In addition to nurturing new talent, the program provides the opportunity for a wide range of participating industry practitioners to identify young talent suitable for ongoing employment, delivering a vital outcome of the program: vocational pathways. Moreover, it is envisaged that numerous participants will gain the confidence and encouragement to pursue more formal educational within VU or other providers of music industry training.

4. Project Management

The following schematic illustrates the project management structure.



The FFreeZACentral Management Committee will plan, manage, and oversee the activities of the project. The early work of the committee involved clearly identifying decision making structures, dispute resolution procedures, and general governance issues. The Management Committee meets monthly, having overall responsibility for the project, and to ensure that outcomes are achieved and that reporting and other deadlines are met. Under the terms of the contract, this committee must report periodically to the designated FFreeZACentral Contract Manager within the Office for Youth (OFY).

The FFreeZACentral Steering Committee is a reference group that will comprise representatives of the consortium, The Push, Mushroom Marketing, the YMCA, Victoria University and other stakeholder organizations, music industry professionals, and young music industry practitioners and aspirants. The steering committee will comprise at least 50% young people and will ensure that FFreeZACentral is relevant and accountable to the needs of young people and the music industry. Throughout the duration of the project, the Steering Committee will provide feedback and direction on issues like program design, training models, and the planning of the tour component.

Given the geographical dispersion of young program participants, the FReeZACentral interactive web site (www.freezacentral.vic.gov.au) will be a crucial vehicle for two-way communication, irrespective of location. The web site will be continually updated and will inform participants of all program activities and forthcoming events. The Internet already plays a vital role in how young people access music and related information. The website will empower and engage young FReeZACentral participants and allow for ongoing feedback and reaction to the program. The web site will be promoted as a resource for young people wishing to establish music industry careers.

During the establishment phase, VU is undertaking a comprehensive scoping study, consulting with music businesses as well as a large group of young people in each FReeZACentral region. The scoping study will inform decisions about:

- which accredited training modules will be offered by VU to accommodate each training stream of the project
- which communities will host FReeZACentral activities such as the training workshops and tour events
- how the needs and interests of young people will shape the project
- which dates are most appropriate to run FReeZACentral activities
- how best to achieve the outcomes of the project
- what kind of settings are most appropriate to engage young project participants
- how best to engage young people to develop pathways into the vocational roles for which the music industry has identified as those with the most immediate need to be filled.

Combined, the FReeZACentral Steering Committee and Victoria University Scoping Study will ensure that the program is ultimately responsive to government, industry, community, and individual need, continually refining and improving the project model. These mechanisms will provide for continual quality improvement throughout the life of the program.

5. Quality Assurance through Action Research

VU will coordinate end user feedback using a three-stage participatory action research methodology. Surveys will be conducted at the completion of each project milestone (workshops, mentoring, tours) to measure participant expectations and satisfaction with the program. Responses will be evaluated and reports provided to the steering committee and project management committee, including recommendations for modification to subsequent stages of the program. A general overview of the continual improvement activity is summarized in the following three stages.

Stage One in this approach to program evaluation is ‘formative evaluation’. The goals of this stage are to provide guidance for ongoing development of the program and to be responsive to the needs of those directly affected, as well as addressing the aims and elements of the program in a systematic way. The role of the VU evaluators is to support and facilitate formal and informal processes of engagement and consultation; work with the consortium partners, local organizers, authorities, and committees to set up robust and rigorous action research systems (systematic data gathering, opportunities to share, strategic questioning); participate and contribute information; document the action research process; and, record information as appropriate for the summative and comparative evaluation phase of the evaluation process. The kinds of questions being addressed through the formative evaluation stage will be of the order: How are we doing (and whose perspectives are being heard here)? What are the problems and what needs to be done to address them? What is the next stage? What is on the horizon? How do we manage the risks and threats and respond to the expectations and experiences of participants?

Stage Two, or the summative phase (Scriven, 1991), of the research will describe outcomes, process, and context of the FreeZACentral program. It will evaluate the outcomes achieved, and the policies and strategies used, in the context of the wider contextual circumstances framing the project. Process questions for this stage include: why things went well or didn’t go well (e.g., conflicts over interests, necessary preconditions, e.g. training, employment openings, etc.); how can good outcomes be achieved? (What are the key processes, resources, and strategies?) A wide range of data collection methods will be deployed including document analysis, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and media monitoring. Data will be collected with a view to throwing light upon outcomes, processes, and con-

text. The analysis will be directed to illuminating the issues listed above in relation to the different audiences and purposes of the research.

Stage Three, or the comparative case study (Scriven, 1991), will build a comparison of processes and outcomes in relation to the intensive workshops, the master classes, and the FreeZACentral Tour. Developing these comparative case studies will involve documentation of the experiences of the participants through document analysis, interviews with key informants and focus groups, and the circulation of draft reports for feedback and discussion.

At the completion of the project VU will produce an academic study and report to the Office for Youth examining the community capacity building achievements of the FReeZACentral program.

Performance Measures and Benchmarking

The main goals of FReeZACentral are to provide young people with:

- work-integrated, project-based education in one aspect of the music industry;
- an opportunity to gain valuable work experience in the music industry; and
- pathways for those interested in a career in the music industry or further education.

To measure these outcomes a number of key performance measures have been identified by the OFY. These include:

- young people feel that they know more about a particular part of the music industry and have developed relevant skills;
- young people have had “real” experiences with experts in the music industry;
- young people feel that they know how to take the next steps if they wish to pursue a career in the music industry; and
- young people have the networks/resources available to them to take the next steps to develop a career in the music industry.

These outcomes will be measured by periodic surveys of all participants, including youth, trainers, and mentors.

6. Conclusion

The FReeZACentral initiative by the Victorian Government should be applauded as an innovative youth initiative that is consistent with its overall vision for engaging youth as outlined in *Respect: The Government's Vision for Young People* (OFY, 2002). This goal is to encourage youth to “live personally satisfying lives and enjoy being part of an inclusive community.” The Victorian Government aims to provide supportive and inclusive communities in which young people are:

- valued and respected;
- supported through social, educational, cultural, and employment opportunities;
- able to live healthy, satisfying lives; and
- able to realize their full potential. (OFY, 2002)

The four key themes of this vision for young people are: involvement; learning and working; support; and celebration. These elements are present and form the foundation of the FReeZACentral program.

Endnote

- ¹ The state government conducted a competition, inviting youth to submit names for a community-based youth music initiative. The name *FReeZA* was selected from numerous entries, evoking an image of a “cool” place, somewhere to “chill out.”

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The *MEIEA Journal* is published annually by the Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association (MEIEA) in order to increase public awareness of the music industry and to foster music business education.

The *MEIEA Journal* provides a scholarly analysis of technological, legal, historical, educational, and business trends within the music industry and is designed as a resource for anyone currently involved or interested in the music industry. Topics include issues that affect music industry education and the music industry such as curriculum design, pedagogy, technological innovation, intellectual property matters, industry-related legislation, arts administration, industry analysis, and historical perspectives. The *MEIEA Journal* is distributed to members of MEIEA, universities, libraries, and individuals concerned with the music industry and music business education.

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