

TRADE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME STANDARD POLICY

1.0 AIM

- 1.1 The Trade Enhancement Programme is an initiative targeting the development of our skills-based individuals and entrepreneurs.
- 1.2 In addition, the impact of COVID 19 brought to realisation many skills-based individual's entrepreneurial skills in order to provide a livelihood for their families. The Programme provides financial support of \$1,000 to skills-based individuals who require start-up funding for their businesses.
- 1.3 Since inception, the programme has assisted around 900 individual micro businesses with close to half million invested into acquisition of capital items for business development or diversification.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Fiji Government recognises the critical role Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises ('MSME') play in this period of economic recovery. Pre-COVID, the MSME Sector contributed 18% to Fiji's Gross Domestic Product and 60% to the National workforce.
- 2.2 Following the impact of COVID-19, these figures would have significantly changed given many Fijians who were formally employed would now move to the informal sector to start a business to support their livelihoods.
- 2.3 During this period of economic recovery, the MSMEs have been seen as the driving engines of the economy by virtue of the many employment opportunities created and livelihoods supported.
- 2.4 Given consideration to this, Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications ('Ministry'), through the MSME Fiji Unit, was allocated funding for the implementation of TEP to aid Fiji's socio-economic recovery.
- 2.5 Circular and Digital Economy and the potential of digital transformation represents a significant avenue for Fiji's economic development and fulfilling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- 2.6 Therefore, the Ministry encourages applications which promotes Circular Economy, empower local resource owners, develop digital transformation and demonstrate how proposals meet any of the SDGs.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 The programme is intended to assist new and existing businesses in the Micro category, that is, businesses whose annual turnover is less than \$50,000.
- 3.2 The programme is intended to:

- create employment opportunities for those who have lost their job due to lingering effects of COVID-19, high cost of doing business due to external economic factors such as international conflict;
 - encourage the movement from informal to formal sector;
 - create the opportunity to create training/awareness on financial literacy and business management;
 - encourage youth, women and persons with disability entrepreneurship; and
 - enhance provision of services from the skill based or "blue collar".
- 3.3 The maximum an entrepreneur could qualify for is \$1,000 in funding assistance.
- 3.4 Given the programme is in its fourth year of implementation the aim of programme has been refocused on retaining skilled trades people in Fiji and slow the mass migration as they become job creators.
- 3.5 The grant funding is allocated to assist the sector promoting Trade and Skills in the country. This is the larger service Industry which may include but not limited to Fashion, Creative Arts, Floriculture, Mechanical, Electrical, Construction, Joinery, Handicraft, Food and Hospitality.
- 3.6 The exception on the sectoral support is at the discretion of the Permanent Secretary of Trade, Co-operative, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications ('Permanent Secretary') and the TEP Panel members and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4.0 TYPES OF PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

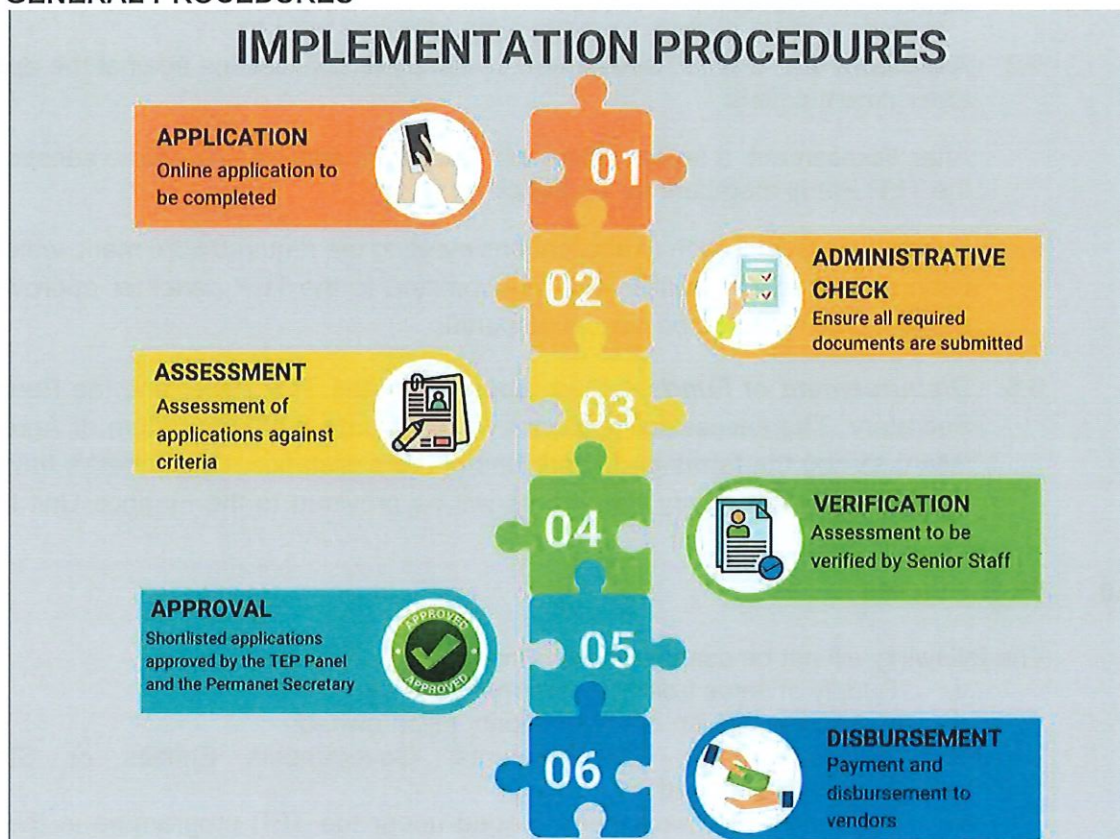
- 4.1 TEP will provide funding for purchase of capital items, few examples are but not limited to:
- i. Procurement of equipment for value adding;
 - ii. Product development for businesses; and
 - iii. Procurement of equipment for diversification purposes.

5.0 CRITERIA FOR FUNDING

- 5.1 Proposals for assistance through TEP must meet the following criteria:
- i. Proposal must display the commercial viability of the business venture;
 - ii. Proposal must showcase capabilities of trade or skill;
 - iii. Proposal must outline the applicant's capability in operating the business;
 - iv. Initiatives that lead to employment creation;
 - v. Businesses that improve the standards of living and overall welfare of all Fijians;
 - vi. Ventures that have a social dimension that support the economic empowerment of women, and persons with disabilities;
 - vii. Enterprises that have strong backward and forward linkages that support other sectors of the Fijian economy;
 - viii. Businesses must be registered;
 - ix. Applicant must be a Fijian citizen and reside in Fiji;

- x. The Ministry reserves the right to request for additional information as and when required for clarification;
- xi. Proposals for operational expenditure will be assessed on a case by case basis; and
TEP recipients that have received funding from the 2020/2021 financial year and are now eligible to apply for funding will be required and subjected to a successful Monitoring and Evaluation Report as part of the assessment of application. It is only in extreme cases that a previously successful applicant will be eligible for the grant.

6.0 GENERAL PROCEDURES



6.1 **Application** – Complete and submit online application for TEP. Applicant to upload the following documents in addition to completing the online form:

- a. Completed TEP Application Form
- b. Valid Business Registration Certificate;
- c. TIN Letter/Joint ID;
- d. Valid Photo Identification (Driver's License or Voter ID Card or Passport Biodata Page);
- e. 12 Month Forecasted Cash flow Statement;
- f. Quotations (Maximum of two (Vendors); and
- g. Copies of relevant trade certification (optional).

- 6.2 **Administrative Check** – Upon receipt of the online application an administrative check of that application will be done to ensure all necessary documentation has been submitted.

Should applications be missing certain documents or are required to be clarified, officers will follow up with the applicant (maximum of 3 calls in a day and 3 attempts for a single application). If the applicant has still not responded and submitted the required documentation, their application will be put on hold within the 3 attempts of calling, their application will be recommended to be marked “admin check failed – insufficient information”.

- 6.3 **Assessment** – Online Assessment of complete applications against the approved assessment criteria

After assessment, a senior officer will verify final applications before submission to the TEP Panel members for approval.

- 6.4 **Approval** – Submission of applications meeting the required 50% mark, which have been assessed and verified will be submitted to the TEP panel for approval. The same will be reflected on the online portal.

- 6.5 **Disbursement of Funds** – Upon approval by the TEP Panel and the Permanent Secretary. The successful applicant will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) stating the terms and conditions of the assistance. Once checks have been completed all necessary documents will be provided to the Finance Unit for final processing.

7.0 EXCLUSIONS

The following will not be considered for funding if:

- i. Supply of items from international vendors;
- ii. Businesses which are not majority Fijian owned;
- iii. Proposals from Civil Servants, Governments Entities or Statutory Organisations; and
- iv. Applicants that have been funded under the TEP programme in the last 3 years.

Exceptions to the above exclusions and other items not mentioned, can be made on a case by case basis subject to the approval of the Permanent Secretary and the TEP Panel.

Exceptions to the above 4.0 Types of Projects Eligible for Funding, 5.0 Criteria of Funding and 6.0 Exclusions can be made on a case by case basis subject to recommendation by the TEP Panel and approval of the Permanent Secretary.

8.0 SUBMISSIONS

- 8.1 Those businesses interested in applying are strongly encouraged to complete the online application form at <https://www.msme.mcttt.gov.fj/grant>
- 8.2 Project applicants must provide following essential documentations:

- a. Completed TEP Application Form;
- b. Valid Business Registration Certificate;
- c. TIN Letter/Joint ID;
- d. Valid Photo Identification (Driver's License or Voter ID Card or Passport Biodata Page);
- e. 12 Month Forecasted Cash flow Statement;
- f. Quotations (Maximum of two Vendors); and
- g. Copies of relevant trade certification (optional).

8.3 The Ministry requires the applicant to demonstrate that the proposal is commercially viable and meets the criteria for funding.

8.4 The Ministry encourages youth, women and people with disabilities entrepreneurs to apply.

8.5 The Ministry will prioritise projects that contribute and address SDGs.

8.6 The Ministry reserves the right to request for additional information as and when required for clarification and reject proposals that are not submitted within the criteria for funding.

9.0 ASSESSING OF TEP APPLICATIONS

9.1 TEP applications will be assessed based on the criteria for funding in Section 5.0 using the assessment criteria.

9.2 The implementation of the programme shall be the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications.

9.3 TEP applications that submit all the essential documentations, satisfy the criteria for funding and score 50% and above on total scoring will be submitted to the Permanent Secretary for final approval.

10.0 TEP PANEL

10.1 The chairperson of the TEP Panel will be elected by the TEP panel members.

10.2 The Panel Members will comprise representatives from the Ministry, statutory agencies and Private sector.

10.3 Additional members may be co-opted as and when the need arises.

10.4 The TEP Panel members will be invited by the Ministry. The same panel may continue without additional notification should it be decided by the Permanent Secretary on the last circulated notification letters and Terms of Reference.

10.5 The quorum for any TEP committee meeting shall be general rule of thumb; 50% plus one. The same rule of thumb shall be for the decisions and approvals of the TEP panel.

10.6 Processing of applications can also be done through flying minutes and email approvals are to be considered as final endorsements. The quorum for any TEP flying minute shall be general rule of thumb; 50% plus one.

11.0 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

- 11.1 The TEP recipient must utilise the Government grant as efficiently and effectively as possible solely for the intended purpose as stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).
- 11.2 The TEP Recipient must notify the Ministry in writing, to change the vendor and/or change of procured items.
- 11.3 Should the TEP Recipient fail to punctually perform any of its obligation or is in breach of any of its obligations stipulated in the MoA, the Grant Recipient would be required to refund the Government grant in the currency in which it was disbursed or the Ministry may opt to physically retrieve the procured item.
- 11.4 TEP Recipients will be given a period of 30 days from the date of payment to the vendor to collect items from the vendor. If the grant recipient fails to collect items within the 30 days, the money will be transferred to the Ministry.
- 11.5 Grant funds will be directly disbursed to the TEP Recipients nominated vendors. TEP Recipients will be notified on the time and date to report to their nominated vendors for confirmation of items to be procured.

12.0 MONITORING MECHANISM

- 12.1 The Grant Recipients will be monitored 6 months post disbursement of items to verify performance and ensure compliance in honouring recipients commitments stipulated in the Agreement.
- 12.2 The Ministry is responsible to monitor the TEP recipients as per the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and will be submitted to the Permanent Secretary.

13.0 POLICY REVIEW

- 13.1 This policy can be reviewed every 2 years effective date of approval of the Permanent Secretary or as need arises.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 26 July 2024

REVIEW DATE: 25 July 2026

APPROVED:



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SHAHEEN ALI
PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR TRADE,
CO-OPERATIVES, MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND
COMMUNICATIONS

26 July 2024
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DATE