

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Virtual E-Commerce Accelerator Programme

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION

1.1 Relevant Background

With support from the European Union (EU), under its Regional Private Sector Development Programme (III), the Caribbean Export Development Agency is initiating efforts to support the digital transformation of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) leads private sector development programmes across the Caribbean through the provision of innovative, targeted initiatives designed to increase Caribbean business growth, sustainability and job creation.

In recent years, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation has emerged as a critical pillar for business resilience and growth worldwide. The pandemic underscored the importance of digital technology in maintaining business continuity, as businesses with digital capabilities were better able to pivot to online platforms, remote work, and digital sales channels. In fact, an October 2020 survey of business executives, conducted by McKinsey & Company¹, found that just a few months into the pandemic, there was a marked acceleration in the projection of digital technology adoption. The average share of customer interactions that became digital increased by over 20 percent in 2020 with North America seeing an accelerated adoption rate of 65 percent compared to 41 percent in the previous year. This trend was echoed with similar results in the European and Asia-Pacific regions as well (53 percent and 55 percent respectively). This same survey noted that the pandemic saw a shift in the offerings of products characterised by marked increase in the average share of products and/or services that became partially or fully digitized (55 percent in 2020 as compared to 35 percent in 2019). Again, North America led the

¹ McKinsey Digital and Strategy & Corporate Finance Practices. (2020). *How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point—and transformed business forever*. McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

way with 60 percent followed by Asia-Pacific and Europe with 54 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

Proactive responses to the pandemic led to global changes in areas such as increased use of advanced technologies in operations and business decision-making, with an acceleration factor of 25. The survey noted that companies expected it to take well over 600 days to respond to these changes but responded in 25 days to implement the necessary changes. The area of business that saw the highest acceleration factor was around increased remote working and/or collaboration. Globally, companies expected it to take 454 days to adjust and implement changes, however, the study revealed companies took just 10.5 days, an acceleration factor of 43.

Other areas saw significant acceleration in implementing digital technology measures to adjust to pandemic such as increased migration of assets to the cloud and increased spending on data security, both of which saw an acceleration factor of 24 and 19 respectively.

Whilst globally the pandemic has shown evidence that points to an uptake in digital inclusion, adoption and overall transformation, the Caribbean has lagged behind. ECLAC's report², *Digital inclusion in Caribbean digital transformation frameworks and initiatives: A Review*, concluded that digital inclusion was not yet a priority in the eleven (11) Caribbean states of interest. It also noted that few countries have digital transformation frameworks in place. In fact, the research highlights that data on digital transformation in the Caribbean is severely lacking such that the true extent of Caribbean digital transformation is unclear at best. What has been noted however, is that where digital transformation has taken place in the Caribbean, it has done so at the public administration level with some Caribbean states putting emphasis on e-government. One of its recommendations, upskilling Caribbean people in ICT, noted that training is paramount to the success of any digital transformation initiative.

² Alexander, D., Døhl Diouf, L., & Prescod, K. (2023). *Digital inclusion in Caribbean digital transformation frameworks and initiatives: A review* (Studies and Perspectives series – ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 112). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications>

With the noticeable global shift favoring digital transformation and the Caribbean's inability to be early adopters of digital transformation tools and processes, there needs to be a concerted effort to build the knowledge capacity and implementation of digital transformation in the Caribbean private sector where small and medium enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the economy. Even well before the pandemic, early digitization was touted to have significant impact on productivity and job creation in the Latin American and Caribbean region. According to Strategy&³, a PwC partner, digitization was estimated to provide an additional \$USD27 billion to the LAC economy and create over 600,000 new jobs in 2011.

There has been significant acceleration in the interest to adopt digital technologies in the Latin American and Caribbean region, prompting governments to expand internet access and promote technology-driven business models for MSMEs and consumers, thereby fueling rapid growth in e-commerce⁴.

The dynamics of the e-commerce landscape globally is also itself, changing. There is an increase proportion of online shoppers who are making purchases through various social media platforms. A 2024 DHL report noted that out of 12,000 online shoppers across 24 countries, 37 percent of those survey indicated they purchased from Facebook, 28 percent from Instagram and 18 percent form TikTok. It is estimated in 2025 the social commerce market will reach approximately two trillion US dollars or approximately 28 percent of global online retail sales⁵. The same report noted that online marketplaces such as Amazon, Shein, Temu & Ebay dominate market share, however, 52 percent of the those surveyed indicated that they do still use retailer's app to make purchases. This suggests that there is enough incentive for retailers to develop and curate their own custom apps.

In addition to which, e-commerce payment methods are being redefined. Across major markets in

³ Strategy&. (2013). *Digitization for economic growth and job creation: Regional and industry perspectives*. Booz & Company.

⁴ B. Díaz de Astarloa, "Practices and initiatives for the development of cross-border e-commerce in Latin America and the Caribbean and its impact in the post-pandemic era", Production Development series, No. 233 (LC/TS.2022/221), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023

⁵ DHL. "Online Shopper Trends 2024: E-Commerce Trends Report." 2024.

the Americans, Asia Pacific and European regions, digital wallets are emerging as a growing staple of payment⁶ according to a 2021 Global E-Commerce Trends report by J.P. Morgan. In Brazil for example, cards represent the most popular payment method, however, digital wallets were expected to raise from 11 percent to 14 percent in 2024.

Similarly, digital wallets are the second most popular payment method behind cards and gaining popularity across Canada (19 percent raising to 23 percent in 2024), Mexico (21 percent) and the United States (26 percent).

In the Asia Pacific region, digital wallets are the third most popular payment method with 17 percent market share and across Europe digital wallets are very popular (Italy – 34 percent, Portugal – 14 percent). Based on the report, PayPal is the most widely used digital wallet for e-commerce purchases.

While these point to an ever-growing e-commerce ecosystem, there are many challenges that affect the e-commerce opportunities for MSMEs.

According to the World Economic Forum, MSMEs face the following logistics challenges such as uncompetitive pricing, lack of or unreliability of traceability, complex custom duties and tax calculations, lack of a cost-effective return policy and lack of last-mile delivery services⁷.

In response to evolving global trends, the Agency has repositioned the Virtual E-Commerce Accelerator Programme (VEAP) to deliver a more streamlined, practical, and high-impact capacity-building initiative for Caribbean MSMEs.

E-commerce offers Caribbean businesses a powerful avenue for expanding beyond local markets. However, challenges such as high shipping costs, limited payment processing options, and low digital adoption have slowed regional participation in global digital trade.

⁶ J.P. Morgan. *Global e-commerce trends report*. 2021. <https://www.jpmorgan.com/content/dam/jpm/treasury-services/documents/global-e-commerce-trends-report.pdf>.

⁷ World Economic Forum. *Delivering the Goods: E-commerce Logistics Transformation*. 2018

This programme tackles these barriers head-on by providing a structured, results-oriented roadmap that supports SMEs through every stage of their e-commerce journey—from establishing online sales platforms and integrating payment solutions to managing logistics and fulfilling international orders. This initiative empowers Caribbean SMEs to seamlessly sell and ship products to customers worldwide.

Ultimately, the VEAP aims to drive a significant increase in e-commerce-driven exports from Caribbean SMEs, fostering a more digitally competitive private sector and positioning the region as a key player in the global digital economy.

1.2 Contracting Authority

The contracting authority for this assignment is the Caribbean Export Development Agency (*hereinafter* Caribbean Export/the Agency).

1.3 Beneficiary Countries

The primary beneficiaries under this project are the private sectors of CARIFORUM Member States, namely: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1 Overall Objectives

The overall objective of this initiative is to increase the number of Caribbean SMEs participating meaningfully in e-commerce by equipping them with the tools, training, and strategic guidance needed to boost online sales revenue by the end of their participation. In doing so, the programme will directly contribute to increased export capacity, enhanced digital competitiveness, and a more resilient and future-ready private sector. It will also strengthen institutional capacity by training BSOs to provide sustained support to MSMEs at the national level—ensuring long-term impact and regional scalability of the VEAP model.

This expansion comes at a critical time when the global e-commerce landscape is evolving rapidly. From the rise of social commerce and mobile shopping to the growing use of digital wallets and alternative payment solutions, consumer behaviors and market expectations are shifting. Meanwhile, MSMEs in the Caribbean continue to face structural barriers including high shipping costs, lack of access to digital payment options, and low adoption of digital tools. By addressing these barriers through a structured five-component roadmap—from e-commerce setup to scaling and international growth, VEAP will bridge the gap between knowledge and implementation. It will ensure Caribbean SMEs are not only digitally equipped, but commercially empowered to compete and thrive in the global digital economy.

2.2 Specific Objectives and Scope of Work

The specific objectives of the Consultancy are:

- Lead the delivery of capacity-building sessions and expert-led content throughout the duration of the programme. The consultant will facilitate a series of interactive webinars covering key thematic areas such as website functionality, digital marketing, fulfillment logistics, shipping, customer service, and scaling. These sessions must be supported by actionable assignments that encourage hands-on learning and practical implementation. Deliver targeted, practical training and mentorship through the Caribbean Digital Transformation Masterclass and access to the Agency's CDTI platform will enhance participants' skills in digital tools, platforms, and strategic frameworks for digital transformation.
- Provide one-on-one coaching and technical support to participating MSMEs and BSOs. The consultant will offer personalized guidance to help firms set up or improve their e-commerce platforms, integrate digital payment solutions, adopt inventory management systems, and develop pricing and digital sales strategies. The consultant will also provide troubleshooting support for implementation challenges.
- Support the finalization and contextualization of the VEAP training curriculum. This involves ensuring that all content is regionally relevant and practically applicable to the realities of Caribbean MSMEs and BSOs. The consultant will align the curriculum with the five core

components of the e-commerce roadmap and define clear learning outcomes and delivery schedules to guide implementation

- Develop and deliver a suite of practical tools and templates that participants can use to operationalize their e-commerce strategies. These resources may include toolkits for marketing plans, logistics workflows, analytics dashboards, pricing models, and customer service protocols. The consultant must ensure that these materials are user-friendly and easily adaptable for different sectors and markets.
- Monitor and evaluate participant progress using key performance indicators. The consultant will develop a method to track metrics such as website traffic increases, digital sales growth, payment system integration, and export-readiness improvements. Based on this data, the consultant will provide strategic feedback to participants and recommendations to the programme team for continuous improvement.
- Contribute to institutional learning by documenting success stories, best practices, and lessons learned throughout the programme. The consultant will prepare a comprehensive final report outlining the overall impact of the consultancy, challenges encountered, and recommendations for future iterations of the VEAP. This will support the long-term sustainability and regional scalability of the programme.

The scope of works for this consultancy are:

- **Programme Design and Content Development (Refinement & Customization):** The consultant will be responsible for reviewing and refining the existing VEAP e-commerce roadmap across its core components: Website Development & E-Commerce Functionality; Digital Marketing & Customer Acquisition, Pricing & Marketing Strategy; Fulfilment, Logistics & Inventory Management; Shipping, Customer, Delivery & Customer Service; and Analyze, Refine, Scale & Grow. This involves developing comprehensive, practice-oriented learning materials, tools, and resources for each component, specifically tailored for Caribbean businesses. A key aspect of this will be ensuring that the content directly addresses identified barriers such as difficulty in accessing merchant accounts, lack of

international payment options, high shipping costs, and low digital adoption. Furthermore, the consultant must incorporate evolving global e-commerce trends, including the increasing proportion of online shoppers using social media platforms, the dominance of online marketplaces, and the growing prevalence of digital wallets as a payment method. To support practical implementation, the consultant will also develop targeted post-webinar activities for participants each week across different components, along with clear tracking and progress monitoring mechanisms

- **Participant Recruitment and Onboarding:** The consultant will establish clear eligibility criteria for participating firms, ensuring they are export-ready, have an existing website, possess funds to develop their website, have an existing customer base, and are a registered legal entity in a CARIFORUM state.
- **Programme Delivery and Facilitation:** The consultant will manage the full online delivery of the VEAP, ensuring accessible and efficient content dissemination. The cohort will receive expert-led webinars lasting between 90 and 120 minutes, covering all five programme components. The consultant will facilitate structured weekly webinars, ensuring each session is engaging and informative, focusing on critical elements for building a comprehensive e-commerce business model. Throughout the 12-month learning journey, the consultant will provide expert coaching and practical experience to all participants, both firms and BSOs. A crucial aspect of this will be working closely with each participant to support the development and implementation of their individual strategies, aligning with each component of the E-Commerce Roadmap Framework. Additionally, the programme aims to build institutional capacity by training BSOs to provide ongoing national-level support to MSMEs, a task the consultant will ensure is adequately addressed
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting:** The consultant will implement a robust system for tracking participant progress on post-webinar activities and their overall engagement in the programme. This includes monitoring and reporting on key performance indicators (KPIs) to gauge the programme's success.

2.3 Purpose of consultancy

The Virtual E-Commerce Accelerator Programme (VEAP) aims to increase the number of Caribbean Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) engaged in impactful e-commerce and enhance their capacity to implement effective online sales strategies. The consultancy will be responsible for refining the programme's content, recruiting and onboarding participants, delivering all online training and coaching, and monitoring the achievement of key objectives. By the end of participation, the VEAP aims to drive e-commerce-led exports from Caribbean SMEs. Ultimately, the consultancy will empower Caribbean SMEs to leverage digital trade as a driver of business growth and export expansion, positioning the region as a key player in the global digital economy.

3. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS AND MITIGATION

3.1 Assumptions

1. Private Sector Willingness to Participate: It is assumed that a sufficient amount of Caribbean private sector firms will be interested in digital transformation and see value in participating in the VEAP.
2. Institutional Support: Key organizations, business support agencies and policy makers see the value of the VEAP.
3. Digital Readiness of the Caribbean Private Sector: It is assumed that all participants will have access to resources to implement e-commerce activity.
4. Relevance of Content: The consultant will tailor the VEAP content to the business environment of the Caribbean taking into account local challenges, regulations and digital infrastructure limitations.

3.2 Risks

1. Low Participation: Lack of interest or scheduling conflicts may result in low attendance.

2. Resistance to Change: Caribbean private sector may be skeptical about digital transformation due to cost concerns, cultural inertia or the lack of immediate return on investment.
3. Lack of Adequate Digital Infrastructure: Existing technological infrastructure in some Caribbean regions may not be adequate to support the proposed digital transformation initiatives.

3.3 Mitigation

1. Targeted Outreach & Engagement: Develop a comprehensive engagement plan to ensure full participation collaboration from across all levels of the private sector. This includes collaboration with business associations, government agencies and business support organizations.
2. Strategic Partnerships: Developing partnerships to provide access to finance for participants to implement customized e-commerce roadmaps.
3. Curate Caribbean Specific VEAP Content: Content should include case studies of Caribbean private sector firms integrating digital technologies and their successes. This encourage participants to follow suite.

4. DELIVERABLES

4.1 Deliverables

The consulting firm will be responsible for the delivery of the following:

- Deliverable 1: Inception Report, review e-commerce roadmap framework and draft work plan within 2 weeks of contract signing
- Deliverable 2:
 - a. Consultant to provide a course outline and training materials for, but not limited to, the following based on e-commerce roadmap framework review:
 1. Website Development & E-Commerce Functionality

2. Digital Marketing & Customer Acquisition
 3. Fulfilment, Logistics & Inventory Management
 4. Shipping, Customer, Delivery & Customer Service
 5. Analyze, Refine, Scale & Grow
- b. Develop programme structure
 - c. Develop all training materials, inclusive of post-webinar tasks.
 - d. Develop implementation roadmap template
 - e. Develop monitoring and evaluation framework
- Deliverable 3: Programme Delivery and Facilitation. This entails, but is not limited to the following:
 - a. Expert-led webinars delivered weekly, covering all programme components.
 - b. Facilitator guides and session plans for all webinars
 - c. Templates and tools for participants to develop their e-commerce strategies, pricing models, inventory management plans, digital communication plans, and market entry strategies.
 - d. Execute and track post-webinar activities with clear instructions
 - e. Completion of participant feedback forms.
 - Deliverable 4: Submission of Post-VEAP Analysis Report to include, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Final programme evaluation report, including an assessment of the overall impact and effectiveness of the VEAP against its objectives, data on the boost in online sales revenue, and recommendations for future phases or similar initiatives.
 - b. Presentation of analysis.

Every deliverable must be presented to and reviewed by the Caribbean Export team, and recommendations made need to be addressed to the satisfaction of the parties before payment of the deliverable.

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

5.1 Management structure

The Executive Director will retain overall responsibility for the overall project. Day-to-day supervision of this project is the responsibility of the Innovation, Digital Business Officer, who will communicate progress to the Executive Director.

5.2 Reporting

A monthly written progress report outlining key activities undertaken, progress made, and results achieved, must be submitted to Innovation & Digital Business Officer.

6. Payment timeline:

Payments will be made upon delivery and acceptance by the Advisory Committee of the DTI based on the following deliverables.

Payment plan	
<i>Deliverables</i>	%
Deliverable 1	10%
Deliverable 2	30%
Deliverable 3	40%
Deliverable 4	20%
TOTAL	100%

7. REQUIREMENTS

7.1 Qualifications and Work Experience

A qualified firm, whose project team contain the following qualifications and experience:

- A Postgraduate Degree in Social Sciences, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Computer Science or a related field.
- A minimum of ten (10) years experience in supporting private sector firms in the areas of digital business, e-commerce adoption, technology adoption, innovation or digitization.
- Strong project management skills – A certification in project management will be an asset.
- Experience working with enterprises and with national trade promotion organizations and/or other business support organizations.
- Experience and a track record in building out e-commerce business models.
- Proven relationship management skills.
- Proven track record in conducting similar webinar sessions
- Fluent in English.
- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office programmes especially Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Project and Microsoft PowerPoint.

7.3 Contract Duration

Twelve months, with payment based on deliverables.

7.4 Location

Virtual

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Consultancy will be monitored and evaluated by Caribbean Export over the duration of the project. Performance on the project will be measured by satisfactory completion and timely submission of the deliverables outlined in Sections 4, and as outlined within the work plan submitted. Feedback, other than acceptance, on each submitted deliverable is not a requirement

for the continuation of the project. However, in some instances the Consultant may need to integrate any feedback into the subsequent deliverables. The Contracting Authority will provide feedback to the consultant within ten (10) working days of receipt of the final report.

9. PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

To participate in any activity executed or supported by Caribbean Export, you hereby agree that any information and personal data that you share and is collected by the Agency will be processed for the purpose of reporting the outcomes and impact of your projects and/or participation. Please note that Caribbean Export reserves the right to publish the Contractor's/Participant's name and address, the purpose and nature of the activity, and financial arrangements, in accordance with Caribbean Export's Personal Data Protection Policy. [Personal Data Protection Policy](https://content.carib-export.com/download/personal-data-protection-policy/). (<https://content.carib-export.com/download/personal-data-protection-policy/>). Derogation from publication of this information may be granted if it could endanger the Contractor/Participant or harm his/her commercial interests.

10. DECLARATION

To participate in any procurement undertaken by Caribbean Export, all applicants must complete and submit to the agency the Applicant Declaration Form. <https://content.carib-export.com/download/applicant-declaration-form/>

To apply, please download the full Terms of Reference (TOR) and submit the required documentation, including the:

- Technical Proposal (inclusive of a list of references for project undertaken of a similar nature)
- Financial Proposal
- Applicant Declaration Form

Submit these documents to Jonathan Seecharan, Innovation and Digital Business Officer at jseecharan@carib-export.com, copied to Wayne Elliott, Manager - Technical Programmes, at welliott@carib-export.com.

The submission deadline is **11:59PM (AST) (GMT-4) on 4 August 2025**.