Concept Note

Upload Endorsed Concept Note	7_VN_CN_Paperless trade platforms_endorsed.docx	**Sponsor Confirmation Doc**	JP_Co-sponsorship confirmation.jpg KR_Co-sponsorship confirmation.jpg MY_Co-sponsorship confirmation.jpg PE_Co-sponsorship confirmation.jpg PH_Co-sponsorship confirmation.jpeg

Project Overview

Project Year and Session	2026 2		
Project Title	APEC Workshop on Advancing Paperless Trade Platforms for Seamless Cross-Border Trade		
Fund Source	APEC Support Fund (ASF)	**Sub-Fund**	ASF: Digital Innovation (Digital)
APEC Forum	Digital Economy Steering Group (DESG)	**Co-Proposing Forum**	
Proposing APEC Economy	Viet Nam;	**Co-Proposing Economy**	
Co-Sponsoring APEC Economies	Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Peru; Philippines;	**CN Final Submission Date**	24-07-2026
Expected Start Date	01-03-2027	**Project Completion Date**	30-06-2028
Project Topic(s)	Trade Facilitation; Digital Technology and Innovation; Digital Economy;		
Project Summary	This project seeks to accelerate the adoption of paperless trade platforms for seamless cross-border trade across APEC. It will examine existing initiatives including electronic single window systems and private sector platforms. These platforms help streamline supply chains, digitize documentation, automate compliance, and improve transparency, ultimately leading to significant cost reductions (3.8% on average) and contributing to GDP growth (around 0.8% across eight surveyed APEC economies). The project also considers barriers to wider adoption of paperless trade platforms including legal and regulatory challenges, lack of harmonized standards and interoperability, limited digital skills, digital infrastructure disparity, and costs for secure development and maintenance. To address these issues, the project proposes to convene a two-day hybrid workshop to exchange knowledge, share best practices, explore obstacles and opportunities for promoting paperless trade platforms to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and facilitate faster cross-border transactions. The workshop will be held during SOM 1 in Viet Nam's APEC host year 2027.		
List All Project Outputs	1. Two-day Workshop 2. Workshop Report (APEC publication)		

Project Alignment to APEC's Putrajaya Vision 2040 and Aotearoa Plan of Action

Alignment to Primary Driver	2 Innovation and Digitalisation	**Primary Objective**	2.3 Digital infrastructure and transformation

Alignment to Secondary Driver (Optional)	1 Trade and Investment	**Secondary Objective (Optional)**	1.4 Connectivity and supply chains

Budget

a. Labor Costs (USD)	18,300.00				
b. Travel (USD)	60,587.50				
c. Hosting (USD)	13,000.00				
d. Publications & Distribution (USD)	0.00				
e. Other (USD)	0.00				
Total Amount Being Sought from APEC (a+b+c+d+e) (USD)	91,887.50	**Self-Funding Amount (USD)**	0.00	**Total Project Value (USD)**	91,887.50

Main Project Overseer Information

Name	Bui Thi Thanh Hang	**Job Title**	Head of International Affairs Division
PO Organization	E-commerce and Digital Economy Agency, Ministry of Industry and Trade	**Primary Contact No** *(Economy Code/Area Code + Telephone No)*	+84983570098
Primary E-mail	hangbtt82@gmail.com		

Alternate Project Overseer Information

	SN	Alternate PO	Job Title	PO Organization	Contact No	E-mail
☐	1	Ho Thi To Uyen	Deputy Head of International Affairs Division	E-commerce and Digital Economy Agency, Ministry of Industry and Trade	+84945869899	uyenhtt@moit.gov.vn

Project Synopsis

Project Objective	This project seeks to advance the adoption of paperless trade platforms for seamless cross-border trade in APEC. Through a two-day hybrid workshop, the initiative will build capacity, foster collaboration, and enhance readiness among APEC economies by showcasing best practices and addressing the opportunities and obstacles in promoting paperless trade platforms. Discussions will examine diverse approaches to public and private sector's platforms, ensuring that both governments and MSMEs

	can effectively leverage trade digitalization to reduce transaction costs and expand participation in global trade. Ultimately, these efforts will accelerate digital transformation, narrow the digital divide, and support objectives of the AIDER.

1. Relevance	
1a. Issues	APEC economies have made significant progress in facilitating paperless trade to increase efficiency, reduce costs and accelerate the movement of goods across borders. Central to this progress are paperless trade platforms that connect stakeholders and enable key functions to digitalise trade processes. In APEC economies, electronic single window systems have been implemented to enable the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents to fulfil all import, export and transit-related regulatory requirements. In parallel, private sector's paperless trade platforms such as CargoWise (Australia), TradeWaltz (Japan), Trusple (China), Morpheus.Network (Canada), DLT Ledgers (Singapore), and Secro (United States) have also been utilized substantially to streamline global supply chains, digitize trade documentation, automate customs and compliance processes, enable blockchain-based trade finance, and enhance transparency and efficiency in cross-border transactions. The adoption of paperless trade platforms delivers substantial benefits in terms of connectivity, productivity, transparency, predictability and inclusiveness. An APEC research across eight economies shows that adoption of these platforms reduced exporting firms' total trade costs by 3.8% on average. In 2021, paperless trade platforms drove higher trade volumes and contributed USD 383 billion in value added across these economies, equivalent to 0.8% of these eight economies' aggregate GDP. Despite this progress, challenges remain for wider adoption of paperless trade platforms. Key barriers include: (i) legal and regulatory challenges, with limited recognition of electronic documents (e.g., bills of lading, warehouse receipts) due to uneven progress in adopting international frameworks such as UNCITRAL MLETR; (ii) a lack of harmonized standards and interoperability across paperless trade platforms; (iii) limited digital skills to effectively adopt and use paperless platforms; (iv) digital infrastructure disparity across APEC economies, particularly broadband coverage and performance; and (v) costs for secure development and maintenance. Moreover, APEC economies vary in their readiness and capacity to maximize paperless trade platform adoption, with advanced economies outperforming developing ones. To address these issues, the project proposes to organize a two-day workshop designed to foster knowledge exchange on the role of paperless trade platforms, best practices, opportunities and obstacles in utilizing them in APEC, promote greater adoption of domestic and cross-border paperless trade platforms, equip APEC members with practical insights to maximize the benefits of trade digitalization, and contribute to narrowing the digital divide in the region.
1b. Alignment to APEC	This project aligns with the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the Aotearoa Plan of Action, with a primary focus on the "Innovation and Digitalization" driver as it seeks to strengthen digital infrastructure, accelerate digital transformation, narrow the digital divide, and foster an enabling environment supported by digital economy and innovation. It also aligns with the "Trade and Investment" driver as it aims to promote seamless connectivity and resilient supply chains. Moreover, this project supports APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade's commitment to facilitating paperless trade in the region, by promoting paperless trade platforms and through capacity-building efforts. It directly contributes to ongoing APEC's discussions aimed at developing a framework for regional trade digitalization cooperation to enable economies to facilitate trade digitalization, accelerate regional cooperation and promote cross-border trade and investment in APEC. Finally, this project reinforces several APEC initiatives which prioritize paperless trade as an essential driver of supply chain resilience, cost reduction, and regional integration, such as the APEC Connectivity Blueprint (2015–2025), the APEC Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan (SCFAP III, 2022–2026).
1c. Alignment to Forum	The project supports the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap (AIDER, 2017) by advancing key focus areas such as "Development of digital infrastructure" (KFA 1), "Promotion of Interoperability" (KFA 2), and "Promoting innovation and adoption of enabling technologies and services" (KFA 6). In addition, it also aligns with the APEC Cross-border E-commerce Facilitation

Framework which focuses on facilitating cross-border paperless trade in the region through building capacities.
Moreover, it directly supports the broader goal of reducing or eliminating mandated paper-based documents in cross-border trade, a transformation that has the potential to revolutionize trade across the Asia-Pacific region and has long been a central focus of the Digital Economy Steering Group (DESG).

2. Eligibility and Fund Priorities

This project aims to apply for APEC Support Fund (ASF) – Digital Innovation. It fully aligns with its eligibility criteria and funding priorities:
- The initiative significantly contributes to the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap and the APEC Cross-border E-commerce Facilitation Framework.
- It supports DESG's priority on paperless trade and closely aligns with CTI's work on trade facilitation and digitalization of trade procedures.
- It features a capacity-building workshop designed to enhance understanding of paperless trade platforms. By sharing best practices and innovative solutions, the project works to narrow the digital divide among APEC economies.
- The project facilitates a multi-disciplinary approach by engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including policymakers, regulators, researchers, experts and entrepreneurs, to advance trade digitalization.

3. Capacity Building

This project will strengthen the capacity of APEC participants through a hybrid workshop format designed to maximize participation and foster inclusive collaboration across government, academia, business, and international organizations. By facilitating the sharing of knowledge, real-world use cases, and best practices, the initiative will provide insights into:
- Use of paperless trade platforms including both public and private sector platforms and enabling factors for successful implementation.
- Broader benefits of paperless trade platforms such as time and cost savings, increased efficiency, and wider economic gains.
- Key barriers for wider adoption including: (i) legal and regulatory challenges, with limited recognition of electronic documents (e.g., bills of lading, warehouse receipts) due to uneven progress in adopting international frameworks such as UNCITRAL MLETR; (ii) a lack of harmonized standards and interoperability across paperless trade platforms; (iii) limited digital skills to effectively adopt and use paperless platforms; (iv) digital infrastructure disparity across APEC economies, particularly in broadband coverage and performance; and (v) costs for secure development and maintenance.
- Differing approaches and considerations between governments and business in implementing and utilizing these platforms.
- Recommendations to promote the adoption of paperless trade platforms and foster interoperability and integration within the paperless trade ecosystem, thereby enhancing cross-border trade.

Through this targeted capacity building, APEC economies, particularly developing members and MSMEs, will gain a deeper understanding of how to navigate the challenges and leverage the benefits of paperless trade platforms to expand participation in cross-border trade. Ultimately, this project will enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of APEC economies in the global marketplace.

4. Methodology

4a. Work Plan

SN	Start From	Finish By	Activity	Deliverables
1	15-07-2026	21-07-2026	Prepare Concept Note	Concept Note
2	22-07-2026	01-10-2026	Prepare Project Proposal	Project Proposal
3	01-11-2026	28-02-2027	Prepare the implementation plan for the project	Project implementation plan

☐	4	01-11-2026	28-02-2027	Coordinate logistics for project implementation	Contracts, TOR, General Information Circular, Agenda, invitations, etc.,
☐	5	01-02-2027	15-03-2027	Organize the two-day workshop	A two-day workshop
☐	6	16-03-2027	30-06-2027	Prepare the Workshop Summary	Workshop Summary Report
☐	7	01-07-2027	31-12-2027	Complete the Monitoring and Completion Reports	Monitoring and Completion Reports

4b. Beneficiaries	This project will benefit a broad range of stakeholders across APEC economies, including: - Government officials: Officials responsible for trade digitalization and facilitation will gain insights into best practices, opportunities and challenges in adopting paperless trade platforms to enhance the policy making process and support the implementation of trade facilitation measures. - Businesses (particularly MSMEs): Platform operators, exporters, importers and logistics providers will benefit from knowledge-sharing and interactive discussion sessions and networking opportunities. - International organizations and academia institutions: Experts, researchers, and trade specialists will be engaged in the sessions, contributing research insights and fostering collaboration. The workshop will provide a platform for these diverse stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing trade digitalization challenges. To achieve this, it features a balanced mix of expert presentations, practical use-case demonstrations, interactive group work sessions, all designed to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration on paperless trade.
4c. Evaluation	The number of participants and economies attending the workshop will serve as benchmarks for assessing the project outcomes. A post-workshop evaluation survey will aim to evaluate participant satisfaction as well as capture key takeaways on practices and opportunities for strengthening skills, knowledge, and institutional readiness in adopting paperless trade platforms.
4d. Linkages	This project will support and reinforce APEC efforts regarding economic growth, paperless trade, MSMEs, interoperability, and digital economy development, especially including the following initiatives: - Workshop series report on utilizing technology in trade facilitation by the Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI 07 2020T). - Studies by Policy Support Unit (PSU) on trade digitalization and paperless trade platforms in APEC. - A path to paperless trade: Analysing the legal gaps and economic benefit of adopting or maintaining a legal framework that takes into account the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (CTI 02 2024). - Addressing Interoperability and Trust in SCFAP III Chokepoint 1 Through Paperless Trade (CTI 03 2025S). - The Guidelines for Paperless Trade by the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) with a focus on the implementation of trade Single Windows to support streamlining of border processes (SCCP 02 2021S). Building on these APEC works, this initiative will examine paperless trade platforms established by public and private sector to assess progress in paperless trade implementation. It will also explore critical challenges including the legal recognition of electronic transferable records, platform interoperability, the region's digital disparity, and propose recommendations to drive wider adoption for seamless cross-border trade. Additionally, the workshop aims to provide a platform for diverse stakeholders from government, academia, business, and international organizations to share practical insights and strengthen collaboration. By focusing specifically on paperless trade platforms, this project does not duplicate above mentioned initiatives. This approach not only demonstrates the tangible benefits of paperless trade platforms for trade solutions but also encourages wider adoption and fosters trade digitalization. To maximize synergy, prevent duplication and ensure alignment with ongoing paperless trade initiatives, workshop information and outcomes will be shared across relevant APEC fora, including CTI, Policy Partnership on Science, Technology and Innovation (PPSTI), Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group (SMEWG), and SCCP. Specifically, throughout development and implementation, the project will engage CTI on trade facilitation, SCSC on digital and technology-led customs and

	ACCEPT on electronic trade documentation. These stakeholders will be invited to the workshop to share their insights and experience.

Project Overseer Declaration	☑ I agree to the declaration stated below	**Date**	15-07-2026

As Project Overseer and on behalf of the above said Organization, I declare that this submission was prepared in accordance with the Guidebook on APEC Projects (the Guidebook) and any ensuing project will comply with said Guidebook. Failure to do so may result in the BMC denying or revoking funding and/or project approval. I understand that any funds approved are granted on the basis of the information in the document's budget table, in the case of any inconsistencies within the document. By submitting this APEC Concept Note to the APEC Secretariat, you (each Project Overseer or point of contact) agree that the APEC Secretariat will collect, use, disclose, and transmit the data contained in the APEC Concept Note, which you have provided to the APEC Secretariat, in accordance with the Singapore's Personal Data Protection Act 2012 and the APEC Secretariat's data protection policy (https://www.apec.org/PrivacyPolicy). The APEC Secretariat will transfer any data provided in this form, which may contain personal data of Project Overseer(s), to APEC member economies overseas via the APEC Secretariat.