Project Proposal

Project Proposal Number	CTI_101_2025T
Current Status	Satisfactory
Project Title 2	In-depth study on Digital trade provisions of FTAs/RTAs
Fund Source	Trade and Investment Liberalisation and Facilitation Account (TILF)
Sub-Fund	-
APEC Forum	Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI)
Co-Proposing Forum	
Proposing APEC Economy	Japan;
Co-Proposing Economy	
Co-Sponsoring APEC Economy(ies) if any	Australia; Canada; Chile; China; Hong Kong, China; Korea; New Zealand; Peru; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand;
Expected Start Date	01-09-2025
Project Completion Date	31-12-2026
Project Summary	The project aims to contribute to the advancement of FTAAP agenda, focusing on digital trade, with the meaningful input to the implementation of "the Ichma Statement". With the significant prospect for future growth of digital trade in the region, issues such as enhancing trust and security in the use of ICTs and the facilitation of cross-border data flow need to be further emphasized as set in AIDER (Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap). This project will conduct in-depth study and analysis on the legal settings, implementations and business practices regarding digital trade provisions of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA), The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the Pacific Alliance (PA) (the FTA/RTAs dealt with in the PSU study), as well as other regional undertakings, including the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) and U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement. The project will identify benefits for business entities as well as hindrances caused by existing disparities among member economies, that affect the cost in the global digital business. The findings of the study including best practices will be shared with APEC economies including private sector. It will help participants better equipped for negotiations for high quality trade agreements, which will contribute to the advancement of FTAAP agenda. This project may make a good alignment to the Australian project on "APEC Digital Trade Provision Handbook" (CTI 01 2025S). The handbook deals with a wide range of provisions on Digital Trade including "Building trust" and "Data flows" with resommendations for higher commitments in FTAs while paying attantion to a balanced approach. This project will focus on Personal information protection and cross-border data flow. This project intends to support, in a way, the recommended commitment in the Handbook, based on the in-depth case study on legal setting and actual business pratices. The close collaboration with the Handbook project, as an unbrella initiative, this Digital Trade project will be able to elaborate the recomendations as well as provide additional ideas in order to make the Handbook to be useful and effective tool in this dimention.
Project Topic(s)	Electronic Commerce; Trade Facilitation; Digital Economy;
Project Outputs	1. Study report on digital trade-related provisions of FTAs/RTAs focusing on legal setting and business practices regarding data security/protection and cross-border data flow, with identified best practices and hindrance to global digital trade. The report will be minimum 80 pages, excluding annexes. 2.One-full day hybrid Workshop (in-person and virtual) at SOM1 (2026) 3.Project summary report of minimum 20 pages
Project Alignment to APEC's Putrajaya Vision 2040 and Aotearoa Plan of Action	

Primary Driver	1 Trade and Investment	**Primary Objective**	1.3 Bogor Goals and economic integration in the region
Secondary Driver (Optional)	2 Innovation and Digitalisation	**Secondary Objective (Optional)**	2.2 Digital economy and global interconnectedness

Summary of Proposed Budget	**APEC Funding (USD) 1**	**Self-Funding (USD) 1**	**Total (USD) 1**
	161,028.00	0.00	161,028.00

Main Project Overseers Information	
Name	Keiko FUTAMI
Job Title	Deputy Director
PO Organization	APEC division, Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
Primary Contact No *(Economy Code/Area Code + Telephone No)*	0081355018342
Primary E-mail	keiko.futami@mofa.go.jp
Please provide a brief profile of the PO	Ms. Keiko Futami is Deputy Director responsible for the CIT at the APEC division, Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Prior to the current post, she had been engaged in a number of FTA/EPA negotiations, namely with ASEAN, Vietnam, Australia, the Philippines, GCC, as well a variety of other economic agreements such as Customs Corporation, Tax Treaty, Social Security, Aviation cooperation, and MRAs. Until March 2024, she served as Alternate director for Japan at EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and was involved in the evaluation and approval of loan projects for Central Asia and Eastern Europe countries, as well as in the Audit/Risk management of the Bank.

Alternate Project Overseer Information

Section A: Overview and Relevance	
SECTION A: Project Relevance	
1a. Benefits to Region	Internet and digitalization have significantly advanced and become the essential infrastructure for the economic development in the APEC region. To realize the full economic potential, issues such as enhancing trust and security in the use of ICTs and the facilitation of cross-border data flow will be further emphasized. The study conducted through this project will focus on the legal settings and business practices regarding personal data/information protection and cross-border data transfer, paying the close attention to the balance with protection/flow of data for business and economies' legitimate purposes respectively. Capacity building in this aspect will also be organized for policy makers and experts so that they will be better equiped when engaged in trade agreements negotiations in the area of digital trade. Such exercise will contributes to the advancement of the FTAAP agenda.
1b. Eligibility and Fund Priorities	This project is qualified for TILF funding since it will contribute to enhancing cooperative programs and support trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, aiming at the project proposed by Peru as the CTI dialogue on "A way forward to implement the Ichma Statement on A New look at the FTAAP agenda". This project also meets many of the criteria set in the 15 areas in Part 1 of the Osaka Action Agenda; namely, comprehensiveness, comparability, WTO consistency, non-discrimination, transparency and so on.
1c. Capacity Building	This project will provide a capacity building for policy makers and experts from all APEC economies, who are engaged in policy formulation or/and trade agreements negotiations in the area of digital trade, as well as business persons/entities who are involved in digital trade. One-day hybrid workshop is expected to be organized on the margins of SOM1 in 2026.
2. Objective	The project will conduct in-depth study on the legal settings and implementation regarding digital trade provisions including "Personal Information Protection" and "Cross-Border Transfer of Information by Electronic Means" of the CPTPP, RCEP

	AANZFTA, USMCA, PA (The FTA/RTAs dealt with in the PSU study), as well as other regional undertakings, including DEPA, and U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement That includes careful comparative study by analyzing disparities and conformities in related laws/regulations, policies as well as actual business practices among member economies and therefore to identify benefits and hindrances as well as recommendations for further improvement and future considerations. The project will organize a one-day workshop for APEC economies including private sector and participants will be better equipped with knowledge and good insight for digital trade agreement.
3a. APEC	(1)This project will contribute to the implementation "Ichma Statement on a New look at FTAAP agenda". The Statement has instructed CTI to work on a new workstream and explore innovative traded issues based on the PSU study on convergences and divergences of RTAs/FTAS of the region, and digital trade has been identified as one of the areas for its scope. (2)"Lima Roadmap to Promote the Transition to the Formal and Global Economies (2025-2040)", highlights digitalization, including in administrative procedures and business operations, as the essential factor to promote the transition. The project will be a meaningful input for facilitating cross-border data transfer in this respect. (3)This project also aligns to MRT statement of 2024, stating the acceleration of AIDER in which "enhancing trust and security in the use of ICTs" and "facilitating the free flow of information and data for the development of the Internet and digital economy, while respecting applicable domestic laws and regulations" as the main factors to be further pursued.
3b. Forum	(1) CTI: The in-depth study and analysis conducted through the project will provide useful inputs to the initiative proposed by Peru as the CTI dialogue on "A way forward to implement the Ichma Statement on A New look at the FTAAP agenda". (2) DESG: The project will also contribute to further the discussion in DESG based on AIDER, namely 7.Enhancing trust and security in the use of ICTs and 8.Faciliotaing the free flow of information and data for development of the Internet and Digital Economy, while respecting applicable domestic and regulations.

SECTION B: Project Impact

	SN	Output Name	Description
☐	1	Study and analysis (Study report)	1.The study will conduct a cross-cutting analysis of digital trade disciplines set out in major agreements, particularly those relating to data security/protection and cross-border data transfers, to identify commonalities and divergences and to assess options for governments to ensure effective implementation and compliance. The agreements presently in scope are CPTPP, RCEP), AANZFTA, DEPA, and the U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement, USMCA and PA. 2.The economies initially envisaged for this inquiry are [tenatively Japan, China, Vietnam, Singapore, Australia, and the United States] . It is intended to develop an evidence base through interviews and related outreach to firms operating in these economies Depending on the availability of interview participants and the final budget, the scope may be narrowed. 3.To identify best/good practices as well as hindrances to global digital trade based on the above study. 4. To prepare a study report of minimum 80 pages excluding annexes. The duration of the study is expected for four months, and the report should be finalised prior to SOM2 of 2026 (for the planned workshop for capacity building).

☐	2	One-full day Workshop (in-person and virtual)	To hold one-full day Workshop (in-person and virtual) at SOM2 in 2026. It will be attended by policy makers and experts from all APEC economies, who are engaged in policy formulation or/and trade agreements negotiations in the area of digital trade, as well as businesspersons/entities who are involved in digital trade. <Purpose of the workshop> The workshop aims to provide a capacity building opportunitiy for participating officials. It will expand and upgrade their knowledge and perspective in digital trade provisions and policy that will redsuce cost and further facilitate the digital trade in the region by introducing the hindrances derived from the disparities in legal settings and good practices, as well as direct opinions from the business sector. <Expected number of participants> 100 participants (60 from APEC economies, 20 from the business sector, 10 academics, 10 from international organizations) <Proposed agenda of the workshop> (1) Introduction and Key note speeches (2) Personal information protection - three presentations (at least one presentation is from the business sector) - discussion among panelisets - Q&A (between participants and panelists) (3) Cross-border data flow - three presentations (at least one presentation is from the business sector) - discussion among panelisets - Q&A (between participants and panelists) (4) Wrap-up (including a survey on the workshop though online) Virtual participation (no limit on the number) is possible including Q&A and virtual participants can attend either the morning session (Personal information protection) or the afternoon one (cross-border data flow). An online survey will be in placed during and at the end of the workshop.
☐	3	Study Report (APEC Publication)	1. A study report of minimum 80 pages excluding annexes will be provided at the end of the project. The duration of the study is expected for five months, and the draft report should be finalized in prior to SOM2 of 2026 (for the planned workshop for capacity building). 2. As the report's content will be refined in light of the study's findings, it is a bit premature to set out detailed contents at this stage. Broadly, however, we envisage a structure comprising: (i) Executive suummary, (ii)Research scopoe and Mathodology, (iii)a cross-cutting legal analysis of the relevant disciplines across the agreements; (iv) a survey and analysis of business realities and challenges in the target countries; and (v) best-practice and recommendations for both the private and public sectors, informed by the foregoing analyses, (vi) Project summary report.

	SN	Outcome Description
☐	1	Increase in participants knowledge/understanding on trade agreements (provision) in the region in the area of Digital Trade. This outcome will be measured by pre-event survey and post-event survey.
☐	2	Member economies will have better understanding in the importance of trust and credibility in Digital Trade. This outcome will be measured by pre-event survey and post-event survey.

6. Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries of the project will include APEC economy officials, especially officials to be engaged in trade negotiations for FTAs/RTAs in the area of digital trade and E-commerce. The project will also target representatives from the business sector (ex. ABAC members). Beneficiaries will be invited to the planned workshop and participate in the discussions.
7. Dissemination	(1)The Study Report (minimum of 80 pages excluding annexes) will be an APEC publication. (2)Press release will be doen thourgh the channels of APEC website, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and researcher's own website. (3)Conferences of other international forums can be taken advantaged for presentation on the project.

8. Gender

1. Description of Gender Inclusion in the Project

PO is committed to collecting sex disaggregated data for all speakers and participants (not only those funded by APEC) at the project event. This data will be included when submitting a Completion Report to the Secretariat upon completion of the project, as well as providing guidance to future POs on their own gender parity targets.

2. Gender Participation Target Goals	As Participants (%)	As Speakers/Experts (%)
Male	50	50
Female	50	50

☐ Check this box if no event is proposed in the project

Five Pillars of the Gender Criteria
☐ Access to Capital and Assets
☐ Access to Markets
☑ Skills, Capacity Building, and Health
☐ Leadership, Voice and Agency
☑ Innovation and Technology

Section C: Effectiveness

9. Work Plan

☐	SN	Start From	Finish By	Description of Tasks	Deliverables
☐	1	01-10-2025	14-11-2025	Conduct a t ender process for a contractor for the study.	Signed contract with a tendered contractor for the study
☐	2	17-11-2025	30-04-2026	Conducting the study and analysis (by the contractor), including drafting the study report.	Draft study report
☐	3	02-03-2026	02-03-2026	General Information Circular (GIC) and draft agenda of workshop will be circulated to the members, participants and speakers will be called for.	GIC and draft agenda
☐	4	11-05-2026	11-05-2026	One-day hybrid workshop (in-person and virtual) at SOM2 in May 2026	- Workshop held - APEC event Attendance List - Post-event Surveys
☐	5	25-05-2026	25-05-2026	No more than 2 weeks after the event, submit all the necessary documents - APEC Event Attendance List - Per diem and Attendance Certification form - Claims e.g. hosting claims	- APEC Event Attendance List - Per diem and Attendance Certification form - Claims and other relevant documents
☐	6	01-04-2026	01-04-2026	PO will submit the Monitoring Report.	Monitoring Report
☐	7	01-10-2026	01-10-2026	PO will submit the Study report.	Study report
☐	8	01-01-2027	28-02-2027	Submit APEC Project Completion Report and supporting docs to the Secretariat 30 Jun - 31 Dec 2027: Participation in LTEAP Survey	Completion Report LTEAP Survey

10. Risks

☐	SN	Describe the Risk	Mitigation
☐	1	Lack of participants	-To promote the workshop to the member economies well beforehand -To send timely reminders and follow-ups to encourage maximum participation
☐	2	Lack or cancel of speakers	-To make frequent contacts with speakers well beforehand and well-informed about the contents of workshop -To adjust speakers to be concurrent position
☐	3	Delay of reports and papers	-To ask and remind the persons in charge in line with the target schedule -To submit papers and reports by deadline

☐	4	Low participants' engagement in discussion session in the workshop	-To try to design the workshop with interactive formats. -To utilize the pre-workshop survey to gauge the interests and expectations of participants. -To ask skilled moderators to facilitate lively discussions.
☐	5	Accidents at event	-To check the accidents regularly by staff and communicate with the person in charge of the venue beforehand. -To avoid the risks among speakers, moderators and related staffs

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

Output

☐	SN	Outputs	Indicators	Target Goals	Evaluation Method	Reporting
☐	1	Study and analysis	(1)No. of recommendations (2)Submission to secretariat (3)No. of pages	(1) 10 (2)End of June 2026 (3)Minimum of 80 pages, excluding annexes	(1)certification by PO (2)submission	(1)Final Study report (2)Email to secretariat
☐	2	One-day workshop	(1)Number of participants (2)Ratio of participating men / women (3)Number of experts/Speakers (woman) (4)Number of attending economies (5)Number of travel eligible economies (6)High satisfaction ratings	(1)60 (2)50-5 (3)4 (50% woman) (4)21 (5)11 (6) 85% satisfaction ratings	(1)Event attendance list (2)Event attendance list (3)Event attendance list (4)Event attendance list (5)Event attendance list (6)on and off line survey method	(1)-(5) Project summary report (6) report to CTI
☐	3	Project summary report	number of pages	Minimum 20	certification by PO	Report to Secretariat

Outcome

☐	SN	Outcomes	Indicators	Target Goals	Evaluation Method	Reporting
☐	1	Increase in participants knowledge/understanding/capacity on Digital Trade provision	80% of participants reporting an increase in their knowledge, understanding on Digital Trade provision	minimum 2/3 of workshop participants will enhance knowledge	The outcome will be measured via pre-event survey and post-event survey	Completion Report
☐	2	Member economies will become more aware and recognize importance of trust and credibility in Digital trade.	80% of participants reporting an increase in their awarness of the importance of trust and credibility in Digital Trade.	30	pre-event survey and post-event survey	Completion Report
☐	3	Final study report	Number of readers	200	Access to the report on the Web	Final study report

Others

12. Linkages	Non-APEC stakeholders including international think-tanks, private entities and international organizations will be invited to the study as well as the hybrid workshop. This project may make a good alignment to the Australian project on "APEC Digital Trade Provision Handbook" (CTI 01 2025S). The handbook deals with a wide range of provisions on Digital Trade including "Building trust" and "Data flows" with resommendations for higher commitments in FTAs while paying attantion to a balanced approach. This project will focus on Personal information protection and cross-border data flow. This project intends to support, in a way, the recommended commitment in the Handbook, based on the in-depth case study on legal setting and actual business pratices. The close collaboration with the Handbook project, as an unbrella initiative, this Digital Trade project will be able to elaborate the recomendations as well as provide additional ideas in order to make the Handbook to be useful and effective tool in this dimention.

SECTION D: Project Sustainability	
13. Sustainability	(1)This project will be implemented as a part of the new stream under Peru's proposal on A way forward to implement the Ichma Statement on A New Look at the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda. The workstream is expected until the end of 2026 and the results of the study will continue to feed in to the following FTAAP agenda initiatives. (2)Participants of the workshop include APEC economy officials, especially focusing on those who are engaged in trade negotiations for FTAs/RTAs in the area of digital trade and E-commerce, and other policy makers specialized in digital trade. They will have better understanding on the importance of trust and credibility in Digital Trade, thus will contribute to the improvement of Digital Trade provisions/policies.

SECTION E: Project Efficiency

14. Budget

Part A : Project Budget Plan

Event Number	1
Number of event days	1
Location (city) of the event	Beijing

Cost Items	**Details**	**Notes**	**APEC Funding (USD)**
Experts to receive APEC funding	8		
Honorarium Type 1	$700 X 6	Speakers and Panelists	4,200.00
Honorarium Type 2	$700 X 2	Moderator	1,400.00
Honorarium Type 3	$0 X 0		0.00
Per diem	8 X 2.75	$295 per day	6,490.00
Airfare Type 1 - International Economy	$700 X 7	Speakers, Moderators and Researchers	4,900.00
Airfare Type 2 - International Business	$2500 X 1	1	2,500.00
Airfare Type 3 - Domestic or others	$0 X 0		0.00
Participants to receive APEC funding	22		
Per Diem	22 X 2.75	$295 per day	17,847.50
Airfare Type 1 - International Economy (Short Distance)	$700 X 14	14	9,800.00
Airfare Type 2 - International Economy (Long Distance)	$2500 X 8	8	20,000.00

Airfare Type 3 - Domestic or others	$0 X 0		0.00
Hosting - rental of venue, AV eqpt	$7000		7,000.00
Specialized equipment or materials	$0		
Communications	$400	- mobile wifi and other communication (international calls) cost .	400.00
Photocopying	$0		
Publication/distribution of report	0		
Contractor 1			**86,490.00**
Total APEC Funding			**161,027.50**
Total Self Funding			**0.00**
Total Project			**161,028.00**

Part B : Contractors

Direct Labor Contractor 1

The contractor will conduct in-depth study on the legal settings and implementation regarding digital trade provisions including "Personal Information Protection" and "Cross-Border Transfer of Information by Electronic Means". Five APEC economies will be selected for sample study.

That includes comparative study by analyzing disparities and conformities in related laws/regulations, policies as well as actual business practices among member economies and therefore to identify benefits and hindrances as well as recommendations for further improvement and future considerations.

Based on the above study, the contractor will edit and complete a study report.

Position to be funded *(Short-Term Clerical, Consultant, Researcher, Event Logistics Provider, etc.):*	Researchers
If travel is involved, indicate total airfare cost	2,500.00
Provide details of the airfare cost *(number of people, where, whether it is included the total contract fee)*	- One researcher - Three APEC economies for in-person interviews.
If travel is involved, indicate total per diem	3,990.00
Provide details of the per diem total *(number of people, where, number of days)*	- One researcher - Three days in each three economies = 1 person × 4.75 (3 days) × 3 economies × $280 = $3,990
Contractor Fee (Tasks Table)	80,000.00
Total Contract Cost (Tasks Table + Travel)	86,490.00

SN	Specific and Actual Tasks	Work Hours	Work Hourly Rate	Notes

1	Study on Personal Information Protection	400.00	80.00	- 80 hours for cross-cutting analysis of Digital Trade disciplines set out in the trade agreements in scope. - 80 hours : Conducting online and in-person interviews and related outreach to a number of firms, examining evidence-based business practices and challenges faced by business entities engaged in digital trade. - 80 hours : Analysis on the data collected and identifying issues and best practices. - 80 hours : Preparing the draft study report and workshop document including programme, capacity building materials and discussion paper. - 80 hours: Preparation of the Final study report. Presentation at the project event including results of analysis, what kind of disparities among legal systems in hindering the digital trade as well as generating business costs in the region.
2	Study on Cross-border Data Flow	400.00	80.00	- 80 hours for cross-cutting analysis of Digital Trade disciplines set out in the trade agreements in scope. - 80 hours : Conducting online and in-person interviews and related outreach to a number of firms, examining evidence-based business practices and challenges faced by business entities engaged in digital trade. - 80 hours : Analysis on the data collected and identifying issues and best practices. - 80 hours : Preparing the draft study report and workshop document including programme, capacity building materials and discussion paper. - 80 hours: Preparation of the Final study report including project completion report.
3	Clerical/administration, Research assistance, Event management and assistance for the Long Term Evalution of APEC Project (LTEAP)	300.00 200.00	40.00 20.00	- 100 hours : Research on the legal setting relating to the both two topics of each targeted economies. - 100 hours for cross-cutting analysis of Digital Trade disciplines set out in the trade agreements in scope. - 100 hours : Conducting online and in-person interviews and related outreach to a number of firms, examining evidence-based business practices and challenges faced by business entities engaged in digital trade. - 200 hours : Management/Administration of the event (workshop at SOM2) including pre-meeting preparation and post-meeting works including questionnaire compiling. - Compiling findings of the workshop and making inputs to the final study report.

Part C : Self-Funding		
Budget Item	**Subtotal ($)**	**Note**
Experts' Honorarium		
Experts' Per Diem		
Experts' Airfare		
Participants' Per Diem		
Participants' Airfare		
Hosting		

Specialized equipment or materials		
Communications		
Photocopying		
Publication/distribution of report		
Contractor Work		
Contractor Travel		
Total Self-Funding Amount:	**0.00**	

Part D : Waivers
Please indicate any waivers from the normal APEC financial rules and provide a detailed explanation for each request. Example of waivers may include funding for project site visits, and for open tendering processes.

Project Overseer Declaration	☑ I agree to the declaration stated below	**Date**	22-09-2025
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.			