

STANDARD POLICY

1.0 AIM

- 1.1 The YES Programme is an initiative targeting the development of young business entrepreneurs with innovative ideas. It is intended to promote and harness the talents of young visionary entrepreneurs, to become 'job creators' rather than be just 'job seekers'.
- 1.2 The Programme provides financial support in the form of Government Grants of up to \$50,000 to successful young budding Fijian entrepreneurs who are between 18 to 40 years of age to develop or expand their innovative business ideas/projects. It should be noted the YES applicant should meet the age criteria even at the time of approval by the YES Selection Panel.
- 1.3 As much as possible, this is aimed to address the market failure where financial institutions are reluctant to provide start-up capital to young entrepreneurs.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since its inception in 2017, the YES programme has assisted 25 businesses, amounting to over \$670,000 in achieving uniqueness, innovativeness, and competitiveness.
- 2.2 The programme has supported business ventures in a wide cross section of sectors, that is, Food and Beverage, Health, Agriculture, Construction and Traffic Management, Recreational Services and Information, Communication and Technology, to name a few.
- 2.3 Assistance provided across all sectors and business is to demonstrate the unique and innovative business idea.
- 2.4 With reference to the criteria relating to **Uniqueness** and **Innovation**, clarifies that eligibility is not limited to applicants proposing entirely new products or services. Rather, consideration is also given to common business proposals that demonstrate sustainability and viability.
- 2.5 Business proposals will be assessed with 60% emphasis on uniqueness and innovation, favoring those that address clear market gaps with distinctive products or services. The remaining 40% considers common business concepts that apply innovative methods and demonstrate strong market position, operational efficiency, and financial sustainability.

Target Percentage	Area	Justification
60% demonstrated in the business proposal	Uniqueness and Innovation of the business concept	The business proposal that demonstrates a unique product and services that solves market gaps of the intended sector.
40% demonstrated in the business proposal	Demonstrated sustainability and viability.	While the business concept may be common, the applicant must clearly demonstrate market preposition, operational efficiency, and financial viability to justify business sustainability

2.6 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).

2.7 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 DEFINITION

3.1 One of the key criterion for securing assistance from the YES programme is to ensure proposals reflect an element of uniqueness or innovation.

3.2 **Unique** is defined as being the only existing one of its type or unusual or special in some way. **Innovation** is defined as developing new products, services or processes to solve a problem, increase efficiency and reach new customers.

3.3 In essence, applicants must identify a gap in the market segment and come up with a unique solution through a product, service or process that fulfills an untapped customer need.

3.4 The Ministry encourages applications from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that are in the business or even those who are start-ups. The Ministry will assist interested MSMEs by providing advice on the criteria, application process and relevant documents that are required for the application.

3.5 The definition for MSME is categorized in the table below:

Enterprise Type	Annual Turnover in FJD
Micro	From \$0 to \$50,000
Small	From \$50,001 to \$300,000
Medium	From \$300,001 to \$1,250,000

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Since inception, YES has evolved over the years in terms of supporting young entrepreneurs in realising the unique and innovative business idea. It is proposed the implementation of the programme evolves through introduction of the Business Pitching.

4.2 Business Pitching refers to pre-approved applicants who are to present their business ideas to the selected YES Panel. A business pitch needs to give your audience i.e. Panel a clear understanding of your plan or goals.

4.3 Through this initiative, the YES Secretariat seeks to provide a platform for the promising YES Pre-approved applicants to connect with the YES Selection Panel.

4.4 YES applications that submit all the essential documentation and satisfy the YES criteria for funding based on the YES assessment score sheet will be shortlisted for Business Pitching, and eventual funding by the programme.

4.5 Site inspections will be conducted by the Secretariat prior to Business Pitching (*if applicable*).

4.6 The duration of the business pitching is about approximately 25 minutes of which pre-approved applicants will be allocated 15 minutes to present and nominated 3 Panel Members will have at least 10 minutes for questions and answers session. The Pitch meeting does not require all YES Selection Panel members. The Secretariat will ensure to provide regular updates to the wider Selection Panel. Selection Panel

Members present at the Business Pitching session shall make final decisions including the funding value.

4.7 Following approval from the Business promising session, the YES Secretariat will seek approval from the Ministry, for disbursements for the approved business proposal.

4.8 Project applicants must provide the following documents with their submission:

- Completed YES Application Form;
- Valid Business Registration Certificate, if applicable;
- TIN Letter/Joint ID
- Valid photo identity (ID) of director(s)/proprietor (Driver's License or Voter ID Card or Passport Biodata Page);
- Certified Copy of Academic Certificate; and
- Detail business Plan inclusive of 3 years Cash Flow Forecasts/Projections.

4.9 The Ministry reserves the right to request for additional information as and when required for clarification.

5.0 CRITERIA FOR FUNDING

5.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposals for assistance through the YES must meet the following criteria:

- i. Open to all young Fijians who are between the ages of 18 to 40;
- ii. Must be a Fijian Citizen only and residing in Fiji;
- iii. Must have an Innovative/Unique Business Idea;
- iv. Must have positive social impact; and
- v. Must display sustainable commercial viability.

5.2 SPECIFIC CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used for the assessment of the application:

- i. Applicant must be a Fijian citizen and resident between the ages of 18 to 40;
- ii. YES will only fund proposals up to a maximum of \$50,000. The recipient will be required to contribute the excess of the total cost of the project if proposal exceeds \$50,000
- iii. Innovative ideas, products or services that contribute to achieving the vision of transitioning Fiji towards a knowledge based and modern society;
- iv. Initiatives that lead to employment creation;
- v. Businesses that improve the standards of living and overall welfare of all Fijians;
- vi. Projects that will enhance the reputation of Fiji in the international fora;
- vii. Ventures that have a social dimension that support the economic empowerment of women, and persons with disabilities;
- viii. Enterprises that have strong backward and forward linkages that support other sectors of the Fiji Economy;
- ix. The Ministry reserves the right to request for additional information as and when required for clarification; and
- x. Proposals that require construction works must set clear timelines, provide copy of Land Title or proof of Land Ownership, and City, Town and/or Rural Local Authority Approved Plan, Budgetary Requirements and an Implementation Plan.

6.0 EXCLUSIONS

6.1 The following will not be considered for funding if:

- i. Proposal from the members and Immediate family members¹ of MSME Fiji programme secretariat;
- ii. Proposals for operational expenditure;
- iii. Proposals to purchase land;
- iv. Recipients (including inter-related entities) that have been funded under the YES programme in the last 5 years;
- v. Proposals from former recipients that do not showcase any diversification or growth or the proposal is similar to previously assisted project the recipient received;
- vi. Similar enterprise activity was assisted through any other grant funding from other Government Ministry or donor funding agencies in the current application year;
- vii. Acquisition and licensing of intellectual property rights;
- viii. Registration of patents, trademarks and designs;
- ix. Proposals for debt refinancing;
- x. Proposals from businesses that are deemed bankrupt; and
- xi. Proposals from Governments Entities or Statutory Organisations.

6.2 Exceptions to the above 5.0 Types of Projects Eligible for Funding, 6.0 Criteria for Funding and 7.0 Exclusions can be made on a case by case basis subject to recommendation by the YES Selection Panel and approval from the Permanent Secretary of Commerce and Business Development.

7.0 GENERAL PROCEDURES

7.1 The general procedures undertaken in the selection of projects are as follows:

- i. Internal assessment and site visitations by YES Secretariat;
- ii. Scrutiny and approval/decline of the Applications by the YES Selection Panel which comprises of relevant private sector agencies;
- iii. Submission to the Ministry for Commerce and Business Development for fund disbursement;
- iv. Signing of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for Disbursement of Grant; and
- v. Monitoring and Review of Projects that have been approved.

8.0 SUBMISSIONS

8.1 The Ministry requires the YES Grant Applicant to demonstrate that the business proposal is viable and meets the criteria for funding.

8.2 Those businesses interested in applying are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for the YES Application to the Ministry via website <https://msmeportal.gov.fj/>

8.3 The Ministry encourages Women and Youth businesses to apply.

8.4 The Ministry will prioritise projects that can clearly demonstrate that they contribute and address SDGs.

8.5 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 can be recommended for decline by the YES Panel.

9.0 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

9.1 YES applications will be assessed by the Secretariat based on the Criteria for Funding in Section 6.0.

9.2 The Secretariat for the YES Selection Panel will be the Ministry of Commerce and Business Development MSME Fiji Unit.

9.3 YES applications that submit all the essential documentation and satisfy the criteria for funding based on the YES assessment score sheet will be shortlisted.

9.4 Shortlisted applicants that score 50% and above on total scoring will be submitted to the YES Selection Panel for processing. Unless a waiver is provided by the YES Selection Panel, applications that score below 50% can be presented to the YES Selection Panel with strong justification on the merits of the proposal.

9.5 Site inspections will be conducted by the Secretariat for shortlisted applicants on a case by case basis.

10.0 YES SELECTION PANEL

10.1 The Selection Panel will be drawn from the Private Sector and Chaired by a Senior Banker. Additional members from the Public Sector may be co-opted as and when the need arises.

10.2 The Selection Panel Members will comprise private sector representatives.

10.3 The YES Selection Panel members will be invited by the Ministry.

10.4 The quorum for any YES Selection Panel meeting shall be general rule of thumb; 50% plus one. The same rule of thumb shall be for the decisions and approvals of the YES Selection Panel.

10.5 Processing of applications can also be done through flying minutes and email approvals are to be considered as final endorsements.

11.0 MONITORING MECHANISM

11.1 The YES programme will be monitored to verify performance and ensure compliance in honoring recipients commitments stipulated in the MOA signed with the Ministry.

11.2 The Ministry is responsible to monitor the YES recipients as per the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and will be submitted to the Permanent Secretary of Commerce and Business Development.

12.0 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

12.1 The YES recipient must utilise the Government grant as efficiently and effectively as possible solely for the intended purpose as stipulated in the MOA.

12.2 The Grant Recipient must notify the Ministry in writing, to change the vendor and/or change of procured items. This change shall be reflected through a Deed of Variation with prior consent from the YES Selection Panel.

12.3 Should the Grant Recipient fails 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.

13.0 POLICY REVIEW

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