

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSULTANCY SERVICES TO CONDUCT A LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

1. BACKGROUND

1.01 Antigua and Barbuda is a services-based economy located in the Eastern Caribbean with a population of approximately 99,534 persons in 2021^{1/}. Over the period 2015–2019, the country registered an average economic growth rate of 5.0%^{2/}. As a result of the COVID-19^{3/} pandemic, the economy contracted by 17.3% in 2020^{4/}.

1.02 In 2018, unemployment stood at an average of 8.7% representing 9.9% for males and 7.3% for females and reflecting an average decline of 13.7% from the year 2015; a year in which unemployment among males and females reached 12.9% and 14.5%, respectively. In 2018, the labour force participation rate was 72.1%, with the participation rate for males (76.1%) being higher than that for females (68.9%), while in 2015, the labour force participation rate was 70.9%, with male participation registered at 73.9% compared with 68.5% for females^{5/}. Both surveys, therefore, revealed that men were more likely to participate in the labour force and women were more likely to be unemployed. Males also earned a higher income than females and, a higher proportion of men work in the top income brackets while a higher proportion of women were represented in the lower three income brackets. Another issue of concern is youth unemployment which has traditionally been stubbornly high, registering 33.9% in 2015 and 25.7% in 2018. This represents three to four times the rate for adults. Women, young people, and those in the informal sector are likely to be among those who are disproportionately bearing the brunt of the fallout from the pandemic. Following the onset of the pandemic, more than 10,000 additional persons have become unemployed representing 20% of the labour force and pushing the total unemployment rate to approximately 30%^{6/}.

1.03 The country's services sectors^{7/} contributed significantly to the economic base accounting for on average 69.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) over the past ten years, with tourism services alone accounting for about three quarters of services exports. In 2019, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimated the direct contribution of travel and tourism to the economy at 42.7% of GDP, providing 90.7% of national employment, or around 34,000 jobs^{8/}. However, there is a need to improve the quality of jobs

^{1/} Statistics Division, Min of Finance and Corporate Governance (2021)

^{2/} <https://www.caribank.org/publications-and-resources/resource-library/economic-reviews/country-economic-review-2019-antigua-and-barbuda>

^{3/} Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus

^{4/} <https://knoema.com/atlas/Antigua-and-Barbuda/Real-GDP-growth>

^{5/} Labour Force Surveys 2015 and 2018, Statistics Division Ministry of Finance and Corporate Governance
<https://statistics.gov.ag/>

^{6/} <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2020/12/antigua-and-barbuda-covid19-macroeconomic-and-human-impact-assessment-data>

^{7/} Services sectors include: - hotels and restaurants; wholesale and retail trade; real estate, renting and business activities; transport, storage and communications; and financial intermediation

^{8/} <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>

available in order to contribute meaningfully towards reducing poverty on a sustainable basis^{9/}. This is particularly important given that approximately 49% of households are headed by females^{10/}.

1.04 Groups that experience the highest levels of economic exclusion include women heads of households, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). TVET^{11/} includes education, training and skills development covering a wide range of occupational fields and livelihoods. It can contribute to lifelong learning, empower individuals and communities and bolster capacity for employment, entrepreneurship, and decent work. As such, TVET has tremendous potential to promote inclusive economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. Addressing poverty and vulnerability and building resilient societies in Antigua and Barbuda will require concerted efforts to ensure access to skilled employment and decent work for women and vulnerable groups; TVET is a key channel in this regard.

1.05 The potential of TVET to contribute to equality is affected by harmful norms, beliefs and stereotypes that continue to influence study, career, and other life choices. The result is that TVET programmes are gender-biased^{12/}, affecting access to and participation of girls and women as well as men and boys in specific study and occupational areas. Stereotypes and participation issues sometimes direct women to unpaid, caregiving roles over productive employment and contribute to the perpetuation of gender segmentation in the labour market and gender inequalities in society at large. Similar to women, men at times are directed to areas which may be less suited to their natural skills and abilities.

1.06 Notwithstanding these weaknesses however, TVET programmes have the potential to improve learning, social and economic integration across all socio-economic spheres while lending to the dynamic development of the economy. This is particularly so once individual capabilities are channeled to job-related areas where they are most productive.

1.07 GOAB's overarching national goal is 'to improve the quality of life for all Antiguan and Barbudans and their posterity'. Necessary conditions identified to achieve this goal, are 'adequate skills and capacity to support sustainable development' and 'adequate access to education and lifelong learning for all.' Antigua and Barbuda's TVET is integral to this process, with a strategic focus on enhancing export competitiveness and securing a higher level of development.

1.08 The Government's thrust towards education and training as a conduit to sustainable development is envisioned to be realized in part through key vocational agencies: The Antigua and Barbuda National Training Agency (ABNTA) and the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE). The ABNTA is responsible for the regulation of the TVET system in Antigua and Barbuda while the ABICE is the leading TVET institution in the country. Antigua and Barbuda's TVET framework is aligned with CARICOM's Regional TVET Strategy, which recognizes TVET as 'a critical agent for economic development', through the provision of highly skilled and credentialed individuals, 'who form the core of the competitive workforce.' The Regional TVET Strategy is also designed to support the operationalization of Article 46 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC)^{13/} and in so doing facilitate free movement and

^{9/} <https://www.competecaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2014-Antigua-and-Barbuda-Private-Sector-Assessment-Report.pdf>

^{10/} https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/39054/S1500700_en.pdf

^{11/} TVET is understood as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods. (UNESCO-UNEVOC, n.d.)

^{12/} Boosting gender equality in science and technology, a challenge for TVET programmes and careers <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED612225.pdf>

improved access to the regional labour market by Member Countries. This project is directly linked to the Regional Integration efforts as captured under Chapter 3 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which establishes the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

TVET Sector Issues

1.09 In 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conducted an assessment of the regional TVET framework of 13 Borrowing Member Countries (BMCs). The assessment of Antigua and Barbuda's TVET framework revealed the following:

- (a) **Absence of a national gender-responsive and inclusive TVET Strategy:** GOAB recently approved the National Policy for TVET (the TVET Policy). However, a strategy to implement this policy is yet to be developed. While priority sectors have been identified, there has been no strategic assessment of: (i) the demand for skills; (ii) the nature of the training required to meet this demand; (iii) the capacity necessary to facilitate the training; and (iv) the level of investment required in the TVET system to make this endeavour sustainable.
- (b) **Absence of an operational qualifications framework:** No system exists to appropriately train, evaluate, verify and certify competencies across disciplines in accordance with the regional best practices as exemplified in the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) framework, particularly at the post-secondary level. This is due to the lack of an operational qualifications framework^{14/} which is required to regulate the recognition of qualifications within the education system and to establish standards for programme development. Such a framework is typically informed by a demand assessment and is also contingent on an action plan which is a priority area to be addressed.
- (c) **Weak accommodative structures, resources and institutional Capacity:** An independent assessment^{15/} of the resources and structures available within the Antigua and Barbuda TVET system concluded that the physical infrastructure and available equipment necessary to meet National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and CVQ standards were inadequate and prevented the institutions (ABNTA & ABICE) from effectively executing their mandates. The assessment further found that ABNTA was underfunded, having received only 12.5% of its annual subvention over the period 2015–2018. In addition, there are gaps in the instructors' qualifications to effectively deliver TVET training. Approximately 76% of trainers of ABICE were not trained in line with the Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) methodology.
- (d) **Inadequate marketing and promotion of the TVET programme:** Due to the low allocation of resources directed to TVET programmes, promotion of the TVET agenda is

^{13/} Article 46 of the RTC sets out the rights accorded to Member States in regard to the free Movement of Skilled Community Nationals. Under the CVQ arrangement skills qualification and certification are standardized to facilitate equitable access across the Region.

^{14/} An instrument for the classification of qualifications according to an established set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, thereby improving the transparency, access, progression, comparability and quality of qualifications.

^{15/} Dunn-Pierre (2018), Consultancy Services for the Evaluation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Capacity.

limited. Budget allocations to the ABICE was approximately 2% of the education budget in 2020 and 2021^{16/}. This effectively reduces the visibility of the framework and hence limits the potential for an understanding of the dynamics of the TVET sector by the public. This could result in a low appreciation of the sector as being a viable area for persons to pursue their livelihood. Currently, neither ABNTA nor ABICE have functioning websites, and general information on the services offered or the application process is not immediately available in a user-friendly format. The limited publicity about TVET programmes may also limit awareness of the opportunities present within the CARICOM single market as provided for under Article 46 of the RTC.

Progress To-date

1.10 Despite the gaps in the TVET framework and recognizing the urgent need for skills development, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda has rectified some key deficiencies including:

- (a) The approval of the TVET Policy on May 12, 2021.
- (b) Augmenting the capacity of ABNTA with the recruitment of several key positions including:
 - (i) Chief Executive Officer
 - (ii) Finance Administrator
 - (iii) Senior Quality Assurance Officer
 - (iv) Senior Occupational Standards Officer
 - (v) Senior Prior Learning Assessment, Recognition and Apprenticeship^{17/}
- (c) A commitment to carrying out infrastructure upgrades at ABICE to enhance skills development.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.01 The objectives of this consultancy are to:

- (a) Identify and analyze the skills demand and requirements of Antigua and Barbuda.
- (b) Identify segments of the labour market that require development interventions to meet development goals.
- (c) Identify the social and cultural norms and perceptions that hinder and/or foster the growth

^{16/} Budget Estimates for 2021 https://ab.gov.ag/pdf/budget/2021_Antigua_Estimates.pdf

^{17/} At the time of finalization of this appraisal report recruitment was completed for the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Occupational Standards Officer. Recruitment for the other positions is well advanced (candidates have been identified) and all positions have been accounted for in GOAB's budgetary process.

of skill development and certification.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICE

3.01 The Consultant firm will carry out the activities described hereunder and any other activities necessary to accomplish the stated objectives of the consultancy assignment, whether or not a specific activity is cited in these terms of reference. Throughout the assignment, the Consulting firm will liaise with the Project Coordinator, which will be appointed to lead and monitor the Project.

3.02 The tasks will include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Providing an overview of labour market trends and needs.
- (b) Assessing the immediate priority skills needs, including those that push for the achievement of development goals of Antigua and Barbuda, including supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and environmental sustainability.
- (c) Identifying other economically significant sectors and demanded products where skills deficiency/lack of resources might constrain future employment and local economic growth.
- (d) Identifying gaps and requirements of skills, products, services and support to meet identified needs through TVET skills development activities and certification both locally and regionally.
- (e) Identifying sectors available in the economy that can be expanded.
- (f) Identifying opportunities and requirements for entrepreneurship, income generating activities and formal employment locally and regionally.
- (g) Analyzing government policies that promote or hinder TVET skills development training and certification, apprenticeships, skill development, etc.
- (h) Determining the relevance of skills training courses offered in the existing centers, against skills demand in Antigua and Barbuda.
- (i) Mapping governance structures, existing capacity, staff qualifications, needs and services provided by local TVET/vocational training (VT) /skills development institutions, resources and courses availability/duration and identify means of vulnerable groups to utilize TVET skills development services.
- (j) Mapping cultural attitudes of youth, community members, local leaders, and influencers with regards to TVET/VT/skills development, youth employment and entrepreneurship.
- (k) Identify social norms and barriers with regards to access to TVET skills development, employment opportunities and youth entrepreneurship.
- (l) Identifying how youth find jobs or training opportunities and classify how businesses access financial capital.

- (m) Identifying businesses that have the capacity and willingness to take on TVET/VT/skills development placements and provide employment.
- (n) Identify mutually beneficial arrangements to provide youth, women and other vulnerable populations attending TVET/VT/skills development courses with on-the-job learning and employment opportunities.

3.03 In undertaking the assessment it is expected that emphasis will also be placed on the inclusion of a gender/intersectionality analysis of the Project and by extension, include data disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables.

4. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

4.01 The Consultant firm shall report to the Project Coordinator.

4.02 The Consultant firm shall have the following deliverables:

- (a) A Draft Inception Report, after a review of background documents and consultations with the Client, within ten days of commencing the assignment. The Inception Report will contain the proposed detailed work plan for the assignment.
- (b) Revised Inception report within three working days of receipt of the client's comments on the Draft Inception Report.
- (c) Draft Report on the findings of the Assessment within three months of starting the Project.
- (d) Revised Draft Report on the findings of the Assessment within four months of commencing the project and the receipt of comments from the Client.
- (e) Presentation of the findings of the Assessment to key stakeholders within 5 months of commencing the project.
- (f) Final report within three weeks of receipt of the client's comments on the Revised Draft Report.

5. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

5.01 The Consultant firm should have as part of its staff credentials the following combination of qualifications and experience:

- (a) Post-graduate degree in Social Sciences, Business, Economics, Statistics or related field.
- (b) Minimum of ten years relevant professional experience in research and labor market studies.
- (c) Strong background and experience in data collection and analysis (*experience in gender analysis is preferred*).
- (d) Demonstrated technical expertise in assessing issues of labor market demand and supply

in CARIFORUM or in a developing country context, and the ability to draw strong and valid conclusions.

- (e) Strong knowledge of TVET programs is essential.
- (f) Excellent communication and report writing skills in English.

6. SUPERVISION OF THE CONSULTANT FIRM

6.01 The ONAO will facilitate the work of the consultant firm and will make available all studies, reports, and data relevant to the Project. The Project Coordinator will be assigned to be the liaison between the ONOA and the consultant firm.

6.02 It is estimated that this consultancy will require 40 person-days over a period of 6 calendar months.