PACER Plus
IMPLEMENTATION UNIT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Activity Title:	Vanuatu Digital Trade Accelerator for MSMEs - Building Business Capability for Online Trade
Estimated Duration:	6 months
Estimated Budget:	70,000 AUD
Location:	Remote with travel to Vanuatu
Estimated Start Date:	August 2026
Reporting to:	Trade in Services and Investment Adviser

I. BACKGROUND

The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus aims to support sustainable economic development across the Pacific by improving trade opportunities, strengthening productive capacity, and increasing participation of Pacific businesses in regional and international markets. Under the Trade in Services work programme, PACER Plus supports Parties to strengthen the enabling environment for digital trade and e-commerce while improving the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Over the past several years, Vanuatu has undertaken significant work to strengthen its digital economy and e-commerce ecosystem. This includes the Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment (2018), the Vanuatu E-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap (2022), the Digital and Financial Literacy Survey (2023), the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2025–2030, and sector-specific E-Commerce Toolkits for the Business Services, Kava and Tourism sectors (2024). Together these initiatives have identified priority policy reforms, digital infrastructure requirements, financial inclusion priorities, and business capability needs to support the growth of digital trade and e-commerce.

The next phase of support is to move beyond readiness assessments and strategic planning towards practical implementation. While many businesses have access to guidance and training resources, many MSMEs continue to face challenges in establishing an effective online presence, adopting digital payment solutions, marketing products and services online, managing customer relationships, and converting digital engagement into sustainable sales.

This project will support a selected cohort of Ni-Vanuatu MSMEs through a structured Digital Trade Accelerator Programme combining business diagnostics, tailored technical assistance, mentoring and practical implementation support. The project will demonstrate practical digital business models, strengthen MSME capability to participate in domestic and international digital markets, and generate lessons to support wider digital transformation across Vanuatu.

II. OBJECTIVE & SCOPE

The main objectives of the consultancy are to:

- Strengthen the capacity of selected Vanuatu MSMEs to establish and grow online sales.
- Increase the adoption of digital commerce tools, digital payments and online marketing by participating businesses.
- Demonstrate practical business models that can be replicated nationally to support wider MSME digital transformation.

To achieve the above objectives, the Consultant/cy is required to:

i. Assist the Vanuatu Department of External Trade to develop a selection criteria and recruit approximately 20–30 MSMEs, prioritising MSMES in the food, kava, and tourism industries.

ii. Conduct a digital business diagnostic for each MSME and prepare an individual Digital Trade WorkPlan.

iii. Use the sector-specific E-Commerce Toolkits for the Food, Kava and Tourism industries (2024) and provide practical coaching and technical support to help businesses establish or strengthen online trading, including digital sales channels, digital payments, marketing, customer engagement, and delivery.

iv. Deliver targeted workshops and peer-learning sessions to support common business needs.

v. Monitor business progress using agreed indicators, including online presence, customer engagement, digital payment use, and online sales or bookings.

vi. Document lessons learned, business case studies and recommendations for scaling the initiative nationally.

vii. Ensure all activities promote gender equality, disability inclusion, and participation of women, youth and outer island businesses.

III. DELIVERABLES

The Consultant will deliver the following outputs:

1. **Inception Report and Work Plan**, including the implementation methodology, business selection criteria, digital business diagnostic tool, monitoring framework, stakeholder engagement plan, and detailed work plan.
2. **Business Selection and Diagnostic Report**, including:
   - the list and profiles of participating MSMEs;
   - completed digital business diagnostics for each participating business; and
   - an Individual Digital Trade Work Plan for each participating MSME.
3. **Business Implementation Report**, demonstrating:
   - delivery of coaching and technical assistance to participating businesses;
   - establishment or strengthening of online trading capability, including digital sales channels, digital payments, digital marketing and customer engagement;
   - delivery of workshops and peer-learning sessions; and
   - progress against agreed performance indicators.
4. **Final Report**, including:
   - project outcomes and achievements;
   - business case studies and success stories;
   - lessons learned;
   - recommendations for scaling the initiative nationally; and
   - a sustainability plan identifying actions for the Vanuatu Department of External Trade and partners to continue supporting MSME digital trade development.

All outputs shall be provided in Microsoft Office formats or other formats agreed with the PPIU.

IV. TIME AND PAYMENT SCHEDULES

The Activity shall be completed within a period of no longer than six (6) months, according to the indicative timeframes below. Exact commencement and completion dates, as well as the scope of work, may be amended in consultation with the PPIU and the Vanuatu Department of External Trade.

Nr.	Deliverables	Indicative Time Frame (delivered by)	Payment Schedule

1.	**Inception Report and Work Plan,** including implementation methodology, business selection criteria, digital business diagnostic tool, monitoring framework and detailed work plan.	2nd week August 2026	20%
2.	**Business Selection and Diagnostic Report,** including the list of participating MSMEs, completed digital business diagnostics, and Individual Digital Trade Work Plans.	End of September 2026	30%
3.	**Business Implementation Report,** demonstrating delivery of coaching and technical assistance, establishment or strengthening of online trading capability, workshops and peer-learning sessions, and progress against agreed performance indicators**.**	End of December 2026	40%
4.	**Final Report,** including project outcomes, business case studies, lessons learned, recommendations for scaling the initiative nationally, and a sustainability plan.	End of January 2027	10%

Note: Travel expenses for the Consultant(s) are included in the Consultancy Fees. Costs for stakeholder consultations must have prior approval from the PPIU and must follow the PPIU Procurement Policy.

V. REPORTING:

- The Activity will be supervised by the Trade in Services and Investment Adviser and the Vanuatu Department of External Trade and will hold responsibility for guiding progress and technical advice on delivering the activity.
- The Consultant is required to report to the Trade in Services and Investment Adviser and Vanuatu Department of External Trade, who will ensure that the deliverables are submitted according to the indicated timeframes and quality standards.
- Regular discussions with the Trade in Services and Investment Adviser and the Trade Division of the Vanuatu Department of External Trade will also be carried out during the consultancy period to monitor progress and constraints, support required and proposed solutions.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED OF CONSULTANT(S)

Preference will be given to Vanuatu nationals or Vanuatu consultancy firms. Where the required expertise is not available nationally, suitably qualified regional consultants or consultancy firms with demonstrated experience in Vanuatu and the Pacific Islands region may be considered.

1. Qualifications

A tertiary qualification in Business, Marketing, Digital Commerce, Information Systems, Information Technology, Economics, International Trade, Entrepreneurship, or another relevant discipline.

2. Skills and Experience

- Extensive demonstrated experience in digital trade, e-commerce, digital business transformation, MSME development, business advisory services, or a related field.
- Proven experience in designing and delivering business capability development programmes, including one-on-one coaching and mentoring for MSMEs.
- Demonstrated experience in establishing or supporting online sales channels, digital

marketing, digital payment solutions and customer engagement strategies.

- Strong understanding of digital business tools, social media marketing, e-commerce platforms and digital payment systems relevant to small businesses.
- Experience working with government agencies, business support organisations and private sector stakeholders.
- Demonstrated experience delivering similar assignments in the Pacific Islands region, preferably in Vanuatu.
- Strong project management, facilitation, analytical and report writing skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to work effectively with businesses of varying levels of digital capability.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English. Knowledge of local language and business culture will be an advantage.
- Good understanding of the Vanuatu private sector, including the opportunities and challenges facing MSMEs in adopting digital trade and e-commerce.