

Asian Productivity Organization

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PROJECT NOTIFICATION

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1. **Project Code:** 12-IN-96-GE-OSM-B
2. **Project Title:** Multicountry Observational Study Mission on Innovation and Competitiveness in SMEs
3. **Duration:** 12–15 June 2012 (four days)
4. **Venue:** Seoul, Republic of Korea
5. **Implementing Organization:**
Korea Productivity Center (KPC)
Address: 57-1 Sajik-ro, Jongno-gu
Seoul 110-751, ROK
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Facsimile: (82) 2-737-9140
6. **Number of Overseas Participants:**
Up to 18 qualified participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Other member countries with special interest in the subject are also encouraged to apply.
7. **Number of Local Participants:** Up to six qualified participants
8. **Closing Date for Nominations:** 23 April 2012

All nominations along with the **completed biodata** form and medical certificate of the nominees should reach the APO Secretariat by the above date. Selection of participants will be completed immediately after this date. Member countries are requested to inform the APO Secretariat as soon as possible if they decide not to nominate anyone for the project.
9. **Objective:** To learn, share and observe the current mechanisms for and experience in promoting innovation in SMEs to enhance their competitiveness.

10. Background

Innovation is a process by which an idea or invention is translated into a product or service for which people will pay, or something that results from this process. To be called an innovation, an idea must be replicable at an economical cost and must satisfy a specific need. Innovation involves deliberate application of information, imagination, and initiative in deriving greater or different value from resources and encompasses all processes by which new ideas are generated and converted into useful products. In business, innovation often results from the application of a scientific or technical idea in decreasing the gap between the needs or expectations of customers and the performance of a company's products.

Nowadays, the increasing technological complexity required for making new products, short product life cycles, and unceasing competition have forced SMEs to move beyond the change philosophy of continuous improvement to more innovative, radical ideas that will enhance their competitiveness. In addition, fluctuating customer needs and increasing competitive pressure are the main reasons why innovative power is becoming one of the strongest deciding factors in the commercial success or failure of an SME or any business. SMEs often confront barriers to innovation, e.g., resource constraints, which hinder their capacity to invent and commercialize new products, services, or processes.

Realizing the importance of innovation to the success of SMEs, the APO is organizing this study mission; succeeding a workshop on similar topic which was held in September 2011, especially for SMEs to share and grasp new ideas for promoting and creating innovation in their products, services, processes, and policies. It is also a platform for SMEs to share views and concerns on issues related to innovation so that they can enhance their competitiveness in the market.

At the end of this study mission, the participants are expected to prepare action plans based on what they learned. The plans will be shared with NPOs and heads of participants' organizations. Participants will be requested to submit progress reports on action plan implementation six months after completion of the mission.

11. Tentative Scope and Methodology

Scope:

- 1) Innovative strategies for SME development;
- 2) Best practices and initiatives by SMEs to promote innovation;
- 3) Nurturing an innovative and creative culture in SMEs; and
- 4) New technology transfer and partnerships among SMEs for enhanced competitiveness.

Methodology:

Lectures, site visits, presentations, and interactive discussions.

12. Requirements of Candidates

- a) Age: Preferably between 30 and 50 years.
- b) Education: Preferably university degree or equivalent qualification.
- c) Present Position: SME owners, entrepreneurs, and government officials/NPO consultants involved in consultancy and training for SMEs.
- d) Experience: At least five years of experience in a related field.

- e) Language: Proficiency in written and spoken English is essential.
Proficiency
- f) Health: Physically and mentally fit to attend an intensive program entailing strenuous travel and several plant/field visits.

13. Financial Arrangements

a) To be borne by the APO

i) Round-trip economy-class international airfare by the most direct route between the international airport nearest to the participant's place of work and Seoul, ROK, for participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Nepal and for participants from nonprofit organizations and SMEs from other member countries. As far as practicable, all participants should purchase discount tickets (following IATA PEX or other applicable discount fares). Please note that arrangements for the purchase of air tickets should be in accordance with the "Guide on Purchases of Air Tickets for APO Project Participants" dated 7 July 2006, which will be sent to the selected participants and is available from APO Liaison Officers in member countries.

ii) All assignment costs of overseas resource persons.

b) To be borne by the host country—Republic of Korea

i) Expenses for hotel accommodations for 18 overseas participants for five days;

ii) Per diem allowances for all overseas participants for up to five days; and

iii) Other local implementation costs.

c) To be borne by participants or participating countries

i) For participants from profit-making organizations, except for SMEs, from APO member countries other than Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Nepal:

- 1) Round-trip international airfare between the member country and Seoul; and
- 2) Participating Country Expenses at US\$50 per participant, payable to the APO in convertible currency.

ii) For all participants:

1) Participants must be fully insured against accident and illness (including hospitalization) for a principal sum of US\$10,000.00 for the entire duration of the project and travel, and must submit to the APO a copy of the comprehensive travel insurance certificate before participation. Such insurance must be valid in the countries to be visited. If a participant is unable to arrange for insurance coverage in the host country at the start of the project, he/she must pay the premium himself/herself out of the per diem allowances provided. Neither the APO nor the implementing organization will be responsible for any eventuality arising from accident or illness.

2) Any expenses incurred by participants for stopovers on the way to and from the project venue as well as for extra stay at the project venue before and/or after the

official project period on account of early arrival or late departure, for example, due to either limited available flights or any other reason whatsoever.

- 3) Any expenses related to visa fees and airport taxes.

14. Actions by Participating Countries

a) Each member country is requested to nominate two or more candidates for selection. Please ensure that candidates nominated meet the qualifications specified above.

b) We will not accept any form of self-nomination. All nominations must be endorsed and submitted by an APO Director, Alternate Director, Liaison Officer, or their designated officer.

c) Please note that nomination does not necessarily guarantee that a candidate will be selected. Selection is at the discretion of the APO Secretariat. A basic criterion for selection is the homogeneity of the participants in terms of qualifications and work experience. Nonselection therefore does not mean that the candidates concerned are not competent. Sometimes candidates are not selected because they are overqualified.

d) Each nomination should be accompanied by the documents listed below. A nomination lacking any of these documents may not be considered:

- i) Two copies of the candidates' biodata on the APO biodata form together with passport-sized photograph. The biodata form can be downloaded from the APO website. Downloading information is also available from www.apo-tokyo.org. We encourage submitting the biodata form to the APO Secretariat in electronic form as an attachment to a cover e-mail message from the APO Director, Alternate Director, or Liaison Officer.

- ii) APO Medical and Insurance Declaration/Certification Form. Every candidate must complete and submit a copy of the APO Medical and Insurance Declaration/Certification Form with his/her biodata at the time of nomination. Please note that for this particular project self-declaration is sufficient for candidates without any of the health conditions or illnesses enumerated on the reverse side of the medical form. However, for all others, medical certification by a recognized physician on the reverse side of the medical form is required.

e) Member countries are encouraged to submit the necessary documents electronically as mentioned in (d)-(i). In that case, there is no need to send a hard copy by postal mail. However, if the documents are submitted by fax, member countries are requested to mail the originals of the documents to the APO Secretariat as well. If a digital photograph of a nominee is not attached to the electronic biodata form, a hard-copy photograph should be sent to the Secretariat by postal mail. Please specify the candidate's name and the project code on the reverse side of the photograph.

f) Member countries are requested to abide by the nomination deadline specified in Section 8 on the first page. The APO may not consider late nominations as they have in the past resulted in considerable difficulties to the implementing organization in its preparatory work for the project.

(g) NPOs should inform candidates that the program schedule will be tight and intensive due to the limited mission duration and there may be night session(s) depending on the program outline.

h) Under normal circumstances, candidates who are selected after the initial screening will be informed of their acceptance at least four weeks prior to commencement of the project.

i) Member countries are requested to inform candidates that, once selected, they are not to bring family members or to engage in any private business activities during the entire duration of the project. Further, if they should become unable to take part, the NPOs concerned are requested to inform the APO and the host country promptly of their reason for withdrawal.

j) Each selected candidate is required to arrive at the venue one day before the start of the official project. Also, he/she is expected to return home upon completion of the official project because he/she is visiting the host country for the specific purpose of attending this APO project.

15. Guide for Participants

Other conditions for participation are given in the *APO Guide for Participants*, which is available from APO Liaison Officers/NPOs in member countries and on the APO homepage (http://www.apo-tokyo.org/05part_guide.htm).



Ryuichiro Yamazaki
Secretary-General