



ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

PROJECT NOTIFICATION

25 February 2015

1. **Project Code** 15-IN-96-GE-OSM-B
2. **Title** Observational Study Mission on Innovation and Competitiveness in SMEs
3. **Timing and Duration** 25–28 August 2015 (four days)
4. **Venue** Seoul, Republic of Korea
5. **Implementing Organization** Korea Productivity Center
57-1 Sajik-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-751
Republic of Korea
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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 (see 12. Qualifications of Participants)

Other member countries with special interest in this project may nominate candidates upon consultation with the APO Secretariat.
7. **Number of Local Participants** Up to six qualified participants
8. **Closing Date for Nominations** 19 June 2015
9. **Objectives**
 - a. To understand innovative strategies for SMEs;
 - b. To share best practices and initiatives by successful SMEs to promote innovation; and
 - c. To learn how to develop an innovative, creative culture in SMEs to enhance competitiveness in the market.

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 economically and 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 to decrease 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, shorter 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, demanding customer 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 has organized e-learning courses and face-to-face projects (training courses, workshops, observational study missions, etc.) for nearly 10 years for SMEs to share and grasp new ideas for promoting and creating innovation in their products, services, processes, and policies.

This Observational Study Mission will be a platform for SMEs to learn and share latest trend and information on innovation how to achieve first-mover advantages, attain product success, capture market share, develop an innovative and creative culture in SMEs, and secure long-term sustainability so that they could enhance their competitiveness in the local and global markets.

At the end of this observational 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. Scope and Methodology

Scope

Philosophy and concepts of innovation and methodologies for developing innovative strategies and a creative culture in SMEs.

Methodology

Lectures, site visits, country presentations, and interactive discussions.

The tentative program of the training course is given below:

Date/Time	Activity
Mon., 24 August 2015	Arrival of participants in Seoul
Tue., 25 August	Opening session and lectures
Wed., 26 August	Lectures and country presentations
Thurs., 27 August	Site visits

Fri., 28 August
Sat., 29 August

Group discussion, evaluation, and closing session
Departure of participants

12. Qualifications of Candidates

The participants are expected to possess the following qualifications:

Present Position	SME owners, entrepreneurs, and government officials/NPO consultants involved in supporting and training SMEs.
Experience	At least five years of experience in a related field.
Education	Preferably university degree or equivalent qualification.
Language	All proceedings of the project are conducted in English, and participants are frequently required to make oral and written presentations. They must therefore be proficient in spoken and written English. Those who are not proficient in English will not be accepted.
Health	Physically and mentally fit to attend an intensive project requiring participants to complete a number of individual and group activities and strenuous fieldwork. It is therefore recommended that member countries do not nominate candidates likely to suffer from physical and mental stress.
Age	Candidates who fit the above profile are typically between 30 and 50 years of age.
APO Certificate	Participants are required to attend the entire program to receive the APO certificate of attendance.

13. Financial Arrangements

To be borne by participants or participating countries

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

- a. Round-trip international airfare between the member country and Seoul; and
- b. Participating Country Expenses of US\$50.00 per participant, payable to the APO in convertible currency.

For all participants:

- a. Participants' insurance premiums: All participants should be fully insured against accident and illness (including hospitalization and death) for a principal sum equivalent to US\$10,000.00 for the entire duration of the project and travel, and must submit to the APO Secretariat a copy of the comprehensive travel insurance certificate before participation. Such insurance should be valid in the host country. This insurance requirement is in addition to existing government insurance coverage in some member

countries. If any participant is unable to insure himself/herself as stipulated above, he/she should secure this insurance in the host country at the commencement of the project and pay the premium himself/herself, if necessary, from the per diem allowance provided. Neither the APO nor the implementing organizations will be responsible for any eventuality arising from accident or illness.

- b. All expenses related to visa fees and airport taxes.
- c. 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 because of early arrival or late departure, for example, due to either limited available flights or any other reason.

To be borne by the host country

- a. Per diem allowances and hotel accommodation for up to 18 overseas participants for up to five days at the rate to be specified later.
- b. Transportation cost for hotel and airport transfers in the venue.
- c. All local implementation costs.

To be borne by the APO

- a. All assignment costs of overseas resource persons.
- b. Round-trip economy-class international airfare by the most direct route between the international airport nearest to the participants' place of work and Seoul, ROK, for participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Nepal, for participants from SMEs, and for participants from nonprofit organizations from other APO member countries. Please note that the arrangements for the purchase of air tickets should follow the "Guide on Purchases of Air Tickets for APO Participants," which will be sent to the selected participants. It is also available on the APO website and from APO Liaison Officers in member countries.

14. Actions by Member Countries

- a. Each participating country is requested to nominate three or more candidates in the order of preference. Please ensure that candidates nominated meet the qualifications specified under section 12 above.
- b. No form of self-nomination will be accepted. All nominations must be endorsed and submitted by an APO Director, Alternative Director, Liaison Officer, or their designated officer.
- c. Please note that nomination of a candidate does not necessarily guarantee that he/she 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 enough. Sometimes candidates are not selected because they are overqualified for a project.
- d. Each nomination should be accompanied by the necessary documents. A nomination lacking any of these documents may not be considered: two copies of the candidate's

lacking any of these documents may not be considered: two copies of the candidate's biodata on the APO biodata form together with a passport-sized photograph. The biodata form can be downloaded from the APO website (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. The nomination documents should be sent to the Industry Department, APO Secretariat (e-mail: ind@apo-tokyo.org, fax: 81-3-5840-5324).

- e. The 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 self-declaration is sufficient for candidates without any of health conditions or illnesses listed on the reverse side of the medical form. However, for all others, medical certification by a licensed physician on the reverse side of the medical form is required.
- f. Necessary documents are to be submitted electronically. 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 APO Secretariat by postal mail. Please give the candidate's name and the project code on the reverse side of the photograph.
- g. Member countries are requested to adhere to the nomination deadline given on page 1. The APO Secretariat 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.
- h. For member countries where nominations are required to be approved by higher government authorities and require a longer time, the APO Liaison Officers/NPOs are urged to send the names of nominees on or before the deadline, indicating that government approval will follow.
- i. If a selected participant becomes unable to attend, he/she should inform the APO Liaison Officer/NPO in his/her country immediately and give the reason for withdrawal. The NPO concerned is requested to transmit that information to the APO Secretariat and the host country promptly.
- j. NPOs are requested to inform the selected participants that they are not to bring family members or to engage in any private business activities during the entire duration of the project.
- k. Each selected participant should be informed 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 observational study mission.
- l. NPOs should inform participants that they must attend all four days of the project to qualify for the certificate of attendance.

15. Actions by the APO Secretariat

- a. Under normal circumstances, candidates who are selected will be informed of their acceptance at least four weeks prior to the start of the project.
- b. If some candidates fail to qualify or be unable to participate after selection, or if some

from the same or another member country on a merit basis.

16. Project Preparation

The participants are required to prepare a paper prior to departure for the project venue. In preparing the paper, they are expected to follow the “Guidelines for the Preparation of Country Papers” to be provided later.

17. Postproject Actions

All participants are required to prepare action plans during the observational study mission and share the plans with their NPOs. The APO will also request participants to submit progress reports six months after completion of the training course.

18. Evaluation of Participants

If the conduct/attendance/performance of a participant is not satisfactory, these will be reported to the APO director concerned.

19. 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 website (www.apo-tokyo.org).



Mari Amano
Secretary-General