
Small and Medium Enterprises

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the engines of growth and innovation in the APEC region. They account for over 97 percent of all business and employ over half of the workforce across APEC economies. They contribute significantly to economic growth, with their share of GDP ranging from 40 percent to 60 percent in most APEC economies. However, they only account for 35 percent or less of direct exports. APEC's Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group works to encourage the development of SMEs and to build their capacity to engage in international trade.

First established in February 1995 as the Ad Hoc Policy Level Group on SMEs (PLGSME), the group was renamed the Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group (SMEWG) in 2000. The SMEWG is the champion within APEC for the inclusive development of sustainable SMEs that are well prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The APEC SME Ministerial Meetings, held annually since 1994, set out the direction for the working group. In September 2016, SME ministers endorsed the [SMEWG Strategic Plan for 2017–2020](#), which provided a roadmap to address critical issues pertaining to the growth of SMEs and microenterprises in the APEC region.

These priorities are the following:

- Entrepreneurship, innovation and the internet and digital economy
- Financing for business expansion and capability development
- An inclusive business ecosystem that supports SME growth
- Market access for SMEs

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