



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

2020/DESG/020

Agenda Item: 4

COVID-19 and the Digital Economy

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: Singapore



**Digital Economy Steering Group Special Virtual
Meeting on COVID-19
26 June 2020**

We invite member economies to share information on digital-economy related policy interventions, initiatives, lessons learned, and/or solutions in response to COVID-19 ahead of the 26 June 2020 APEC Digital Economy Steering Group Special Virtual Meeting using the template below. The descriptions of the issues below are **only suggested points** to help members with the exercise, and members need not regard them as mandatory points to follow in generating their information sharing in the template. Members are advised to submit the completed template below through the APEC Collaboration System (ACS) no later than 23 June. Members are able to view and download completed templates submitted by other members on ACS ahead of the Special Virtual Meeting, and this will help DESG optimize the limited meeting time on 26 June.

- a) **Business continuity and resilience** – As COVID-19 has caused significant disruptions to economic activities and business operations, members may wish to share how they support business continuity and resilience in terms of:
 - i. Ensure access to reliable connectivity and relevant digital technologies, in particular among MSMEs, women, and young entrepreneurs, to help overcome digital divides;
 - ii. Encourage businesses, including MSMEs, to leverage digital technologies and solutions in carrying out production, business activities, and international trade, so as to maintain the stability of global supply chains;
 - iii. Encourage the digital transformation, including through digitalized production systems, e-commerce, digital supply of services, e-invoicing, and e-payments, and other services, as well as smart working solutions, including remote working, and innovative new business models.
- b) **Exchange and use of data in a secure manner** – Members may wish to share how they:
 - i. Encourage collaboration to collect, pool, process, and share reliable and accurate non-personal information that can contribute to the monitoring, understanding, and prevention of the further spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases;
 - ii. Ensure the collection and processing of COVID-19-related data is being done in an ethical, transparent, safe, interoperable, and secure manner that protects the privacy and data security of individuals, in line with prevailing international measures and domestic laws and regulations.
- c) **Use of digital technologies and solutions including for tracing purpose** – Given the importance and urgency of slowing down the spread of COVID-19, members may wish to share how they:
 - i. Use digital technologies and solutions to enable individuals and firms to continue to participate in the economy;
 - ii. Use digital technologies to help contact tracing efforts;
 - iii. Promote digital work and the development of basic digital skills in companies, public institutions, schools, and universities;
 - iv. Encourage and collaborate with the research community, private sector, and business entities to promote the use of digital technologies and solutions for the development and manufacturing of critical medical equipment and supplies (including disinfectants, Personal Protective Equipment, and ventilators) to fight COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.
- d) **Secure and trusted online environment** – Given the increased digital vulnerability in the context of a pandemic, members may wish to share how they:

- i. Enable timely domestic and international responses to counteract malicious cyber activities that present risks to the security of the digital economy;
- ii. Work collaboratively with businesses and organizations to leverage online platforms to continue sharing trustworthy information and prevent disinformation, hoaxes, and online scams;
- iii. Ensure that reliable crisis communication over digital channels is available.

e) **Preparations for economic recovery post-COVID** – Members may wish to share other policy interventions and initiatives as part of the preparations for economic recovery, given the reinforced significance of the digital economy as a result of COVID-19.

Singapore

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ISSUE	POLICY INTERVENTIONS, INITIATIVES, LESSONS LEARNED, AND SOLUTIONS IN RELATION TO THE ISSUE	ACTUAL/EXPECTED OUTCOME
Business continuity and resilience	<p>We have introduced and extended initiatives to step up digitalisation support under our Stay Healthy, Go Digital initiative so businesses can continue operations remotely and digitally.</p> <p>SMEs Go Digital – We launched the SMEs Go Digital programme in April 2017. More than 20,000 SMEs have adopted various digital solutions under the programme. There are three parts to the programme for businesses at different stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>Start Digital</u>: Simple tools for new SMEs to use in basic business functions, like accounting, HR and payroll, digital marketing, digital transactions and cybersecurity. b. <u>Go Digital</u>: For SMEs to take up tried-and-tested digital solutions that are pre-approved by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), in accordance with sector-specific Industry Digital Plans (IDPs). SMEs can tap on the Productivity Solutions Grant to subsidise the costs of taking up such pre-approved solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SME Go Digital aims to make going digital simple for SMEs

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	<p>c. Grow Digital!: New initiative announced in 2020 for SMEs that are ready to grow overseas. It connects SMEs to Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) e-commerce platforms that have regional or global reach. Through such platforms, SMEs can get matched to more overseas customers, with more access to financing and integration with cross-border logistics.</p> <p>Support for E-payments – to build on the current momentum of digital transformation, IMDA, NEA, JTC, HDB and ESG will provide a bonus of \$300 per month over five months to encourage stallholders in hawker centres, wet markets, coffee shops, and industrial canteens to use e-payments in order to allow businesses to operate in a safe manner by reducing contact with customers and cash during transactions. In the next phase, agencies will prioritise the deployment of Singapore Quick Response Codes (SGQRs) for contactless payments. Through the SGQR, stallholders will be able to receive payments through 19 different providers, which include Dash, GrabPay, and local bank offerings such as DBS PayLah!</p> <p>National Innovation Challenges – These challenges will focus on how we can re-open Singapore safely – to achieve safe workplaces, safe homes, safe schools, and safe commuting – as well as medium- to long-term solutions for emerging stronger. The National Innovation Challenges will be launched over a series of Innovation Calls, starting from Q3 2020. Successful solutions may receive Government co-funding for initial deployment. They build on IMDA’s Open Innovation Platform, and the Open Innovation Network, jointly managed by IMDA and ESG, which support companies in getting quality and multi-disciplinary ideas, talent and resources to meet their innovation and business needs effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for E-Payment aims to encourage stallholders in hawker centres, wet markets, coffee shops, and industrial canteens to use e-payments in order to allow businesses to operate in a safe manner by reducing contact with customers and cash during transactions • National Innovation Challenges aims to address immediate economy-wide priorities and challenges of reopening and recovery post circuit breaker

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<p>Exchange and use of data in a secure manner</p>	<p>At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) issued an advisory clarifying that organisations are permitted to collect, use or disclose personal data without consent for the purposes of contact tracing and other COVID-19 response measures. The advisory also made clear that under the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA), organisations must make reasonable security arrangements to protect the personal data and ensure that the personal data is not used for other purposes.</p>	<p>Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) ensures that organisations have reasonable standards of protection for personal data that they collect, use and disclose, so that individuals can trust that their personal data is protected even in times of a pandemic</p>
<p>Use of digital technologies and solutions including for tracing purpose</p>	<p>We have rolled out a suite of digital tools to help swiftly manage the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate safe reopening. These include:</p> <p>TraceTogether – to help support and supplement current contact tracing efforts, Government Technology Agency (GovTech), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH), has developed a mobile app called TraceTogether that was launched on 20 March 2020. TraceTogether works by exchanging short-distance Bluetooth signals between phones to detect other participating TraceTogether users in close proximity. Records of such encounters are stored locally on each user’s phone. If a user is interviewed by MOH as part of the contact tracing efforts, he/she can consent to send his/her TraceTogether data to MOH. This facilitates the contact tracing process, and enables contact tracers to inform TraceTogether users who are close contacts of COVID-19 cases more quickly.</p> <p>SafeEntry – a national digital check-in system which logs visits by individuals to hotspots and venues providing essential services, as well as employees of essential services. SafeEntry has been deployed to more than 45,000 venues as of 12 May 2020. Among these venues are workplaces including offices and factories, schools, healthcare facilities, community care facilities, hairdressers, supermarkets, popular</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TraceTogether aims to improve contact tracing for users who might have been in close contacts with COVID-19 cases • SafeEntry aims to improve contact tracing at hotspots and venues providing essential services

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	<p>wet markets, malls and hotels. SafeEntry will also be progressively rolled out to taxis from 12 May 2020 to better support contact tracing for street-hail trips.</p> <p>Clinical Chat Assistant Smartphone App – the National University Hospital (NUH) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) are utilizing the app that utilizes AI to power its natural language interface and to extract clinical information from large swathes of content from different data sources. The app can be quickly trained on any hospital or clinical content and answer questions from medical staff.</p> <p>Stay-Home Notice (SHN) Tracking Solution – The Stay-Home Notice Tracking Solution is an SMS and mobile web-based solution that enables people serving out their Leave of Absence (LOA) or Stay-Home Notice (SHN) to report their locations to the Ministry of Manpower quickly and accurately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Chat Assistant Smartphone App aims to assist healthcare staff in extracting relevant clinical information quickly • Stay-Home Notice (SHN) Tracking Solution aims to make reporting easier for people who are serving their quarantine orders
<p>Secure and trusted online environment</p>	<p>Dissemination of reliable, clear, and timely information on COVID-19 is vital to combat disinformation and dispel unnecessary fear. Modern solutions used include:</p> <p>Gov.sg WhatsApp – Available in all four official languages (i.e. English, Malay, Tamil and Mandarin Chinese), the WhatsApp account provides citizens with timely and trusted updates on the COVID-19 situation. The system has been optimised to send multi-lingual messages to all subscribers within 30 minutes. The number of subscribers to the account has grown exponentially from 7,000 subscribers to over 900,000 subscribers in 10 weeks.</p> <p>Online Directory/Information Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gov.sg WhatsApp aims to provide timely updates on the COVID-19 situations • Online Directory and Crowd

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	<p>a. MaskGoWhere – A website that aids the public in identifying nearby mask collection points across the island.</p> <p>b. FluGoWhere – A website that provides information about the nearest general practitioner (GP) clinics that have been activated as Public Health Preparedness Clinics (PHPCs) for the public to seek required medical attention.</p> <p>Crowd Level Monitoring/Real-time Maps.</p> <p>a. Safedistparks – A real-time interactive webpage that allows citizens to track crowd levels at different green spaces and parks when exercising, in order to ensure individuals can practice safe distancing measures.</p> <p>b. Spaceout – A website that leverages shopper traffic data from retail malls and incorporates safe distancing guidelines for malls by ESG to provide real-time updates on the crowd levels to help people in planning to purchase essential goods and services at malls.</p>	<p>Level Monitoring aim to provide the public with useful information to help them make informed choices</p>
<p>Preparations for economic recovery post-COVID</p>	<p>The Digital Economy will continue to underpin Singapore’s recovery from COVID-19 and serve as a key engine for growth. Singapore is developing a plug-and-play Digital Utilities in consultation with industry to enable businesses and individuals to continue to carry out key digital processes such as paperless trade, e-invoicing and e-payments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to enable businesses to continue carrying out key digital processes amidst COVID-19 measures like safe distancing