



**Asia-Pacific
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Session 4

Future Travel Facilitation with APEC Business Travel Card?

Submitted by: Thailand



**Capacity Building Workshop on Improving
the Utilization of APEC Business Travel
Card**

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Economic Cooperation**

Future Travel Facilitation with ABTC?

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What do we want?

- ▶ We want to jumpstart APEC's economic recovery!
- ▶ We want to sustain robust economic growth of APEC economies into the future.



What can we do?

- ▶ Since business travels do contribute to activities that support economic growth, we can try to facilitate bona fide business travels as much as we can.
 - ▶ And, we have so far done that with a good degree of success with ABTC!



What is ABTC?

- ▶ ABTC is a **very unique** multilateral agreement among APEC economies to issue a special kind of temporary visitor visa (so-called pre-clearance) for selected senior business persons!
 - ▶ Validity is for 5 years.
 - ▶ Period of stay is 2-3 months per visit depending on economies.
- ▶ ABTC scheme is governed by a charter called the ABTC Operating Framework.
- ▶ ABTC can be issued as a physical card and/or a virtual mobile application.

Who can have ABTC?

- ▶ Generally, very senior business persons in (large) business organizations can apply for ABTC.
 - ▶ Initial vetting to verify the status of an applicant is done by the applicant's home economy.
 - ▶ Foreign economies mostly rely on the home economy's judgment of the applicant in granting the pre-clearance.
- ▶ There is also a provision that allows government officials who need to travel for APEC business to apply for ABTC.
- ▶ Note that these people are generally **low risk** travelers!

What shall we do for the future?

- ▶ We can try to enlarge APEC's travel facilitation to cover those who are not senior business persons, but need to travel with bona fide **business purposes**.
 - ▶ Such travelers also contribute a lot to the economic growth of APEC.
- ▶ These travelers include
 - ▶ Middle management in big business organizations
 - ▶ SME owners and management
 - ▶ Professionals like architects, engineers, scientists, researchers, educators, physicians and other healthcare professionals, etc.
 - ▶ Travel industry specialists like hoteliers, MICE organizers, etc.⁵

How can we do that?

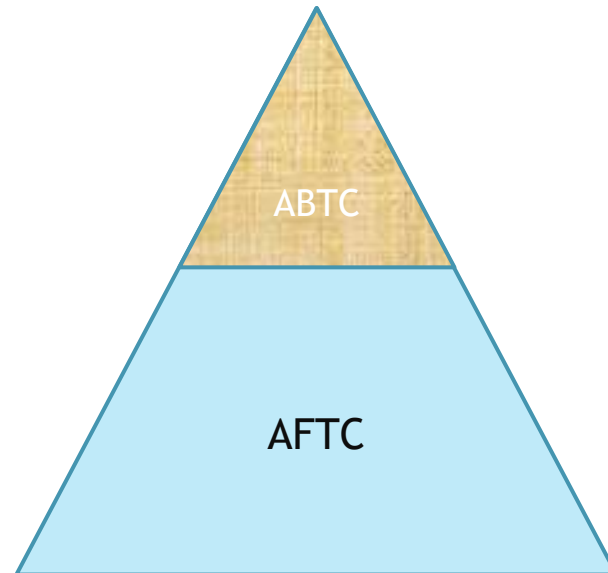
- ▶ Expand ABTC to accommodate these other business travelers.
 - ▶ Need to revise the ABTC Operating Framework.
 - ▶ May dilute the prestige of ABTC which so far has been highly regarded as a premium top-tier product for very senior business persons (from large business organizations).
- ▶ Create a new, **middle-tier** product to facilitate these other bona fide business travelers.
 - ▶ Need to undertake a major revision of the ABTC Operating Framework or develop a new operating framework.
 - ▶ Will have a clear distinction between the two products that are to facilitate two different groups of business travelers.

Do we have supporting technologies to do that?

- ▶ e-Application and on-line lodgment
 - ▶ Will assist economies in handling a larger volume of applications.
- ▶ Virtual card (virtual ABTC)
 - ▶ Will assist economies in managing card issuance and revocation.
 - ▶ Will enable card holders to instantly enjoy travel facilitation to economies from which the respective pre-clearances have been granted.

What if we are going for two different products?

- ▶ APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC)
- ▶ APEC Frequent Travel Card (AFTC)



What would the middle-tier product look like?

- ▶ These other business travelers are perceived to be of somewhat **higher risk** than those eligible for ABTC.
 - ▶ A new set of eligibility criteria for vetting the applicants
 - ▶ More sharing of information on the applicants between the home economy and foreign economies for per-clearance processing
 - ▶ Validity (pre-clearance) period of 2 or 3 years
 - ▶ Stay period of up to 30 days for each visit
- ▶ A larger pool of applicants and subsequently a larger number of card holders than those of ABTC

Questions, comments and/or discussion

Thank you