

15th April 2021, Basseterre, Saint Christopher (St Kitts) and Nevis –The Eastern Caribbean Partial Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECPCGC) has rolled-out two new products to assist medium and small enterprises, which have suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Working Capital Guarantee and a Start-up Guarantee are now available in addition to the original product that was available from inception.

The eligibility requirements have also been relaxed, thus opening the suite of products to a wider cross section of the MSME sector, as they work through their recovery. The new products will be available for an initial 12-month period, during which time they would be assessed, and a determination made as to how well the needs of the entrepreneurs were served.

Chief Executive Officer of the ECPCGC, Carmen Gomez-Trigg, says that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted regional businesses and, as some semblance of normalcy returns to the region, the Corporation is well poised to work with MSMEs in their recovery efforts. She stresses that the Corporation works very closely with the Participating Lenders to cater to the needs of the sector, where possible. The CEO of the ECPCGC further says that “collaboration is one of the key elements of our business, all for the benefit of the MSMEs”.

The Eastern Caribbean Partial Credit Guarantee Corporation was launched in October 2020. It was formed as a joint initiative of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the World Bank, which has provided most of the financing to fund the programme, through the member countries. The governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Christopher (St Kitts) and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have invested heavily into this programme for the growth and development of their entrepreneurs.

The Corporation provides guarantees to Participating Lenders in each country so that entrepreneurs would have more access to loan funds.

The loans that are now being guaranteed range from \$100,000 to \$300,000 and are available through Participating Lenders in each country. The loans must be secured, and that is where ECPCGC makes the difference. The Corporation provides collateral or security ranging from 75.0 per cent to 80.0 per cent of the loan amount. This fulfils a major need of entrepreneurs who have sound businesses but lack the security required for the loans that they are seeking. The Corporation requests that the borrower has some equity in the project, 10.0 per cent to 25.0 per cent, and the Participating Lenders are able to make this assessment.

MSMEs are urged to take advantage of this programme, which has been designed with them in mind - they are the ultimate beneficiaries. They can visit their financial institutions and speak with the lending officers. The following are ECPCGC Participating Lenders by country:

- Antigua and Barbuda: Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank Ltd, Antigua Commercial Bank Ltd
- Commonwealth of Dominica: National Bank of Dominica Ltd
- Grenada: Grenada Co-op Bank, Grenada Development Bank
- Saint Christopher (St Kitts) and Nevis: St. Kitts Nevis Anguilla National Bank Ltd
- Saint Lucia: Bank of St. Lucia Ltd, 1st National Bank of St. Lucia Ltd, St. Lucia Development Bank Ltd

Financial institutions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will soon come on board.