**Eligibility Criteria and Guidelines for Accessing**

**the APEC Support Fund Sub-fund for Strengthening Economic Legal Infrastructure (SELI Sub-fund)**

**Objectives**

The SELI Sub-fund aims to provide funding for capacity building to assist APEC economies in assessing and implementing structural reform in relation to their economic legal infrastructure, which may include raising awareness of the role and importance of legal infrastructure for economic development in APEC economies; enhancing understanding of relevant international standards and international instruments useful for the strengthening of the economic legal infrastructure of member economies; and other forms of capacity building in the relevant fields. The SELI Sub-fund may also provide funding for the facilitation and implementation of relevant work plans, action plans, initiatives or policy discussions endorsed by Economic Committee (EC), such as the Work Plan on APEC-wide cooperative online dispute resolution framework for micro-, small- and medium enterprises in business-to-business transactions and use of modern technology for dispute resolution and electronic agreement management (SELI ODR Work Plan).

In view of the above, the SELI Sub-fund will provide funding for implementation of the following **objectives**:

* to facilitate exchange of information on legal infrastructure relevant to economic development, including sharing of law and practice in relevant fields;
* to develop and enhance in-depth understanding of international economic law including relevant international standards and instruments;
* to share experiences and expertise on activities relevant to the implementation of these international standards and instruments and to develop good practice guides in specific legal areas;
* to identify areas for, and engage in, capacity building and technical cooperation for the strengthening of economic legal infrastructure;
* to examine and promote the importance of legal infrastructure on trade and investment flow; and
* to develop and review appropriate action plans relevant to the work endorsed by EC, such as the SELI ODR Work Plan.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Operating within any APEC fora, economies may submit Concept Notes (CNs) that meet the scope and eligibility criteria of the SELI Sub-fund.

To be considered eligible for the SELI Sub-fund, CNs must:

* describe projects that support the strengthening of economic and legal infrastructure in APEC economies; and
* include an explanation of how the proposed project would advance one or more of the objectives of the SELI Sub-fund, as well as any relevant work plans, action plans, initiatives or policy discussions, endorsed by EC such as the SELI ODR Work Plan.

Proposed projects may primarily benefit a single economy, but should have implications for APEC members more broadly.

In developing CNs and related Project Proposals, as approved, economies should also:

* consider how the proposed initiative is relevant to women, and how it will include and benefit women (refer to APEC’s Gender Inclusion Guidelines <https://www.apec.org/Publications/2017/11/APEC-Gender-Inclusion-Guidelines>);
* include international best practices relevant to economic legal infrastructure from international organisations;
* describe how the proposed initiative can contribute to structural reform and inclusive growth;
* use an evidence-based mode of implementation, using internationally-recognised data where available;
* ensure participation and/or planning input from a broad range of stakeholders, including the private sector and/or civil society;
* account for, relevant work, both completed and underway across APEC and in other fora that can contribute to the project; and
* where possible, develop implementation timelines that are greater than 12 months.

All CNs seeking access to the SELI Sub-fund must be endorsed by the proposing forum and have at least two co-sponsors. No single CN shall request in excess of US$150,000 from the SELI Sub-fund but there is no restriction on the scale of any self-funding that is applied to any single CN. Following the Final Submission Deadline that applies to the Project Session in question, an Assessment Group will first undertake an assessment of each CN seeking funding from the SELI Sub-fund, for the purpose of determining eligibility.

The Assessment Group will consist of:

* The EC Chair;
* The EC Program Director, APEC Secretariat;
* The Host economy, where the Host economy is a developing economy (where the Host is a developed economy, the EC shall decide on which developing economy should occupy this role); and
* Economies, which have contributed to the SELI Sub-fund.

The Assessment Group will use APEC’s Quality Criteria of *relevance, impact, effectiveness, sustainability* and *efficiency* to assess each CN in advancing the specific objectives of the SELI Sub-fund. The APEC Policy Support Unit (PSU) may also be requested to provide advice and feedback on CNs in appropriate cases.

The Assessment Group will operate in a transparent and fair manner, with any EC member entitled to observe proceedings. The Assessment Group function will be subject to annual review and renewal by all EC members. If there is no consensus on renewal, the projects will follow the standard process of eligibility assessment.

The EC would continue to have full decision-making authority in relation to the endorsement of CNs proposed within the EC. Eligible CNs that have been endorsed by the EC, or another proposing fora, will be scored by the EC using the APEC Scoring Template, in its role as the forum responsible for scoring all CNs found to be eligible to access the SELI Sub-fund. Consistent with the Guidebook on APEC Projects, the Secretariat will then calculate which CNs can be funded, based on order of scores (highest to lowest), and in consideration of the total amount that is available under the SELI Sub-fund, for the APEC Project Session in question. For those CNs that are assessed as eligible and are subsequently recommended by the Secretariat to the Budget and Management Committee for in-principle approval, the Assessment Group may provide feedback on a CN to the Project Overseer (PO) to be taken into account at the Project Proposal stage.

In accordance with the rules that apply to all APEC project funds, if a CN is found to be ineligible to access the SELI Sub-fund, the CN may not proceed any further in the APEC Project Session in question, either under the SELI Sub-fund, or any other APEC project fund (including the ASF General Fund). The Assessment Group will provide the ineligibility reasoning to the PO.

**Administration of the Sub-fund**

The APEC Secretariat will be responsible for the administration of the SELI Sub-fund. It will be subject to the procedures governing the APEC Support Fund, as set out in the Guidebook on APEC Projects.