Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Skills for Global Services: Innovation Awards Ceremony: A Vision 2030 Initiative

The Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis, Minister of Planning and Development cordially extended an invitation for six entrepreneurs, whose proposals for training programmes received awards for their capacity to build on the information technology enabled services (ITeS) sector in Trinidad and Tobago. This was held on **Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business**.

Representatives from the business, information technology, creative and education sectors were in attendance.

The Ministry hosted the Innovation Awards Ceremony to recognize the winners of the Skills for Global Services Initiative. The Ministry of Planning and Development in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded loan operation: Global Services Promotion Programme and the IDB Technical Cooperation project: Manpower Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago developed the Skills for Global Services Initiative and is recognizing the winners and the potential of their projects to contribute towards a reliable, competent and steady supply of talent to transform the information and communication technology-based sectors in Trinidad and Tobago.

The following were identified by the IDB as Trinidad and Tobago's Competitive Advantage in the ITeS sector:

- Geographic proximity to major target markets and the country has a similar time zone to the US and Canada - the world's largest markets for ITeS;
- Language and familiarity with culture of the target markets;
- Economic stability;
- Education system and quality of human capital.

Utilising these advantages, this Programme is geared towards micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the general objective is to support the advancement of Trinidad and Tobago's positioning as a renowned location for the global provision of Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) as well as to increase the capacity and cadre of skills currently existing in our society. Another broad objective is setting the wheels in motion for the transformation of our economy focusing on information technology as a catalyst. ITeS is defined as all of the activities utilizing information technology to increase the profitability and efficiency of an organization. In this case, the Government intends to expand the expected impacts of the ITeS through increased exports and employment in the IT sector. This is supported by a host of activities which include training and support services, investment promotion and branding, and capacity building to improve the business climate and regulatory framework in Trinidad and Tobago.

The beneficiaries of the Program are students, the unemployed and underemployed who will benefit directly through training and skills development; ITeS companies engaged in exporting who require additional qualified labour to scale their exports; and MSMEs who wish to increase their export capacity. Businesses can therefore maximize their potential either by being able to access the skills of trained professionals who can contribute to their growth or service providers in the IT sector can apply their skills towards the improvement of their own businesses.

This has already taken fruit, the award ceremony on April 11th recognised 6 (six) SMSEs who received awards totalling TT $3.2 million for the development of training programmes and other initiatives in collaboration with larger businesses to enhance skills development. Named Skills for Global Services, this project comprised a competitive process involving bids from interested SMSEs in an effort to be responsive to the current needs of the business community. These

business needs were attained through a skills needs assessment questionnaire. In 2017, through a Call for Proposals for the Skills for Global Services, firms throughout the Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) sector were invited to partner with academic institutions and training providers both local and international to increase the availability of human capital to support the growth and international competitiveness of the firms in the Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) sector. It is envisaged that this project has the potential to address these existing skills gaps.

This project is at the centre of the National Development Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, Vision 2030 with one of its five major themes being 'Building competitive businesses'.

According to the National Development Strategy 'In an era where ICT is burgeoning and influencing every sphere of life, the potential of ICT as a development tool rests on its ability to not only transform how people conduct day-to-day activities and how they access information, but also how public and private entities operate and deliver services as well. In that regard, initiatives will be concentrated on strengthening the strategic and effective use of ICT to facilitate fast and efficient delivery of public services as well as the growth of business'.

There is a long road ahead requiring major shifts in our systems, processes, legislation, culture, values and even our education and economic models among a myriad of others, but the groundwork is being laid with the Global Services Promotion Programme and the National Development Strategy to build a strong foundation for national development not only for the present, but for the future generations of Trinidad and Tobago.

An evaluation of the proposals was conducted and it was determined that the following six (6) firms (in no particular order) were deemed to be successful based on the evaluation criteria:

- Animae Caribe Festival

- Avasant T&T Consulting Limited
- Coded Arts Limited
- Fijitsu Caribbean (Trinidad) Limited
- Lagoon Animation Studios Limited
- Social Justice Foundation