

Fourth APEC Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) Action Plan

1. Introduction

This action plan establishes the objectives and parameters for the Fourth APEC EoDB Action Plan. This document will be accompanied by a separate Implementation Plan, which will function as a living document that can be adjusted throughout the duration of the initiative.

2. Structural Reform and Ease of Doing Business in APEC¹

APEC's EoDB initiative was introduced in 2009 to make it cheaper, faster and easier to do business in the APEC region. This initiative was originally patterned after the World Bank's Doing Business program, which documents the time, cost, and complexity of formal regulatory compliance in twelve areas of business activity across 190 economies.

As APEC economies continue efforts to rebound from the global COVID-19 pandemic, the need for economic resilience remains clear. APEC economies recognize that structural reform— removing barriers that stand in the way of people and economic opportunity— play a significant role in either strengthening or weakening economic resilience.

APEC's EoDB agenda has been an integral part of APEC's structural reform agenda since APEC Leaders endorsed the Leaders' Agenda to Implement Structural Reform (LAISR) in 2004. The EoDB initiative addressed key LAISR priorities in a pragmatic way since its introduction, setting collective targets and encouraging measurable progress. As a core area of structural reform across multiple APEC agendas, the EoDB initiative has continuously helped economies streamline regulations and reduce behind-the-border barriers.

3. Objectives of the Fourth EoDB Action Plan

The goal of the Fourth APEC EoDB Action Plan is to build on previous efforts to improve the business environment in the Asia-Pacific region by setting an APEC-wide target of 20 percent improvement in priority areas for the 2025-2035 period. The baseline of percentage improvement will be set by the outcomes of the World Bank's new B-Ready reports (see Part 5).

Based on survey responses from 18 economies, and taking into consideration the relevance of B-Ready indicators to APEC's broader structural reform agenda, the priority areas for the Fourth EoDB Action Plan are as follows:

¹ More information can be found in the Background Paper on the Fourth EoDB Action Plan

Priority Areas
1. Business Entry
2. Financial Services
3. Business Location
4. Market Competition
5. Dispute Resolution

4. Capacity Building and Implementation Plan

Capacity building and technical assistance are vital to help economies overcome constraints and challenges in implementing business ready reforms. Capacity building is an opportunity to share best practices and experiences, identify constraints and recommend areas for reform, and will continue to be an integral part of the EoDB initiative.

Under the Fourth APEC EoDB Action Plan, APEC economies will formulate an APEC EoDB Implementation Plan, which will be a living document, developed and updated through a consultative process with APEC economies at each Economic Committee Meeting. The Implementation Plan will identify Champion Economies, who are expected to help coordinate and advance capacity building efforts in their priority areas as well as provide updates to the EoDB FotC Convenor during the EC Plenary Meetings. Champion Economies may be updated on an annual basis. The Implementation Plan will also identify capacity building and technical assistance activities to be implemented under the new Action Plan together with the economy that will lead implementation of that activity. While the Fourth APEC EoDB Action Plan and PSU Reviews of the Fourth EoDB Action Plan will be focused on the five selected priority areas, economies interested in providing capacity building for other B-Ready priority areas are encouraged to list them in the Implementation Plan for awareness.

One key element to the success of the EoDB initiative is to leverage the ongoing work both in APEC, particularly in the Economic Committee, as well as in other international organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, UNCITRAL, and UNIDROIT. The Fourth EoDB Action Plan proposes that EoDB initiatives will be coordinated with ongoing work in international organizations where possible.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The World Bank has decided to roll out its new B-Ready Indicators to cover about 180 economies in three tranches over three years. APEC economies will be added as follows:

- **2024:** Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; Philippines; Singapore; Viet Nam
- **2025:** Australia; Canada; China; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Papua New Guinea; Chinese Taipei; United States
- **2026:** Brunei Darussalam; Chile; Japan; Russian Federation; Thailand

To account for this transition period, the baseline against which quantitative progress will be evaluated will be set in 2026, when statistics for all APEC economies will be available. By basing percentage increases on 2026 data, all economies will be evaluated on an equal footing. B-Ready data is expected to be fully updated every three years.

To assess APEC's progress in achieving the target of the Fourth APEC EoDB Action Plan, the PSU will present a mid-term (2030) and a final (2035) assessment to the Economic Committee focused on the five selected priority areas. The exact timing of these assessments may be adjusted depending on when the World Bank publishes its B-Ready data reports. Each assessment will account for the latest cycle of data available.

In addition to reviewing the progress of World Bank's B-Ready indicators, these assessments will complement quantitative analysis with qualitative assessments of improvements and anecdotal success stories relevant to the priority areas. Accordingly, this proposal encourages economies to use supplementary methods beyond the World Bank's indicators to demonstrate improvements. The reviews should consider how progress made under the Fourth EoDB Action Plan contributes to APEC's broader structural reform agenda. Cross-cutting thematic areas may also be considered as part of the reviews, including advancements made towards economic inclusion and sustainability in line with the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth and the Bangkok Goals on a Bio-Circular Green Economy.

In addition to the mid-term and final assessments, the Implementation Plan will seek to outline ongoing opportunities for informal reporting, including by the EoDB Convenor, Champion Economies, and/or the PSU to help provide EC members with more frequent progress updates.

Finally, during the transition period, economies should continue to seek improvements and report progress in priority areas identified by the Fourth EoDB Action Plan.