



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister Gopee-Scoon Congratulates Over 1,700 Graduates of the Growing Together Small Business Training Programme

November 13, 2024: Over one thousand, seven hundred (1,700) individuals have graduated from the 2024 Cohort of the Growing Together Small Business Training Programme offered by the Coca-Cola Company (TCCC) and Caribbean Bottlers Trinidad and Tobago Ltd (CBTTL), in partnership with UWI-ROYTEC. The programme is part of CBTTL and the Coca-Cola system's initiatives to support the growth and strengthening of small businesses. It provides training and resources on business ownership and management that will guide future decisions and support economic growth for retail businesses.

Delivering the Feature Address at the graduation ceremony on November 12, 2024, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry, acknowledged the TCCC and CBTTL and their ongoing commitment to small businesses in Trinidad and Tobago. She also commended UWI-ROYTEC for collaborating with Coca Cola to administer the programme.

"The goal of the Growing Together initiative is to cultivate strong, sustainable businesses that contribute not just to the bottom line, but to the overall prosperity of our people, communities, and country," she said.

Reminding stakeholders present at the graduation ceremony that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are drivers of Trinidad and Tobago's economy and are at the forefront of national innovation, Minister Gopee-Scoon said it is imperative that business-support programmes like the Growing Together initiative continue to create a cadre of individuals willing to take charge and take risks.

"This is vital to harness SMEs' potential and facilitate the growth and expansion of the sector," she said.

Currently, SMEs account for 85 percent of all registered businesses in Trinidad and Tobago while employing approximately 200,000 individuals and contributing roughly 30% to the nation's GDP.

The Minister also encouraged the graduates to aim for continued growth and success. Pointing to established local enterprises such as SM Jaleel, Associated Brands, and

Angostura, she said these businesses exemplify the potential existing within Trinidad and Tobago and prove that our nation can produce outstanding firms and internationally recognized products, and she reminded the entrepreneurs that their small businesses today could also be multinationals tomorrow.

“Global brands aren’t created by everyone, every day, everywhere. But I challenge you: Why not you, why not here, why not now?”

The Minister urged the graduates to be prepared to foster a culture of innovation in their respective businesses, focus on delivering exceptional customer service, prioritize the health and wellbeing of employees and to leverage digital tools for overall success. She also emphasized the importance of focusing on environmental sustainability and building a healthier planet for current and future generations.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to support the unique financing needs of SMEs through various critical mechanisms and programmes focused on “Access to Finance”, “Capacity Building”, and “Market Access”. Some of these targeted initiatives offered through the Ministry of Trade and Industry include the Grant Fund Facility and the Research and Development Facility. Other financing opportunities are also made available by NEDCO and the Government, through commercial banks.

Also speaking at the event were Ms. Camille Chatoor, General Manager, CBTTL, Ms. Keitha Perryman, Executive Director UWI-ROYTEC and Ms. Lidia Castro, PACS Director – Caribbean Region for the TCCC. During her Remarks, Ms. Castro stated that strengthening the skills of small shop owners continues to be one of the company’s top priorities. “Given their contribution to the economy and society they are essential to the economic prosperity of the nation. Therefore it is imperative that they are nurtured and supported through targeted initiatives such as the “Growing Together” training programme,” she said.

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