



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

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***Launch of the Apprenticeship
Programme for the Wood and
Wood Products
Manufacturing Sub-sector***

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MEDIA LAUNCH

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

AUGUST 15TH, 2022

SALUTATIONS

- Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Education
- Professor Clément Imbert, Chairman, MIC-IT
- Dr. Ruby Alleyne, Chairman-National Training Agency (NTA)
- Dr. Patrice Parris-Searles CEO, National Training Agency (NTA)
- Ms. Tricia Coosal, President-Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA)
- Dr. Ramesh Ramdeen, CEO, Trinidad and Tobago's Manufacturers' Association (TTMA)
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning,

I am very pleased to inform that Cabinet has recently approved the implementation of a National Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector.

I must recognize the MIC-Institute of Technology for their significant role in the development of the Programme and for working closely with the Ministry of Trade and Industry to ensure that this Apprenticeship Programme supports the needs of the Wood and Wood Products sub sector in Manufacturing. Other key partners include the Ministry of Education, the National Training Agency (NTA) and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association (TTMA). I look forward to your continued collaboration during the implementation of this Programme.

Why Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-Sector?

The resilience of the non-energy manufacturing sector during the last two years must be commended. Despite the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and other global events, Trinidad and Tobago's trade performance improved substantially, with non-energy manufacturing exports increasing by 46.1% from TT\$7.3 billion in 2020 to TT\$10.7 billion in 2021. Preliminary data for the first half of 2022 demonstrates a continuation of this trend.

The Manufacturing Sector remains an important sector of the economy accounting for 19.3% of GDP in 2021 valued at approximately TT\$26.4 Billion. The manufacturing sector employs over fifty-two thousand (52,000) persons. Relatedly, the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector accounts for the employment of approximately four thousand (4000) persons indicating the pivotal role the sub-sector can play in the country's diversification strategy.

Currently Trinidad and Tobago's non- energy manufacturing export profile is typically dominated by the food and beverages sub-sector. Therefore at this critical juncture in our road to economic recovery, the Government is focused on engendering further growth and expansion by developing and implementing targeted interventions and initiatives that address challenges and obstacles faced by the Sector.

In 2020, the Central Statistical Office reported that the Wood and Wood Products Sub-Sector contributed approximately 0.02% to GDP while exports were valued at an estimated TT\$24 million. The Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019-2023 has identified Wood and Wood - products as a sub-sector with untapped opportunities particularly in the manufacture and export of higher-value added products.

Wood and Wood Products Apprenticeship Programme

Investing in our people is critical; the delivery of this Apprenticeship Programme contributes to the achievement of the targets set out in the Roadmap to Recovery regarding investing in human capital and is directly aligned to our Vision 2030, thematic area of "Putting People First and Nurturing our Greatest Asset". The Programme is focused on retooling, upskilling and building the technological expertise of the national workforce to meet the evolving needs of the private sector. This model of combining alternating periods at the workplace and training is allowing for greater opportunities for employment, well suited to

providing young persons with the skills necessary to put them on a path to grow and expand their career, and supplying enterprises with skilled workers.

Pillar 4 of the Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago *Transforming to a New Economy and a New Society* speaks directly to the need to enhance Human Resource Capacity in the Manufacturing Sector to address the existing labour skills gaps within the Sector.

In 2019, the National Training Agency conducted a labour market review of selected Non-energy Manufacturing sub-sectors, which revealed the need for skilled human resources in several sub-sectors.

Accordingly, in May 2022, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched its first Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector. This three-year Programme will provide training in the industrial areas of; Mechanical Engineering Technology, Electrical/Electronic Technology; Industrial Maintenance Technology and Mechatronics. Currently 150 students are enrolled.

The 2019 labour market review also showed existing vacancies in the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub- Sector, these included Carpenters/Joiners, General Labourers, Assistant Assemblers, Graphic Artists and Seamstresses, supervisors of Assembly, Assistant Assemblers, Printing Machine Operators. The review further highlighted the areas of experience required to fill the vacancies, which included Manufacturing/warehouse manufacturing, Upholstery making, Wood Science, Hand tools and fabrication equipment, Drafting in construction or building materials - related industry, Carpentry, Project Management, Machine Operation and automated finishing methods including UV curing.

The MTI, MIC-IT, NTA and TTMA developed a training Programme specifically tailored for the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector to addresses the shortage of critical skilled labour within the Sub-sector. **A skilled and competent labour force is a critical component of an enhanced manufacturing sector facilitating the achievement of optimal productivity and increased competitiveness.**

I must mention that the Programme will not only fill the existing gaps but will seek to transform the wood and wood products sector to deliver higher value added products as the Programme will upskill apprentices in new and emerging woodworking processes. **The Programme promotes technological advancement** through the adoption of new technology such as AutoCAD, CNC Machining and personal tablet devices and the introduction and use of new technological machinery for the development and printing of woodworking designs. The ability to produce products higher up the value chain provides the opportunity for increased revenue to be generated by the sector.

The Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products Sub-sector builds on the MIC-IT Level II Certificate in Joinery under the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) which aims to produce skillful, competent, creative and innovative joiners who can work well in the industry and become successful entrepreneurs.

The Programme will be delivered using a 1:3 ratio of theory to practical; employing a process-based mode, where learning content is transferred practically through project work. The Programme's curriculum will be administered in three (3) phases and will cover the occupational areas of; Carpentry; Woodworking and Joinery Technology and will include interdisciplinary courses. Apprentices will be exposed to both theoretical and practical knowledge in the areas of Wood Technology, Design and Construction, Furniture Construction, Cabinet Making and practical experiences on the various woodworking equipment.

Phase 1 will be administered during the first nine (9) months of the Programme and will provide trainees with an opportunity to gain skills in five (5) technical and technology areas. Trainees will also be exposed to course related practicals, Mathematics and Life Skills. Year 1 trainees will be full time at the training centres and courses include:

- Managing the Woodworking Shop
- Personal Management, Health and Safety
- Woodworking Tools, Equipment and Machinery
- Design, Production and Reading of Workshop Drawings
- High Quality Furniture Production
- Soft Skills (Communications; Related Mathematics and Science; Life Skills Microsoft Suite; and Computer-Aided Design (CAD)/Related Practical)

Phase 2 will be administered for a period of six months upon completion of Phase 1 of the Programme. Apprentices will continue training under Phase 2 of the Programme and will acquire skills in an additional five (5) technical and technology areas as well as other inter-disciplinary courses. These include:

- Craft of Fastening Wood to Other Materials
- Furniture Restoration
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Woodworking
- Gypsum Installation
- Carpentry
- Communications / Related Mathematics and Science / Life Skills /
- Microsoft Suite / Computer-Aided Design (CAD) / Related Practical

Phase 3 will be administered for a period of 9 months. During Phase 3, Apprentices will be required to specialize in one of the following areas; Furniture Production; Upholstering in Woodworking; Cabinet-Making; and Antique Furniture Production. Apprentices will subsequently be placed at an industry partner site aligned with their chosen specialization to undergo their industry attachment. During this attachment, trainees will gain real-world application of the knowledge and practical skills they have learnt during their training.

During the final three (3) months, the apprentices will prepare for the Centre-Based Assessment (CBA). Trainees will also be required to complete a final examination which is divided into written, practical sessions and a final year project.

Upon successful completion of the Programme, apprentices will be presented with an Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector Diploma.

Entry Requirements

To matriculate in the Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products, applicants are required to be a national of Trinidad and Tobago and a minimum age of seventeen (17) years.

The educational requirements are as follows:

Preferably three (3) CSEC or GCE passes (1,2,3 or A,B,C respectively) in Mathematics, English, and any of the Sciences

Or

Successful completion of either one of the following:

- Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE) Programme – Building Construction Level 1 (Dual Skilling) CVQ L1 Skill Areas;
- Multi-sector Skills Training (MuST) – Building Construction CVQ Level 2 Skill Areas namely; Welding, Plumbing, Masonry, Carpentry and Electrical Installation;
- An equivalent level certification at other training institutions such as: the National Energy Skills Center (NESC) or the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) courses in building construction, carpentry, or other related woodworking courses.

The MIC- IT will also introduce remedial classes for trainees to help students who may encounter difficulty during the course.

Apprentices will receive a monthly stipend of **TT\$2,000.00 for the two-year duration of the Programme.**

The MIC-IT will be responsible for the administration of this Programme. **At this pilot stage of implementation, the Programme will enroll fifty (50) apprentices.**

The Programme will be delivered at the St. Bede Technology and Pleasantville Technology Centres. The Government will also fund the purchase of new equipment for both centres as well as infrastructural upgrades at the St. Bede Technology Centre to accommodate the apprentices and effectively administer the Programme.

The Government recognizes the critical role the private sector plays in the success of this Programme. To ensure that the pool of highly trained and skilled human resource are retained and absorbed into the local

Manufacturing Sector, Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing firms will be engaged to participate as a partner for the industrial attachment component and the hiring of graduating apprentices to fill current labour gaps. Several of these firms are members of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA). The TTMA, present with us today, would therefore play an essential role in facilitating the dialogue between MIC-IT and the relevant firms.

The development of the Wood and Wood Products subsector will contribute to the Government's goal of "transforming the manufacturing sector into one that is globally competitive, productive, and innovative, utilizing advanced technologies and environmentally friendly practices". It also provides an opportunity to diversify and expand the manufacturing sector.

Locally, the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing sub-sector would support other industries such as ship-repair and boat building and construction.

In the regional context, expanding this sub-sector will promote intra-regional trade, particularly with timber and teak exporters Guyana and Suriname, strengthen the wood and wood products value chain and facilitate Trinidad and Tobago's integration as a higher value added wood processor.

Conclusion

As I close, I must once again commend the team on today's launch of the Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector. Apprenticeships provide an alternative and equally valuable educational experience. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage persons to reach out the MIC-IT to enroll. I look forward to the implementation of the Programme and seeing its impact on building a competitive, productive and diversified Manufacturing Sector.

I thank you.