



WRITTEN RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENT QUESTION TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE, COOPERATIVES, MSMES AND COMMUNICATION BY RATU ISIKELI TUIWAILEVU

Wednesday, 1 October 2025

QUESTION:

166/2025 Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu to ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications – Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform Parliament on the following, with respect to the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) for the financial years 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 –

- (a) the total number of applications received;**
- (b) the total number of applications approved, funded and declined; and**
- (c) provide the reasons for any applications that were declined.**

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURSHIP SCHEME PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

The Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) Programme is an initiative that simply invests in our youth who have unique and innovative business ideas. The vision is to promote and harness the entrepreneurial spirit of our young Fijians to become “Job Creators” rather than “Job Seekers”.

Innovation is paramount in a country, especially a developing one such as Fiji, as it drives economic growth, enhances competitiveness, fosters social progress, and addresses pressing challenges. By cultivating a culture of creativity, Fiji can improve their productivity, create jobs, and improve the quality of life.



Furthermore, innovation enables countries to adapt to changing circumstances, such as technological advancements and environmental issues, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. In fact, innovation is increasingly viewed as a key strategy for economic diversification, essential for long-term growth.

Since inception of the YES programme, the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications (Ministry) has invested in **23** recipients with value of **\$641,259**, across wide range of sectors such as Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Traffic Management, Recreational Services and Information, Communication and Technology that cuts across the Tourism Sector, to name a few. Each proposal presents innovative solutions, whether enhancing existing products and services or introducing entirely new offerings to the Fijian market.

TOTAL NUMBER RECEIVED IN 2023-2024 & 2024-2025 FINANCIAL YEAR

The demand for the YES programme has grown significantly, underscoring the vital need for continued and increased government investment.

In the **2023-2024** financial year, the Ministry was allocated **\$100,000** for the YES Programme. The Ministry had received **27** applications valued at **\$706,913**.

This demand grew substantially in the **2024-2025** financial year, when the allocation increased to **\$200,000** but applications surged to **75**, with a total value of **\$3.7 million**.

This reflects a **177** percent increase in the number of applications and a **420.82** percent increase in the value of applications received. This rapid growth in demand demonstrates that Fiji's young entrepreneurs are eager to contribute to economic diversification, job creation, and innovation.

However, the current level of government funding falls significantly short of the demand and potential impact. Increased investment in the YES programme is not just a response to high demand, it is a strategic investment in nurturing innovation, strengthening MSMEs, and building a resilient economy for Fiji's future.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED, FUNDED AND DECLINED

The summary below outlines the breakdown of the applications approved, funded and declined:

	Budget Allocation	Applications Received		Disbursed	
		No.	Value	No.	Value
2023/2024	\$100,000	27	\$706,913	5	\$136,157
2024/2025	\$200,000	75	\$3.7m	6	\$149,461

1. 2023-2024 FINANCIAL YEAR

In the 2023-2024 financial year, a total of 27 applications were received under the YES Programme. Following a rigorous and transparent assessment process, **5** applications were approved and disbursed, with a combined funding value of **\$136,957**.

These successful applicants were carefully screened and advanced to the pitching stage, where they presented their business idea before a panel of selected judges from the YES Selection Panel. The Panel then deliberated thoroughly before arriving at their final decision, ensuring that only the most viable, innovative, and bankable business concepts were awarded support.

This outcome reflects the Programme's alignment to its policy standards and requirements, strong commitment to accountability, merit-based selection, and the prudent use of public funds to back projects with the highest potential for growth, sustainability, and impact.

SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

One of the notable success stories of the 2023-2024 YES Programme is Mr. George Fong of **TicketMax**, a pioneering online ticketing service that has been transforming the nation's digital landscape. TicketMax has successfully managed online ticketing for major events such as the Homecoming Concert, school athletics competitions, art shows, and most recently, the Wan Fire Music Festival held over the weekend.

Through the support of the YES Programme, Mr. Fong has not only expanded the reach and services of his business but has also been able to provide employment opportunities, further contributing to economic growth and community development.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a testament to how impactful the YES Programme has become. It demonstrates your Government's unwavering commitment to supporting innovative, unique, and bankable ideas, while placing trust in the determination of budding entrepreneurs to turn their visions into reality.

2. 2024-2025 FINANCIAL YEAR

Much like the previous financial year, the 2024–2025 Financial Year recorded a significant increase in demand for the YES Programme. A total of 75 applications were received through the YES portal, out of which **6** were approved with a combined value of **\$149,461**. In addition, **2** applications were conditionally approved, valued at **\$60,000**, pending the submission of additional information identified during their mentorship sessions with panel-selected mentors.

Additionally the applicants go through vigorous screening to ensure the most viable and innovative business ideas were selected for support after a thorough screening, pitching, and evaluation process by the YES panel.

SUCCESSFUL STORIES

Another shining example of success is Sweetsip, founded by Ms. Ashna and her husband in 2021, grew from selling juice and milkshakes to opening a permanent dessert shop at MHCC with YES Programme support. Their expansion into rolled ice cream has created jobs, allowed participation in major events like the Hibiscus Festival.

Honourable Members of this August House, ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you, if time permits, do visit Sweetsip and witness firsthand how your government's investment through the YES Programme is being put to good use, nurturing small ideas into thriving businesses

REASONS FOR ANY APPLICATIONS THAT WERE DECLINED

	Budget Allocated	Total Declined	
		No.	Value
2023-2024	\$100,000	22	\$571,756
2024-2025	\$200,000	69	\$3.6m

Applicants may be declined under the YES Programme where business proposals are found not to be unique or innovative, particularly when there are already numerous existing businesses in Fiji operating in the same line of activity.

Other common reasons for decline include, but not limited to:

- incomplete applications;
- proposals that are not commercially viable;
- funding requests that primarily cover operational costs;
- applicants lacking relevant start-up experience;
- requests exceeding the grant's funding capacity;
- applicants not meeting the age eligibility criteria; and
- business ideas that demonstrate limited economic impact.

It is important to note that while some applicants may not qualify for YES, the Ministry remains committed to supporting them by providing ongoing business advisory services. Through this guidance, potential applicants are assisted to refine their ideas and are encouraged to explore other MSME grant programmes available within the Ministry.