



Parliament Sitting Date: Monday, 25 May 2026

Written Question No.: 75/2026

Question: Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu to ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation – Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform Parliament on the following –

- (a) the total number of applications received under the Pilot Tourism Micro and Small Enterprises Fund;
- (b) the total funds disbursed to date; and
- (c) the categories of tourism businesses that have benefitted.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A key driver of economic growth is Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises ('MSMEs'). Given their dominance in the tourism private sector, support for their long-term recovery and expansion is critical to creating high-quality visitor experiences and facilitating community benefits from tourism.
- 1.2 Some data suggests up to 80% of the sector comprises SMEs – highlighting the prevalence of SMEs in the sector and the growing need for a structured support system that can optimise productivity and impact.
- 1.3 The Pilot Micro and Small Enterprise (MSE) Fund aims to support and empower tourism micro and small enterprises by providing financial assistance in the form of grants. It will focus on creating diversified tourism products and experiences.
- 1.4 In the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 financial years, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation was allocated \$400,000 respectively in budget support to Pilot the programme. Implementing the programme as a Pilot was to ensure the Ministry is

able to roll it out in a manner which builds on longer-term sustainability and impact of access to finance programmes of Government.

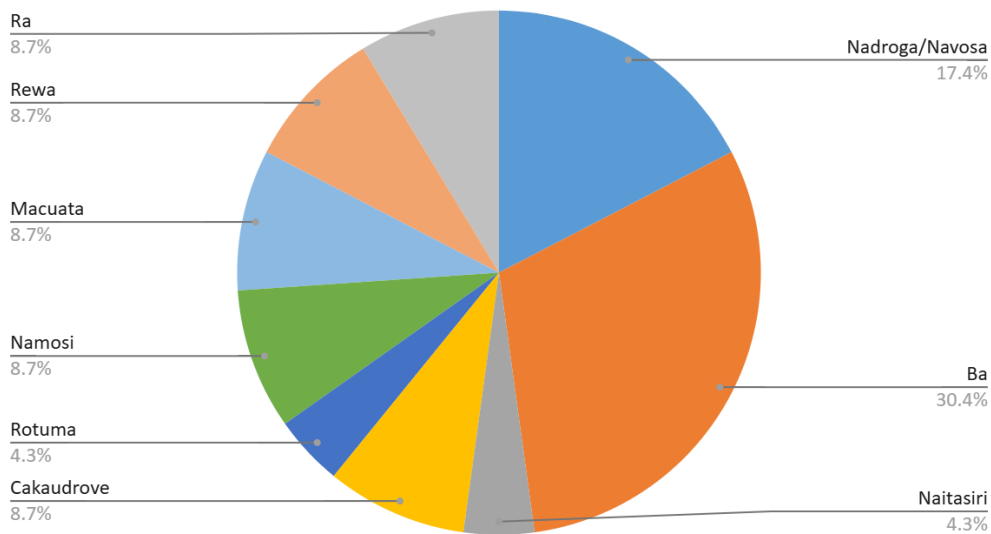
- 1.5 Businesses that fall under the 'micro' category were eligible to apply for grants of up to \$15,000. 'Small' businesses were eligible to apply for grants up to \$25,000.

2.0 KEY APPLICATION HIGHLIGHTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026

- 2.1 The second Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Pilot MSE Fund was launched on 03 August 2025 and closed on 30 September 2025.
- 2.2 A total of 32 applications were received. While this reflects a decrease in volume compared to the previous financial year, there has been a notable improvement in the overall quality of submissions. The screening rates indicate a balanced assessment process, while the high conversion rate from shortlisted to approved applications suggests strong alignment between applicant quality and the Fund's criteria.
- 2.3 The geographical distribution of applicants indicates continued concentration in the Western Division. The Ba Province recorded the highest number of submissions, reflecting its role as a major tourism hub. This was followed by Nadroga/Navosa and Ra, showing increased participation from these provinces compared to previous rounds.
- 2.4 Increased submissions from Cakaudrove and Macuata also reflect growing interest from the Northern Division, which aligns with recent development initiatives and engagement under projects such as Vualiku.

Chart 1: Geographical Distribution Summary

Geographical Distribution Summary - 32 Application received



- 2.5 Applications reflected a diverse range of tourism sub-sectors, with the highest operation in:
- tour operations;
 - marine and adventure tourism;
 - homestay accommodation; and
 - cultural experiences.
- 2.6 Notably, growing applications related to diving operations, reflecting the growing interest in marine and adventure tourism in Fiji. Many of the funded projects also focused on capacity enhancement through the purchase of tourism-related equipment such as boat motors, dive equipment, and e-bikes, alongside risk mitigation upgrades and improved safety measures.
- 2.7 Projects also demonstrated a strong emphasis on sustainability initiatives, particularly solar installations, as well as investments in visitor experience development through cultural performance spaces and guided tours.
- 2.8 In terms of business size, 58% of applicants were classified as small enterprises, reflecting an increase compared to the previous financial year, while 27% were micro businesses, indicating a decline from last year's round. Medium-sized and start-up enterprises remain ineligible under the Pilot.
- 2.9 Compared to the previous funding round, there was a higher proportion of established and formally operating businesses applying. However, limited financial literacy continues to be a challenge among micro enterprises.
- 2.10 In terms of gender, 18% of applications were submitted by women entrepreneurs.

- 2.11 The first Selection Panel meeting was held on 24 November 2025, where 19 shortlisted applications were assessed. Of these, 12 projects were approved for funding. In addition, 11 committed business applications were carried forward from the previous financial year. Notably, 2 additional applications from the previous financial year were approved by the Selection Panel.
- 2.12 In total, 25 applications were approved and committed for funding, amounting to \$399,648, of which 91% of the grant funds (\$365,910.55) have been disbursed to date.
- 2.13 Several promising proposals were deferred and prioritised for the next financial year due to funding commitments exceeding the allocated \$400,000 ceiling.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The utilisation of funds this year is expected to exceed the allocated budget, the programme has demonstrated strong effectiveness. Across both financial years, recipients have included a diverse range of enterprises such as village tours, homestays, marine adventure tourism ventures and strong emphasis in ecotourism.
- 3.2 The Fund directly supports the Government's objective of growing Fiji's tourism sector by expanding participation, improving product quality, strengthening supply chains, and enhancing resilience across the visitor economy. It acts as a targeted catalyst to unlock the potential of micro and small operators—who form the backbone of Fiji's tourism offering, especially in rural and maritime areas.
- 3.3 Through this grant and the Ministry's joint efforts to support MSE businesses, more than 50% of applicants and recipients have participated in Business Continuity training, business literacy training, tour guide training and digital skills training. These opportunities have enabled businesses to improve their operational skills, strengthen sustainability, enhance risk awareness, and build networks with other MSEs.
- 3.4 The Ministry published awareness videos for applicants, which also provided marketing exposure for the featured businesses.
- 3.5 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning are in process to more effectively assess the impact of the programme.

ENDS.