

Work Stream 6: SME Trade Fairs Coordination Guide

ETHIOPIA

Capacity building of public institutions
for improved business enabling environment (Output 1)

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1. Introduction and Background

Trade fairs are the most prominent marketing component of a business. Trade fairs allow SMEs and big companies to interact to form business partnerships that could be nourished moving forward. For SMEs and Buyers who have not been introduced to any market or product, it is an excellent opportunity to compare different products in terms of quality and pricing, including timeframe for shipment. In this guide, we will be looking to document all steps needed to complete a trade fair coordination for both attending and or organizing.

2. Objectives

The first objective of this guide is to support EED to coordinate any trade show either at national or international levels.

The second objective of this guide is to prepare SMEs to attend any given trade fair event both at national and international levels.

3. Scope and Coverage

A trade show is a perfect way to bring together manufacturers and clients or customers to discuss their potential collaborations. It is an opportunity to promote your brand and get brand recognition. Under this guide we will provide guidance on how to organize a trade show both at national and international levels. We will also present the process for selecting SMEs intending to participate in any given trade show. At the end we will present several tools that will guide the entire process.

4. Introduction

Tracing the origin of trade exhibitions might be the work of archaeologists rather than of historians. While it is said that their roots are in the medieval European fairs, very ancient documents talk of trading places where merchants were selling or bartering a multitude of goods.

A reference can even be found in the Bible. Market places developed around crossroads of long-distance trading routes, such as in the case of the Phoenician city of Tyre, as early as the 8th century BC. Ancestors of trade fairs are also the ancient bazaars of the Middle East.

It was anyhow during the period towards the end of Middle Age in Europe that fairs started to flourish and acquire some connotations similar to what exhibitions are today, when cities began to develop together with the progressive urbanization of people. Previously, under the feudalism, the economies were largely autarchic. Products were consumed locally, and little trade occurred outside the communities attached to castles and monasteries.

Marketplaces anyhow existed also in those times and fairs were taking place generally to celebrate religious festivities or the completion of seasonal phases of agricultural works. The word “fair” in fact comes from the Latin “feria”, which means “holy day”. The differentiating factor between market and fair can be related to duration: markets were regular and frequent happenings; fairs were commercial events organized on special occasions.

Not all fairs however originated from religious or cultural festivals. Certain trade fairs were created by royal decrees to benefit cities and other agglomerations of people, and also charters were granted to already existing fairs. In this way the authorities, through income taxes, kept control of the proceeds.

By and large preindustrial fairs were based on privileges granted by the civil or ecclesiastic authority to governing aristocracy. The significant growth of the cities, where people consumed without producing, helped to increase exponentially the trade traffic of food but also of non-food products: textiles and clothing, tools and pottery, hides and skins, leather products, horses and hunting dogs, some jewelry, arms and horse harnesses, etc., were sold alongside spices and other agro-based products.

The old small markets for the barter of products of the neighborhoods were becoming larger events to deal with trade in increasingly valuable goods, fostering at the same time the circulation of money.

Trade was of course at the core of the fairs, but a variety of people started to mingle with traders and customers, like acrobats, magicians, charlatans, inventors, and minstrels. In this extremely lively, heterogeneous, and noisy environment, many activities were taking place and news and information exchanged, making the trade fairs a melting pot of cultures and social classes. It may appear that everything was chaotic, and indeed it was, but with the progressive control on the fairs by the municipal corporations and guilds (the ancestors of professional associations) rules were established to protect, to the extent possible, traders and buyers from fraud and extortion or even from cartels.

Fairs proved to be a powerful means to position growing urban settlements at the crossroads of trade traffic and contribute to their economic development, so they enjoyed a flourishing period. But the danger for the fairs was around the corner. More traded products went back to markets allowing weekly and even daily transactions. The natural evolution was the birth of “shops” which, during the Renaissance, made the fortune of some cities because of their capacity to attract travelers.

Multi-sector fairs started to languish and only continued at the periphery of the most advanced part of Europe, far from the main trade centres. Later, the “industrial revolution” brought about a new physiognomy of fairs, which came closer to the concept of the modern trade fairs. The factors were mostly two: the increased production needed to expand the market and the industry was able to easily and limitlessly replicate goods. This constituted a major turning point in the history of fairs as the old “stocks” fair system – when goods were sold directly and the manufacturer had to transport bulky quantities of goods and take the risk of having to sell the unsold ones at discount price, without profit or at a loss, so as to avoid transporting them back – was replaced by the “sample” fair system. Manufacturers were able to display only specimens for later delivery. “Industrial exhibitions” became popular during the period of the industrial revolution when the authorities understood that such events were able to foster domestic entrepreneurship and enhance the competitive advantage of their towns, countries, and regions.

Meanwhile industrial development brought about major changes in conducting business. Inventions such as the telegraph and the telephone and new transport mode through railway and steamers bridged the distances between sellers and buyers. Specialized commercial houses, making available international networks, flourished. In the context of a free trade world, about the end of the XIX century, fairs had almost disappeared. It was only in the aftermath of the First World War that the powerful role of fairs to revamp the shuttered economies was rediscovered.

The number of fairs grew rapidly up to the point that by 1925 an international association was created, the “Union des Foires Internationales” (UFI), bringing together the cities and organizers of major fairs. It was a matter for the organizers of being on the map, and for the countries of obtaining visibility, market expansion and competitive advantage assertion. Not surprisingly, countries that moved later into market economies – Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and China – have immediately created trade fairs.

It seems that trade fairs have always been the response to changes in market patterns, economic recessions, and “political” interferences to trade.

5. Types of exhibitions

Many names are used to indicate events whose main purpose is to bring buyers and sellers together and promote trade. For example, the term Trade Fair, Trade Exhibition and Trade Show are often used to indicate the same type of event. They can be multi-sector (General Fairs) or, as it is becoming predominant, single sector. In this case they are often referred to as Specialized Trade Fairs. This guide deals with these events that will be simply called “trade fairs”. It can be useful to review other types of trade. Trade is one of the pillars on which economies are based and it dates back in time alongside the existence of human societies. Market places and trade fairs have always been presented to facilitate exchange of events and, irrespective of the names for which anyhow there is no univocal meaning, to determine – to the extent possible – some sort of categories. The list does not pretend to be exhaustive. In fact, purpose and capacity are the factors that should underlie the decision on type and amplitude of the event, after consideration of other alternative means of trade promotion that have in common the same overall goal. A small regional fair in some instances can better suit a development objective than a large international fair.

A specialized trade fair normally occurs at regular intervals in the same place, even if in certain cases the event moves from one location to another, organized under the same sponsorship. It is sometime also called Industry Fairs to distinguish it from the Consumers’ Fairs. While admission to the former is restricted to professionals of the sector, the latter is open to the public. In relation to the targeted audience and therefore participation, the fair can be international, regional, national, or even local.

Commercial Exhibition generally indicates the event organized by and for a representative number of companies and addressed to a specific target group of clients.

Generally, it does not take place recurrently, but is organized ad hoc to cope with specific marketing or industrial needs and objectives of the companies.

A Private Exhibition is a display of products or services of one supplier targeted to a selected clientele, for example for the launching of a new product or for the positioning of the supplier in a new market area.

Buyers’ Fair, similar to the commercial exhibition, is an event organized to promote businesses and facilitate contacts between suppliers pertaining to a homogeneous range of products (e.g. processed food, apparel, etc.) and invited buyers (e.g. distributors and buying offices of department store chains).

Trade Mart indicates a sizable and fixed commercial establishment made of many showrooms to promote and sell products and services of one or many industries on a continuous basis.

Conference Fair consists in a small trade show, mostly a display of a specific range of products that accompanies events whose main content are conferences and seminars.

At the lower end (intended in terms of scope and investment required) a Market Fair, where producers display and sell their products to visiting consumers, is a business promotion event that can have important return in the case of micro and small enterprises especially in developing countries. Often local in scope and based on agricultural products and their derivatives market fairs, can also have a national size and attract consumers from communities across the borders. At the highest end the Universal Exposition (also called World Fair and **World Expo**) is the largest undertaking. It has a tradition that goes back to 1851, when the first

one was organized in London, and its nature has slightly evolved in time, but it maintained the essential connotations. It is a display of technological advancement, and it is future-oriented, addressing themes and issues of cultural relevance to humankind.

Whilst trade is not the purpose, it is a platform to emphasize the image of the host country and of those in the national pavilions. Many types of events fall under the generic definition of trade exhibitions. Purpose, contents, audience, periodicity, size and market breadth can vary, but all have in common the objective of promoting and facilitating trade.

Rising and fading of exhibitions – the example of the leather sector Points of gravity of the international trade, market forces influencing the demand, steady growth of a national industry becoming attractive for the worldwide market, and finally the professionalism and the marketing acumen of the organizers are the ingredients for success and sustainability of trade fairs. Other factors can also be considered e.g.:

- A fair need to evolve with the requirements of the market.
- A strong local industry determines the attractiveness for participation.
- Self-reliance in the long run allows a fair to last and possibly to grow, since sponsors may shift interest and change their field of support.
- A proper fair organization gives a stamp of professionalism and reputation to a fair and to the sector.
- Reliable infrastructures and facilities as well as a safe and attractive environment of the hosting country play an important role.

The cost of participation in a fair should be in line with what the fair can offer and with the participants' expectations. If the leather sector is taken as an example, most leather producing countries have tried to organize international leather fairs, but only a few have been able to attract the industry and become an addition to existing fairs or a substitution of disappearing ones.

Being able to attract the right type of exhibitors will normally mean that visitors will follow suit, provided that the promotion and communication campaigns are correctly and effectively carried out. The two groups are complementary. If a trade fair is not able to attract the audience (domestic and international) expected by the exhibitors, the event will not achieve its objectives even in spite of an efficient and spotless technical organization. National visitors are important and, in the case of a trade fair of finished products, the hosting country should have a strong consumption level for motivating the participation of foreign exhibitors.

An important segmentation is that of domestic versus foreign participants because a high percentage of foreign participation will determine the recognition of the fair as "international". Otherwise, the trade fair can remain a national or even local event, patronized by the domestic industry only.

Before any decision is taken with respect to organizing a trade fair, it is important to understand what determines the choice of participation by exhibitors and visitors, their needs, and expectations. The success and failure of the event depend on that. The answer might appear obvious: to make business, but, if this is the core motivation, the reality is somehow more complex. Organizing a trade fair means to place on the market a service that is already widely available. The question therefore is what makes a new trade fair attractive, that is

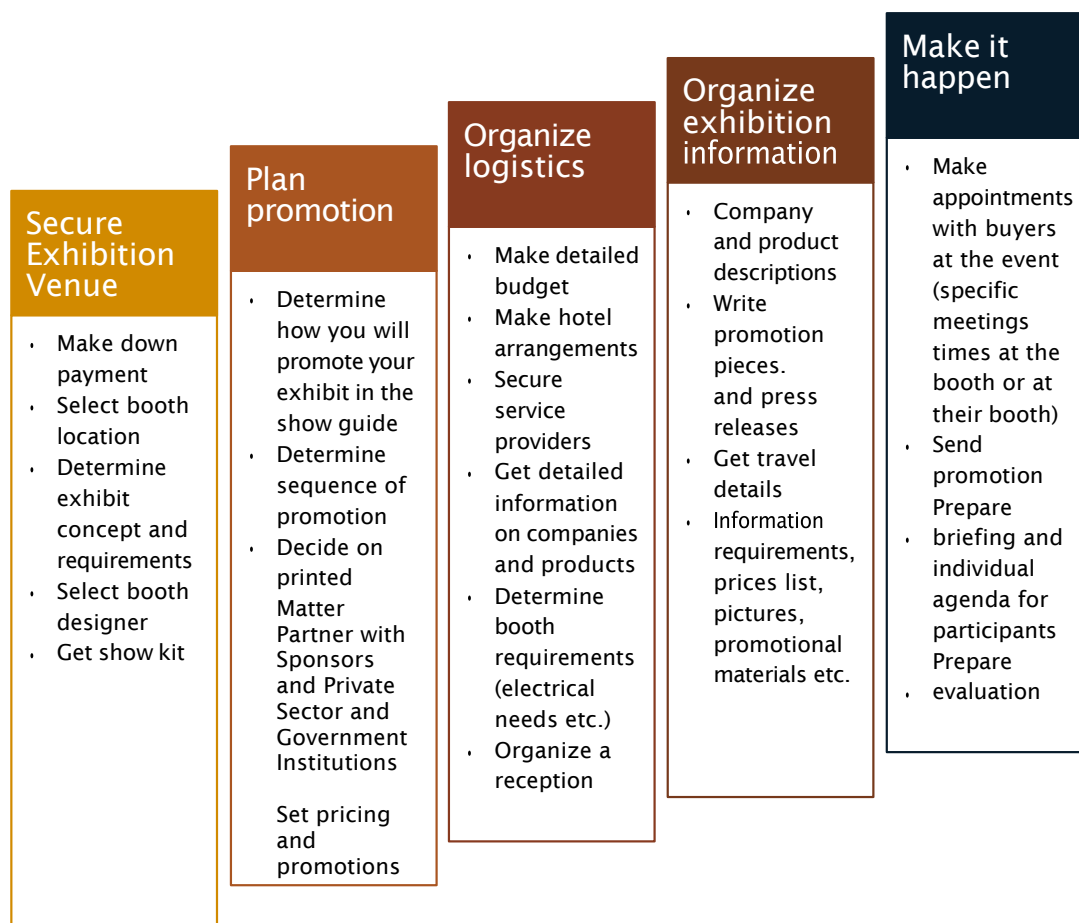
which distinctive features may differentiate it from others and generate the interest of the participants, knowing that participation can be fairly costly, and participants would obviously expect a return from their investment.

5.1 National Trade Fairs

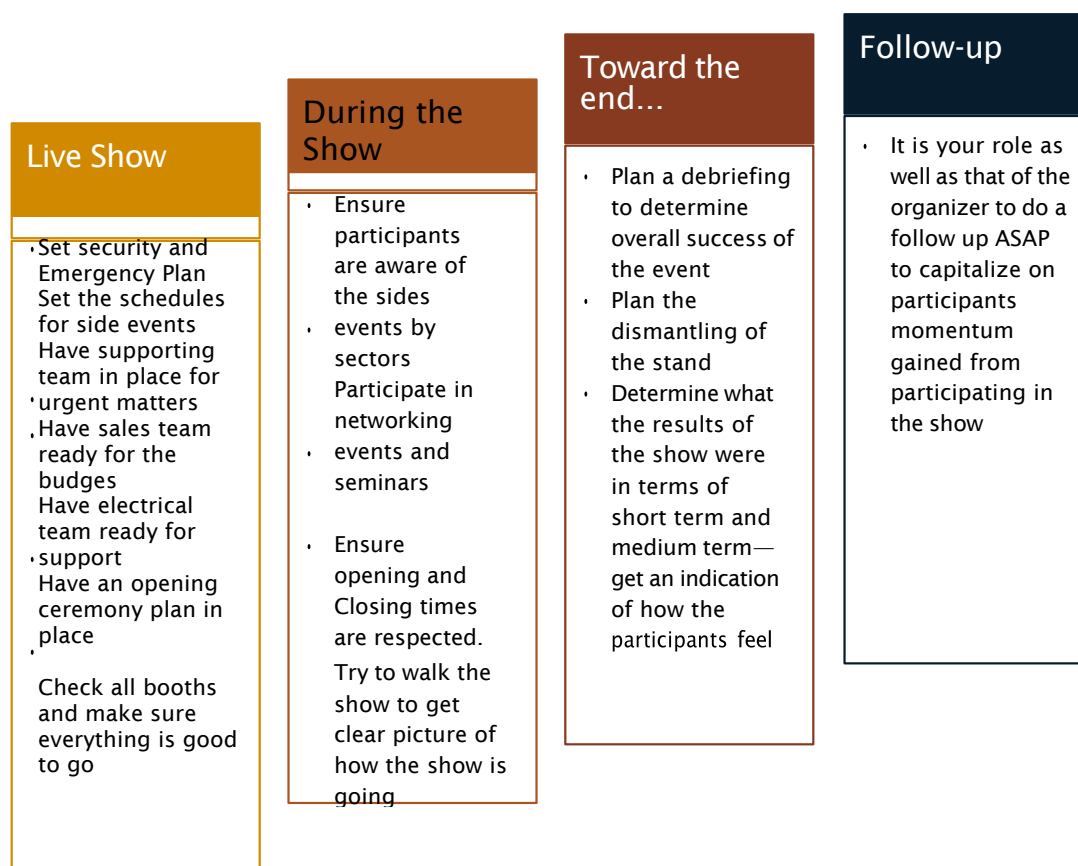
A national trade show is an event happening within the country and brings together different countries' producers. This type of trade show is typically held to bring awareness of different products and to connect producers to the market/public. Most national trade shows are for selling their products to the public. There is also a tendency to bring some international exhibitors but at a very minimal level to take part. National trade shows/fairs are relatively cheap compared to international trade shows, present more opportunities to local producers with less hustle of logistics and cost related to travel.

One crucial aspect of organizing successful trade fairs is prioritizing sectors to ensure optimal participation and impact. In this section, we will outline a methodology for sector prioritization, considering the Ethiopian Government's current priority sectors. This approach will facilitate the selection of industries that align with national development goals and maximize the potential for economic growth and innovation.

The Planning Process—One to Twelve Months Before the Show



The Planning Process—During and After the Show



5.1.1 Understanding Ethiopian Government Priority Sectors

The Ethiopian Government has crafted priority sectors in the 10-year Perspective Plan and the Home-Grown Economic Reform, and it is essential to understand those sectors. These sectors are identified based on their potential to contribute significantly to the country's socio-economic development. Hence, reviewing the latest government documents, policies, and strategic plans is essential to identify the priority sectors. These may include but are not limited to agriculture, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, tourism, information and communication technology (ICT), health, education, and others.

5.1.2 Defining Prioritization Criteria

To establish a structured approach for sector prioritization, it is crucial to define specific criteria that align with the objectives of the EED and the Ethiopian Government's priorities. Hence, EED should follow the following criteria as a starting point:

- Alignment with National Development Goals: Assess how well a sector contributes to achieving the broader national development goals, such as job creation, poverty reduction, export promotion, and regional development.

- b) **Growth Potential:** Evaluate the growth potential of sectors by analyzing factors such as market size, market demand, technological advancements, investment opportunities, and the potential for innovation and competitiveness.
- c) **Value Chain Analysis:** Conduct a comprehensive value chain analysis of each sector to understand its economic linkages, opportunities for value addition, and potential for attracting investment and fostering entrepreneurship.
- d) **Export Potential:** Consider the sector's export potential, including the existing and emerging export markets, export competitiveness, and the ability to generate foreign exchange earnings.
- e) **Social Impact:** Assess the sector's potential to address social challenges, such as improving livelihoods, empowering marginalized communities, promoting gender equality, and enhancing environmental sustainability.
- f) **Job Creation:** Evaluate the sector's capacity to create employment opportunities, particularly for the youth and other vulnerable groups, in alignment with the Ethiopian Government's focus on inclusive growth and poverty reduction.
- g) **Competitive Advantage:** Identify sectors where Ethiopia possesses a comparative advantage, such as access to key resources, favorable geographical location, existing infrastructure, skilled labor force, or favorable regulatory frameworks.

5.1.3 Prioritization Tool

Based on the above criteria, having a tool to prioritize sectors is vital. This tool should include the criteria and a scoring system to objectively evaluate, and rank sectors based on their alignment with the prioritization criteria. Consider assigning weightage to each criterion based on its relative importance and establish a scoring scale (e.g., 1-5) to quantify the sector's performance against each criterion. The tool will aid in systematic decision-making and enable consistent sector prioritization across trade fair events.

5.1.4 Steps for organizing a trade fair in the country.

Hosting a trade show or an expo is a perfect way to bring together SMEs and Buyer to interact and to create business relationships. However, there is a lot of work that goes with organizing a successful trade show or expo. Being a trade show organizer is a big responsibility with lot of challenges to navigate. Though you might have existing experience participating in different trade shows, it does not mean organizing one will go smoothly. Even those hosting such a show twice a year still face number of challenges whenever they organize a new one.

Here are a few steps you can follow as host.

- I. A trade fair needs to evolve with the requirements of the market.
- II. A strong local industry determines the attractiveness for participation.
- III. Self-reliance in the long run allows a fair to last and possibly to grow, since sponsors may shift interest and change their field of support.
- IV. A proper fair organization gives a stamp of professionalism and reputation to a fair and to the sector.
- V. Reliable infrastructures and facilities as well as a safe and attractive environment of the hosting country play an important role;
- VI. The cost of participation in a fair should be in line with what the fair can offer and with the participants' expectations. If the leather sector is taken as an example, most

leather producing countries have made an attempt to organize international leather fairs, but only a few have been able to attract the industry and become an addition to existing fairs or a substitution of disappearing ones.

Motivation for participation in a trade fair anyhow is not only linked to the supplier-client relation, but it has many aspects of a more horizontal nature:

- I. Exploring the market and observing the trends.
- II. Exchanging experiences.
- III. Gathering information e.g.: – Keeping abreast of product and industry innovations; –
- IV. Knowing what competitors do; –
- V. Learning latest sales and promotion techniques.
- VI. Comparing quality, price, and marketing mix performance.
- VII. Attending technical sessions/conferences/symposia and other similar functions organized within the trade fair as side events.
- VIII. Visiting local industry.
- IX. Having the opportunity for some tourism.

5.1.5 Finding the right Venue

Knowing the size of the event you are planning is very key to having a successful trade show. Having an idea of how big each booth will be or number of square meters required for each booth to facilitate flow of people during the show is very important. The venue needs to be easily accessible both with public transport and private ones. Different product sectors have different level of participation from either buyers or general public, it is therefore recommended to choose wisely the venue.

5.1.6 Designing the layout:

Planning the layout of a trade show can be more work than expected, there are a lot of similarities in layouts from one trade show to another but most importantly, using experience of different trade show attended and organized might be good. The layout should facilitate the construction and exhibition itself and the display of the products to participants.

It is also advisable to use standards measurement and following the layout already established to start offering space to exhibitors. Smaller space below the acceptable stands should not be accepted as this might have impact to the rest of spaces unless is already designed space as part of the master plan.

5.1.7 Gathering the perfect team

Regardless the size of your trade show, this is not something that can be done with one person; therefore, it is recommended to have a strong team within your organization and even going beyond and contract some expertise to support your team to be able to deliver.

5.1.8 Finding trade show sponsors.

It is almost impossible to organize a trade show without sponsors. Sponsorship does not only support fund the trade show, but it also creates a big opportunity to attract more participants. It is possible that participants already have an existing relationship with any given sponsor.

5.1.9 Creating a marketing plan.

Marketing strategy is very important for turning any planned activities to a success. Marketing your trade show is one of the most important parts of organizing it. It is important for any trade show to draw people's attention months before the event to allow participants to plan for their involvement and attract different media to continue the outreach.

5.1.10 Schedule events of the day

The most successful trade events are the ones that brings together different activities during the show itself, keeps people engaged and involves special events during the day, inviting speakers and grouping the show talks by sector to increase the appetite for participation and key industry experts. To spice it up more it is recommended to include an exhibitors contest as part of the activities to attract more SMEs and the public.

As mentioned above, several side events are generally foreseen within a trade fair: e.g., buyer-seller meetings, conferences, technical seminars, fashion shows, cultural and touristic shows.

These may or may not take place within the fairground depending on the infrastructures and facilities available. When organized within the fairground, it is important to consider whether they distract attention from the trade fair or create disturbances. For example, blaring music during fashion shows has a negative impact, and the opportunity to organize them after normal business hours should be considered. In some cases, the side events are attached to the fair ground as they are part of the exhibition park of the country.

The choice of what to host as side events depends also on the logistic and organizational convenience. Given the many variables involved it is only possible to provide some hints regarding their basic organization requirements.

Conference and technical seminar:

- Podium with name holders,
- Seats (possibly with folding tablet for writing,
- Sound amplifier or individual earphones,
- Multimedia system (PC and beamer),
- Screen,
- Flip chart,
- Roaming radio microphones in the case of large assembling,
- Refreshments.

Depending on the audience, facilities for simultaneous translations and interpreters may be needed. Buyer-seller meetings: hall with tables and chairs for one-to-one encounters and business negotiations, secretariat with office equipment for meetings coordination and

documents reproduction, simultaneous interpreters if required by the audience, refreshments.

Fashion shows/folklore and touristic shows: stage (catwalk in the case of fashion show), lighting, sound amplifier. Foreign participants in a trade fair may wish to visit local factories of potential business partners. While individual visits can be privately organized by the parties, group visits to selected factories can be included as part of the programme for an acquaintance of the supply capacity of the sector and for promotion.

Generally, a professional association should oversee organizing such group visits. Transport should be arranged and provided by the Organizer. Given the importance of a trade fair for trade promotion, the opening ceremony is normally held and conducted by high ranked government officials.

5.1.11 Live show

No matter how much preparation goes in, there will bound to be changes and surprises. Be prepared for change and be prepared to adapt.

Arrival

- Aim to arrive at the show at least 24 hours in advance. You may need to allow for extra time if exhibiting overseas.
- When you arrive, get in touch with your local contact if you have one to stay updated on what is happening locally.
- Check that you have all documentation related to shipping invoices, booth registration etc. with you.

Booth set up.

- Ensure you obtain a floor plan and take time to familiarize yourself with the surroundings and other exhibitors.
- Check that your display is set up properly.
- Ensure all promotional material is ready.
- Organize a final staff briefing to go over objectives, plan of action, and schedules.
- Reconfirm your upcoming trade show appointments.

Understanding buyers

Trade show crowds exhibit certain behavioral patterns. Understanding the audience will ensure that you develop a good approach to getting them interested in your booth, products, and services. Cues can be taken from the type of workshops or seminars organized in conjunction with the show, local events, as well as the local/regional culture. Trade Commissioners and regional office staff can also provide advice.

Your staff must understand your organization's business plan and target audience and not just push a product. Their efforts will be lost on attendees if they are not able to transfer important products and company information as well as provide professional and competent representation to prospective clients.

Spotting genuine leads

The key to garnering successful leads is being able to recognize a genuine prospect. Building a profile of your target audience beforehand and being aware of whether you are seeking local partnerships or international business alliances can aid staff in identifying the right leads. Developing qualifying questions beforehand can also help staff.

Fact: 95 percent of companies say lead acquisition is one of their most important exhibit-marketing objectives. **(Source: Center for Exhibition Industry Research, 2018)**

Clear business goals will assist in the identification of qualified booth visitors. For example, if you have decided to focus on business expansion into the United States, then all visitors to your booth from the United States have already met one important qualifying variable. The more variables met, the greater the significance of product samples and information.

Networking tips

- Be prepared to have your company information and contact details on hand, whether it is using business cards, pass scanners or Quick Response (QR) codes.
- Be proactive in approaching prospects. Introduce yourself. Develop an elevator pitch or opener that highlights your business and product.
- If your staff need to sit, provide stools rather than chairs so that staff members can greet booth visitors at eye level.
- Avoid closed questions – you want to understand what your prospective clients are looking for and what has caught their attention at your booth.
- Ensure booth staff know your key messages. Active listening is important and booth staff should pay attention to body language, use of words, and tone of voice.
- If you are conducting a demonstration, spot individuals who express above average interest in your products or services. Get them involved in the demonstration or ensure you reach out to them afterwards.
- Fact: Trade shows attract attendees who have a major say in purchasing decisions. Half of all attendees have a buying plan in place before their visit.

Below is a checklist any SME or trade show participation organizer should keep in mind to facilitate the process in smooth way.

Table 1: Sample Checklist for SMEs or any trade show participant

Checklist	Scheduled date	Date completed
Pre-trade fair activities:		
Select booth space. Determine exhibit objectives Set show budget.		
Set exhibit-design goals Set exhibit budget.		
Evaluate promotion opportunities Select exhibit designer/builder Select display products.		

Plan promotion strategy		
Select transportation/I&D companies Finalize exhibit design.		
Plan direct-mail promotion Review exhibitor service kit Select booth staffers Reserve hotel rooms.		
Finalize lead-fulfillment plan Finalize lead follow-up mailings Order show services.		
Implement promotion strategy Order badges.		
Notify show management if using exhibitor-appointed contractor Preview new exhibit.		
Plan exhibit setup/dismantle.		
Finalize availability of display products/literature Send direct mail promotion.		
Plan pre-show staff-training session Preview portable display.		
Finalize graphics copy/art Finalize shipping information.		
Post-trade fair activities:		
Fulfill show inquires/requests		
Write thank-you notes to booth staffers, vendors Audit invoices/finalize show budget Measure/analyze results		

5.1.12 Stakeholder Consultation

In the sector prioritization process, engage relevant stakeholders such as other government offices at the regional and federal level, industry experts, business associations, academia, and civil society organizations. Seek their input, insights, and feedback to understand the sectors and their potential impact comprehensively. Collaboration with stakeholders will enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the sector prioritization exercise.

5.1.13 Periodic Review and Adaptation

Sector prioritization should be a dynamic process that reflects changing economic conditions, government policies, and emerging opportunities. Regularly review and update the sector prioritization criteria and tools to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Monitor the

progress of sectors selected for trade fairs and evaluate their outcomes to inform future prioritization decisions.

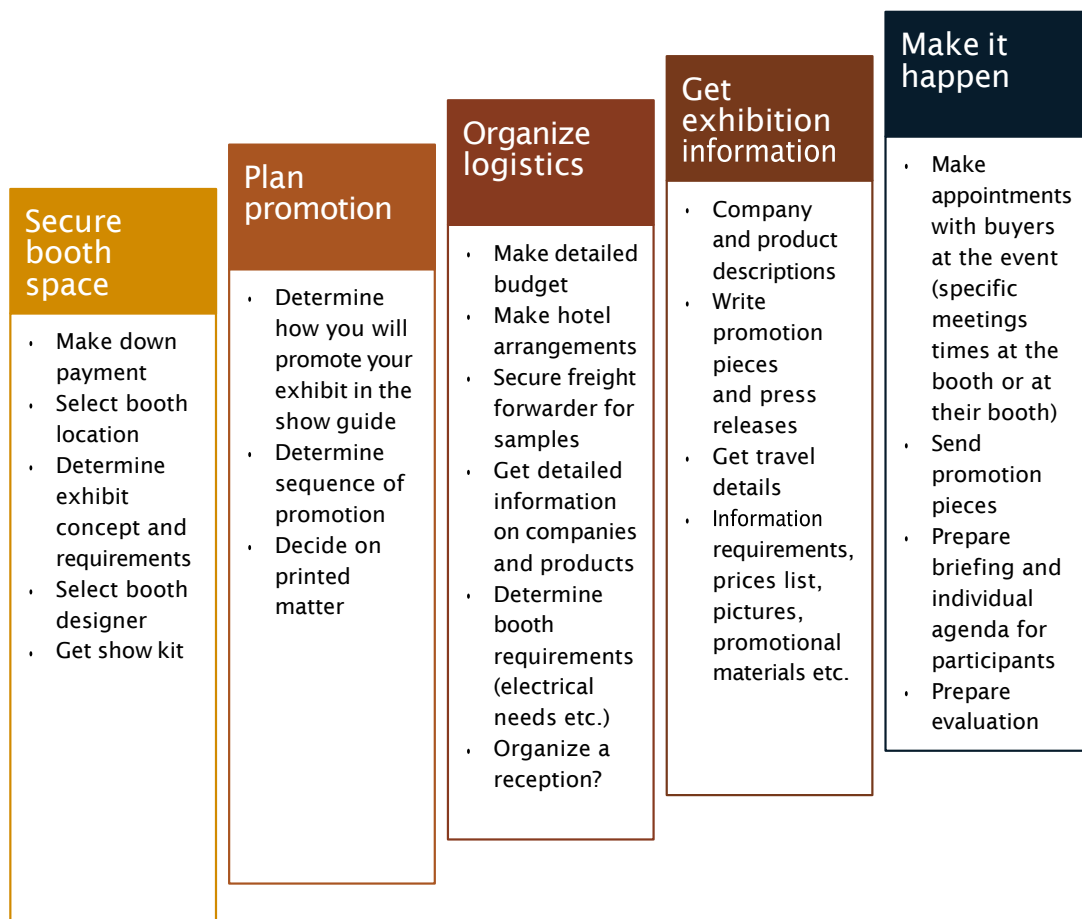
5.2 International Trade Fairs

An international trade show is an event happening outside your country and brings together different countries exhibiting or buyers. This type of trade show is typically held to bring awareness of different products and to connect buyers and sellers. Most international trade shows are not for selling their products but rather to connect buyers and sellers and in some cases to the public. International trade shows are relatively expensive than national ones and, in some cases, becomes unfordable for some SMEs from developing countries. It is highly advisable to seek sponsorship or partnership with development partners.

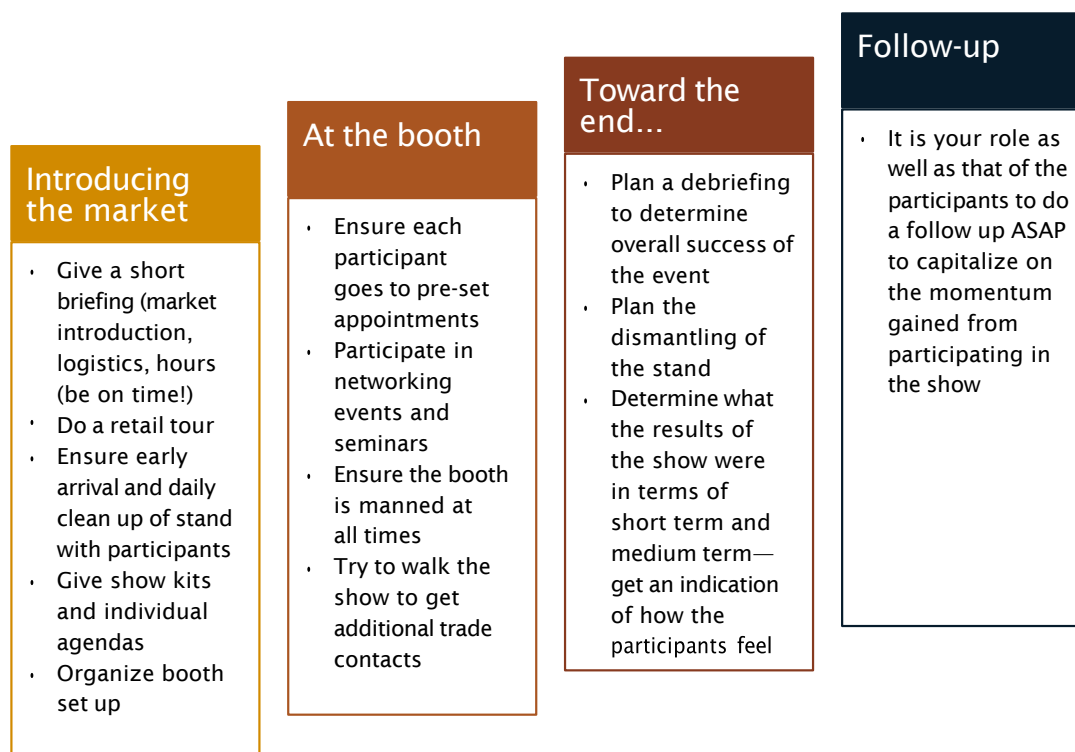
Attending the International Trade Show requires a lot of preparation and research to better understand the level of participation and major sectors involved in the show, type of buyer engagement and other logistics involved.

No matter how much preparation goes on, there will bound to be changes and surprises. Be prepared for change and be prepared to adapt.

The Planning Process—One to Twelve Months Before the Show



The Planning Process—During and After the Show



Steps for organizing an international Trade Show participation.

5.2.1 Assessing the trade Show.

Once a country has been identified as a priority for export promotion in a given sector or a number of sectors, extensive research must be done to select the trade shows that fit the product offer and will lead to the desired results.

In any country, there are different types of shows that target different audiences/ groups in the buying process. Not all are appropriate for off-shore exhibitors, EED should not consider shows directed at the general public, where the audience is principally ending consumers who typically buy the products at the show—often a one-time purchase.

EED should consider shows where the target audience comprises both retailers and wholesalers or importers who would possibly represent them or purchase their products once sufficient interest is shown by the destination country. Shows that are restricted to membership would also not be a good fit for Ethiopian SMEs, new to the marketplace or not. The best fit for SMEs would be shows directed at specific sectors.

When selecting the trade show(s) Indonesian SMEs plans to exhibit at, a lot of homework must be done to analyze which shows will be the best fit. Answering the following questions will be helpful in determining whether participation is worthwhile:

- Who is the main audience and who are the visitors?
- What kinds of products are exhibited?
- How many exhibitors were there in previous years? Of these exhibitors, how many were from different countries? Which countries were they from?

5.2.2 Assessing SMES

As in any selection process, all parties should use the same criteria to choose SMEs to participate in trade shows to be consistent and portray the same image regardless of where Ethiopia is exhibiting. This allows the country to enhance its image as a reliable supplier in a uniform manner. Consequently, the criteria must be determined beforehand and communicated to all parties involved within EED. In theory, the criteria for participating in trade shows should be the same, regardless of the show. However, the criteria should be reviewed for every country considered to ensure they are meaningful and realistic. For instance, having organic products may not be a criterion if an SME is to exhibit at SIAL Canada, but it would be if the intent was to participate in BIOFACH America. Some discretionary measures may be required for different countries and shows.

It is likely that not all SMEs that meet the essential criteria can be chosen to participate in a trade show due to funding and other constraints. To help the ministry choose between those SMEs, a system should be set up that ranks the SMEs from best to worst in order of their likelihood of success in the selected trade show.

The system has three basic steps:

1. scoring the criteria
2. weighting the criteria
3. using the scores and weights to rank the SMEs.

The SME is given a numerical score on each essential criterion as follows:

- 1 = very poor
- 2 = poor
- 3 = fair
- 4 = good
- 5 = excellent

After the essential criteria have each been given a rating, officials must then rate each of the non-essential criteria based on a similar (but not identical) numerical scale, ranging from:

- 1 = very poor/non-existent
- 2 = poor
- 3 = fair
- 4 = good
- 5 = excellent

Depending on the trade show, the ministry may decide that not all criteria are of equal importance. In that case, a numerical weight should be assigned to each criterion ranging from most to least important. For example, the ministry could assign the following weights ranging from 1 to 5:

1 = somewhat important

2 = an asset

3 = important

4 = very important

5 = extremely important

Once the scores and weights have been assigned to each of the essential and non-essential criteria, the results can be tallied up and the applicants ranked from best to worst.

5.2.1 Budgeting for the trade show

Budget item	Pre-show estimate	Actual cost	Invoice paid date	Variance Notes
SPACE RENTAL	_____			
Booth space	_____	_____	_____	_____
Meeting-room space	_____	_____	_____	_____
Deposits	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____
<u>SUBTOTAL</u>	_____			
EXHIBIT STRUCTURE	_____			
Design	_____	_____	_____	_____
Building/refurbishing	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tool-box supplies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Graphics design/production	_____	_____	_____	_____
Drayage outbound	_____	_____	_____	_____
Drayage inbound	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tax on materials	_____	_____	_____	_____
Storage (prorated)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Insurance (prorated)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____
<u>SUBTOTAL</u>	_____			
SHIPPING				
Ground transport to show	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ground transport from show	_____	_____	_____	_____
Air/sea freight to show	_____	_____	_____	_____
Air/sea freight from show	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____
<u>SUBTOTAL</u>	_____			
ON-SITE SERVICES				
Audiovisual	_____	_____	_____	_____
Carpet rental	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cleaning	_____	_____	_____	_____
Computer-equipment rental	_____	_____	_____	_____
Custom signage	_____	_____	_____	_____

Drayage	_____	_____	_____	_____
Electrical	_____	_____	_____	_____
Exhibitor badges	_____	_____	_____	_____
Floral rental	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture rental	_____	_____	_____	_____
Setup/dismantle labor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lead-gathering system	_____	_____	_____	_____
Photography	_____	_____	_____	_____
Plumbing/compressed air	_____	_____	_____	_____
Riggers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Security	_____	_____	_____	_____

5.2.2 Coaching the SMEs

Organizing coaching for the SMEs selected for trade show outside the country is very important step towards the success of the mission as SMEs get to learn the intelligence regarding the targeted market but also receives feedbacks from sector experts in relation to their products. During coaching, SMEs are also given practical experiences and technics on how to conduct themselves during the trade show and on how to engage with potential buyers/clients.

The SMEs coaching should be done by sector experts who are well knowledgeable about trade missions and also have knowledge on destination country market analysis.

5.2.3 Applying for the visas

Visa Application is a very tiring process especially for overseas countries, it important to start the application process early with a plan to have sessions with SMEs on how to go about it. Some SMEs do not have proper business documentation or even personal records that would make them eligible for the visas. EED should consider having visa applications clinic for SMEs selected for a given trade show and offer them supporting letters for their applications. In some cases, it also recommended to seek invitation letters from international trade fair organizers as they make a big difference when applying for visas.

5.2.4 Live Show

Arrival

- Aim to arrive at the show at least 24 hours in advance. You may need to allow for extra time if exhibiting overseas.
- When you arrive, get in touch with your local contact if you have one to stay updated on what is happening locally.
- Check that you have all documentation related to shipping invoices, booth registration etc. with you.

Booth set up.

- Ensure you obtain a floor plan and take time to familiarize yourself with the surroundings and other exhibitors.
- Check that your display is set up properly.
- Ensure all promotional material is ready.
- Organize a final staff briefing to go over objectives, plan of action, and schedules.
- Reconfirm your upcoming trade show appointments.

Understanding buyers

Trade show crowds exhibit certain behavioral patterns. Understanding the audience will ensure that you develop a good approach to getting them interested in your booth, products, and services. Cues can be taken from the type of workshops or seminars organized in conjunction with the show, local events, as well as the local/regional culture. Trade Commissioners and regional office staff can also provide advice.

Your staff must understand your organization's business plan and target audience and not just push a product. Their efforts will be lost on attendees if they are not able to transfer important products and company information as well as provide professional and competent representation to prospective clients.

Spotting genuine leads

The key to garnering successful leads is being able to recognize a genuine prospect. Building a profile of your target audience beforehand and being aware of whether you are seeking local partnerships or international business alliances can aid staff in identifying the right leads. Developing qualifying questions beforehand can also help staff.

Fact: 95 percent of companies say lead acquisition is one of their most important exhibit-marketing objectives. **(Source: Center for Exhibition Industry Research, 2018)**

Clear business goals will assist in the identification of qualified booth visitors. For example, if you have decided to focus on business expansion into the United States, then all visitors to your booth from the United States have already met one important qualifying variable. The more variables met, the greater the significance of product samples and information.

Networking tips

- Be prepared to have your company information and contact details on hand, whether it is using business cards, pass scanners or Quick Response (QR) codes.
- Be proactive in approaching prospects. Introduce yourself. Develop an elevator pitch or opener that highlights your business and product.
- If your staff need to sit, provide stools rather than chairs so that staff members can greet booth visitors at eye level.
- Avoid closed questions – you want to understand what your prospective clients are looking for and what has caught their attention at your booth.
- Ensure booth staff know your key messages. Active listening is important and booth staff should pay attention to body language, use of words, and tone of voice.

- If you are conducting a demonstration, spot individuals who express above average interest in your products or services. Get them involved in the demonstration or ensure you reach out to them afterwards.
- Fact: Trade shows attract attendees who have a major say in purchasing decisions. Half of all attendees have a buying plan in place before their visit.

Below is a checklist any SME or trade show participation organizer should keep in mind to facilitate the process in smooth way.

Table 2: Sample Checklist for SMEs or any trade show participant

Checklist	Scheduled date	Date completed
Pre-trade fair activities:		
Select booth space. Determine exhibit objectives Set show budget.		
Set exhibit-design goals Set exhibit budget.		
Evaluate promotion opportunities Select exhibit designer/builder Select display products.		
Plan promotion strategy		
Select transportation/I&D companies Finalize exhibit design.		
Plan direct-mail promotion Review exhibitor service kit Select booth staffers Reserve hotel rooms.		
Finalize lead-fulfillment plan Finalize lead follow-up mailings Order show services.		
Implement promotion strategy Order badges.		
Notify show management if using exhibitor-appointed contractor Preview new exhibit.		
Plan exhibit setup/dismantle.		
Finalize availability of display products/literature Send direct mail promotion.		
Plan pre-show staff-training session Preview portable display.		
Finalize graphics copy/art Finalize shipping information.		
Post-trade fair activities:		

Fulfill show inquires/requests		
Write thank-you notes to booth staffers, vendors Audit invoices/finalize show budget		
Measure/analyze results		

One crucial aspect of organizing successful trade fairs is prioritizing sectors to ensure optimal participation and impact. In this section, we will outline a methodology for sector prioritization, considering the Ethiopian Government's current priority sectors. This approach will facilitate the selection of industries that align with national development goals and maximize the potential for economic growth and innovation.

5.2.5 Understanding Ethiopian Government Priority Sectors

The Ethiopian Government has crafted priority sectors in the 10-year Perspective Plan and the Home-Grown Economic Reform, and it is essential to understand those sectors. These sectors are identified based on their potential to contribute significantly to the country's socio-economic development. Hence, reviewing the latest government documents, policies, and strategic plans is essential to identify the priority sectors. These may include but are not limited to agriculture, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, tourism, information, and communication technology (ICT), health, education, and others.

5.2.8 Defining Prioritization Criteria

To establish a structured approach for sector prioritization, it is crucial to define specific criteria that align with the objectives of the EED and the Ethiopian Government's priorities. Hence, EED should follow the following criteria as a starting point:

- Alignment with National Development Goals:** Assess how well a sector contributes to achieving the broader national development goals, such as job creation, poverty reduction, export promotion, and regional development.
- Growth Potential:** Evaluate the growth potential of sectors by analyzing factors such as market size, market demand, technological advancements, investment opportunities, and the potential for innovation and competitiveness.
- Value Chain Analysis:** Conduct a comprehensive value chain analysis of each sector to understand its economic linkages, opportunities for value addition, and potential for attracting investment and fostering entrepreneurship.
- Export Potential:** Consider the sector's export potential, including the existing and emerging export markets, export competitiveness, and the ability to generate foreign exchange earnings.
- Social Impact:** Assess the sector's potential to address social challenges, such as improving livelihoods, empowering marginalized communities, promoting gender equality, and enhancing environmental sustainability.
- Job Creation:** Evaluate the sector's capacity to create employment opportunities, particularly for the youth and other vulnerable groups, in alignment with the Ethiopian Government's focus on inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

- g) **Competitive Advantage:** Identify sectors where Ethiopia possesses a comparative advantage, such as access to key resources, favorable geographical location, existing infrastructure, skilled labor force, or favorable regulatory frameworks.

5.2.9 Prioritization Tool

Based on the above criteria, having a tool to prioritize sectors is vital. This tool should include the criteria and a scoring system to objectively evaluate, and rank sectors based on their alignment with the prioritization criteria. Consider assigning weightage to each criterion based on its relative importance and establish a scoring scale (e.g., 1-5) to quantify the sector's performance against each criterion. The tool will aid in systematic decision-making and enable consistent sector prioritization across trade fair events.

Table 3: Sector prioritization tool

Sector	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Energy	Infrastructure	Tourism	Information and ICT	Health	Education	Other
Alignment with National Development Goals									
Growth Potential									
Value Chain Analysis									
Export Potential									
Social Impact									
Job Creation									
Competitive Advantage									
Total Score									

5.2.10 Stakeholder Consultation

In the sector prioritization process, engage relevant stakeholders such as other government offices at the regional and federal level, industry experts, business associations, academia, and civil society organizations. Seek their input, insights, and feedback to understand the sectors and their potential impact comprehensively. Collaboration with stakeholders will enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the sector prioritization exercise.

5.2.11 Periodic Review and Adaptation

Sector prioritization should be a dynamic process that reflects changing economic conditions, government policies, and emerging opportunities. Regularly review and update the sector prioritization criteria and tools to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Monitor the progress of sectors selected for trade fairs and evaluate their outcomes to inform future prioritization decisions.

5.2.12 SME Selection Process

The selection of SMEs participating in any given event (National or International) needs to be more transparent and thorough to meet the expectations of the event and SMEs. While it's common just to pick few SMEs interested in event and those close to organizers or coordinators, SMEs needs to be assessed on their product/export readiness, match their product with the focus of the event and be more inclusive in terms of selection process. During the selection process of SMEs for any event, EED should set up a selection committee composed of both men and women and need be engage stakeholders (Sectoral Association, regional government....) in that committee.

The same group of selected SMEs need to be coached on each aspect of trade show, often we see many SMEs attending trade show without any knowledge of how to conduct their business during such event and all these are due to lack of proper training. It is therefore recommended to select SMEs that went through training in BDS or export readiness training.

SME Selection Tool

This assessment tool consists of 6 separate dimensions for a total of 20 questions.

Scoring: Range from 1 to 5; where 1 is poor or non-existent and 5 is excellent and will be included in the Scorecard. The maximum number of points is 100.

When selecting SMEs, it is important to keep in mind that these SMEs that are going to participate in a given event are the picture of the country for future investors in the country or assurance of quality products that can be produced, therefore the selection of SMEs has been completed in very systematic way to avoid any surprises during the show.

EVALUATION SCORECARD

Staff Name:

Woman led-owned:

Yes _____

No _____

Mixed _____

Region:

Company Name:

Representative Name:

Title: _____

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Website:

Instagram/FB: _____

Email: _____

CRITERIA	SCORE* (from 1 – poor to 5 – excellent)	COMMENTS
1. Product offer / Product Mix		
2. Relevant export experience		
3. Certifications for export markets (company and product); current or in progress		
4. Packaging & Labelling (If no samples, pictures)		
5. Pricing		
6. Promotional Materials/Marketing/Social Media presence		
7. Communication capacity & Level of English		
8. CSR		
9. Environmental Considerations		
10. Representative skill Set		
TOTAL (add all scores together)	/50	Reason(s):
Recommended for project? (yes/no/maybe; indicate reason)		

An assessment form to be used when assessing export ready SMEs for a given trade show will be attached as an annex.

6. Financing Trade Fairs

Trade shows are events that cost very high regardless of the size and country's economic status. Often these events are coordinated by trade associations or chambers of sectoral associations in partnership with regional and federal governments. Most of these events have mixed funding approaches where Government, private sector and development partners come together to fund such events.

Here are different types of funding for trade fairs:

Private Sector

Private sector funding for trade fairs takes the lion's share since most fairs are organized by the private sector, like the Chamber of Commerce, Sectoral Association, and investors. Their funding typically covers the initial cost related to managing the events; these funds are either received as loan or sort of payment for promotion.

Government

Government funding for trade shows might be in different types including space, electricity, promotion, and sponsorship. It is always recommended to involve the right agencies within the government to maximize the funding for any given event. The tracking tool for budgeting is a great tool to show the government what is needed and what EED will be seeking from them.

Exhibitors

Exhibitors funding comes as payment for the space, booth construction and promotion, this kind of funding is the focus for any trade shows as organizers look to make profit from this type of source of funding. It is very important for EED to conduct a detailed assessment.

Development Partners

Development partners are always looking for partnerships with trade show organizers, EED should look to engage different stakeholders in their trade shows as these development partners. Often these partners sponsor exhibitors directly instead of injecting money in the basket of organizers. It very important to know who should be reached to be a sponsor as it motives different businesses to participate.

7. Promotion

Promotion strategies are an excellent way for companies and organizations to communicate with a variety of audiences about their services or products. Every type of promotion has its own target audience and sometimes different types of promotions are combined to achieve the main goal.

Online

Online promotion or digital marketing involves online or web advertising, such as content marketing, search engine optimization social media marketing, and other affiliate promotions. With this type of promotion, EED could reach a bigger audience as digital awareness continues to expand in the country and is price affordable compared to others.

Traditional Media or general advertising

Traditional marketing or general advertising is a s promotional method that does not target a particular audience but aims to promote general awareness of a company or products. In

this case, EED should use mass media advertising, such as magazines, billboards, radio, and television to improve their brand recognition.

Hybrid

The hybrid promotion is just the mix of the above two other types of promotional materials. While each event organizer may fit with one or two types of promotion, it is always recommended to have a mix of promotions as audiences are different and people tend to focus on already known promotion channels to learn more about upcoming events. EED should be different from this practice and should involve as much as possible the three types of promotion strategies for any trade fair coordination.

8. Define Target Participants

Defining a target group for any trade fair is important to match the event focus and objectives with the right participants. Some SMEs find themselves in an event that does not exactly match their sector or products per day based on interest from buyers mostly for the events that are internationally organized. It is therefore recommended to follow the right process of identifying SMEs participating in any given opportunity by sector and their participation commitment since trade fairs involve a lot of commitment both in time and money.

9. Budgeting and Costing

Budgeting and costing for a trade show/fair is a very critical point in realization of the activity, reason why it's advisable to investigate different factors involved in any event, mapping out big budget lines, creating sort of sub budget lines for each big pillars and identifying source of income for each main budget lines.

Often stakeholders are interested in funding a particular item on the budget, and it is important to separate them to clearly account for each money received from donor.

Below is a sample of a budget for any given event.

10. Evaluation (Pre/Post)

There is always a need for evaluation at end of activity, similarly, at the end of trade show it is very easy to fall behind the evaluation and follow up survey to participants so that you can use their feedbacks to improve your services during your next exhibition.

With the current digital trend, it is advisable to use tech-based surveys to speed up the process and multiple choices questionnaire to limit the number of text participants are required to fill. For the SMEs, it's even more recommended to have their own strategic plan on evaluations, especially those buyers who engaged with them during the show.

The evaluation and follow up can be scheduled in different timeframes that will allow them to first process the feedback and implement those that have bigger impact on their businesses

11. Annexes



Trade Fair
Organization Form.pdf



Score Card.pdf



MSMEs Export
Readiness Assessment



Business Exporter
Profile Form.pdf



Trade Show Critical
Path.pdf