



Webinar series bolsters local small businesses impacted by COVID-19

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

11 June 2020

Suva, Fiji - Small businesses around the country are getting the opportunity to engage directly with highly experienced business coaches through a free webinar series, as they find ways to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Over 100 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) registered to participate in an interactive webinar on *COVID-19 - Business Survival, Revival and Growth* today, hosted by international trainer, Steve Cordeiro, and organised by Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) in partnership with the Australian Government.

The webinar marked the official launch of a six-part series by FCEF, facilitated by Cordeiro and four expert local business coaches. FCEF is providing the webinars, as well as the business coaching and counselling services, through its Fiji Enterprise Engine (FEE) Accelerator Program, set up in 2019 with support from the Australian Government-funded Market Development Facility (MDF).

"We are proud to offer this free platform as an added service to assist our local small businesses as many have been greatly impacted by COVID-19. This webinar series allows them to engage directly with highly experienced business coaches who also understand the local landscape. We are very grateful to the business coaches for lending their time and expertise to help small businesses in Fiji," said Mr Kameli Batiweti, FCEF Chief Executive Officer.

The series will also cover pandemic-proof proactive strategies, managing cash flow in crisis, resetting mindsets in a pandemic, and adapting marketing strategies during and post COVID-19.

"Australia is a strong supporter of the Fiji Government's efforts to grow small businesses in Fiji, which play such an important role in the local economy. These webinars provide a useful forum to share innovative ideas and strategies for local businesses to respond to the economic challenges COVID-19 has created for both our countries," said John Feakes, Australian High Commissioner to Fiji.

Businesses will also be able to book follow-up one-to-one business coaching and counselling sessions with the business coaches to seek further advice and information suited to their specific needs.

"The targeting of young men and women entrepreneurs by the FEE is very relevant. The most recently released ILO Monitor on COVID19, specifically highlights that youth are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, particularly affecting young women more than young men. The pandemic is inflicting a triple shock on young people - destroying their employment, disrupting their education and training and placing major obstacles in entering and moving within the labour. The ILO envisages the FEE to be part of FCEF's menu of membership services and an opportunity to share the learnings with other Employer Organisations across the Pacific," said Mr Matin Karimli, Director of the International Labour Organisation.

The FEE Coaching and Remote Counselling services are available from 11 June to 3 July. Link to register: <http://www.fcef.com.fj/fee/>

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Background

The Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation is Fiji's largest private sector organisation. It represents the interests of the employers and the private sector at large in the country.

The Market Development Facility (MDF) initially supported FCEF in 2018 to set up a business acceleration service for its members, in particular the Young Entrepreneurs Council (YEC) and Women Entrepreneurs & Business Councils (WEBC). The pilot of the program was completed in November 2019. Twelve MSMEs graduated from the program, of which 47 percent were women, and reported successful results. The MSMEs earned an additional \$200,000 and saved up to \$113,000 through lessons learnt and implemented from FEE.

FEE is now incorporating business support through webinars, business counselling and business coaching services to assist MSMEs to manage the immediate crisis and identify new business models and new opportunities arising out of COVID-19. The 6-month Accelerator Program for 15 participating MSMEs is expected to start in September.

FOR MEDIA USE

If you would like further information or interviews, please contact:

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BUSINESS COACHES



Strategic Management Coach: Elizabeth Jane Algar

With over two decades of experience in the private sector areas of business, corporate management, education, aviation, retail and hospitality, Elizabeth Jane Algar shapes strategic thinking, achieves results, cultivates productive working relationships, exemplifies personal drive, integrity and communicates with influence. She is a quiet achiever.

She has worked with organisations like the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC), Strategic Air Services Australia, Air Pacific (now Fiji Airways), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for the MACBIO project, and the Market Development Facility for the Fiji Enterprise Engine. Elizabeth has also been appointed by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, as a board member for the Consumer Council of Fiji. She has an MBA, a Postgrad Diploma for General Managers, a Postgrad Certificate in Human Resources from The University of the South Pacific, and is a qualified Trainer and Chef. Elizabeth is passionate about health and wellness, women's empowerment and giving back to our communities, and is a member of numerous professional associations and voluntary organizations. She lives in Fiji with her two teenage children, and celebrates her zest for life through cooking, reading, farming, four-wheel driving and traveling.



Human Resources Coach: Rowena Erasito

Rowena Erasito has over 20 years of experience in the field of Human Resources and received her tertiary education at The University of the South Pacific, and the University of Sydney. Rowena has worked mainly in the private sector, as well as some experience in the public sector. Rowena is a member of the Fiji Human Resources Institute, and the Australian Human Resources Institute. She was an evaluator for the 2019 FHRI Awards. Rowena is a

Leadership Fiji Graduate and is passionate about helping people from all walks of life to prosper in whatever they are pursuing in life.



Finance Coach:

Josua Mateiwai

The viability of a business is critically important and that is where Josh, your Accounting and Financial Management Coach comes in. He has been working in the Accounting and Financial Management profession for the last 10 years. He is currently employed with the Market Development Facility as a Business Adviser, working with the private sector in Tourism, Agriculture and with MSMEs for the last 3 years. His prior work experience includes working as an Accountant for the iTaukei Land Trust Board, a Financial Management Counsellor for the UN-ITC Project, and as a Loans Officer for the Home Finance Co. Ltd. In his spare time, Josh also provides financial advice and consultancy for various charitable organisations on a voluntary basis. Josh is passionate about working with local enterprises and providing solutions to improve their accounting systems, bookkeeping and financial reporting needs. He holds a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Accounting & Financial Management and Banking and Finance from The University of the South Pacific. He is also a member of the Fiji Institute of Accountants, Fiji Institute of Bankers and the Institute of Internal Auditors Fiji.



Marketing and Branding

Coach: Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi

Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi is the Founder, and Creative and Innovation Director of The Greenhouse Studio, a multidisciplinary creative design and communications studio based in Fiji that was started with the philosophy that finding creative solutions can inspire real change in the world. With a degree and background in Organisational Communications, for the past 20 years Ronna has worked in the areas of Integrated Marketing Communications, Graphic Design, Web Design, User Experience, PR, and Brand Development in various sectors in Asia and the Pacific. She won the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the 2018 Fiji Development Bank National SME Awards. Her winning COP23 logo design was featured globally for the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2017 through to 2018. Ronna is a Vital Voices Global Ambassador, VVGrow Fellow, Obama Foundation Leader and TEDx speaker. She is passionate about entrepreneurial thinking, social entrepreneurship, and empowering women and girls through education, and is the current President of Graduate Women (Fiji). She lives in Suva with her family - her life partner, Richard; their 8-year-old son, Māui Ryyu Phoenix; and their 2-year-old daughter, Mayari Luna Zaira Haru.



International Master Trainer and Business Coach:

Steve Cordeiro

Originally from Singapore, Steve has worked in the field of enterprise development in Australia, Asia and the Pacific. Steve operates a manufacturing and marketing business in Sydney, Australia as well as a consulting business that is focused on helping small business operators realise their dreams. He

has been involved in the Fiji Enterprise Engine Program since its inception. Having worked in Fiji and other Pacific Island Countries as well as other developing economies for over 30 years, he is fully aware of the issues and challenges small entrepreneurs face, especially during turbulent times like now. He is currently working with a number of businesses to help them face the challenges that COVID 19 has brought and to plan for the future. His particular interests are in entrepreneurship, strategy, innovation and creativity.

FIJI ENTERPRISE ENGINE WEBINAR SERIES

**Webinars for Fiji Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
to respond and recover from COVID-19**

COVID-19 - Business Survival, Revival and Growth

11 June 2020, Thursday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Steve Cordeiro

**Pandemic-proof Proactive Strategies for Yourself and Your
Business**

17 June 2020, Wednesday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Elizabeth Jane Algar

Marketing Creatively in COVID-19 times

18 June 2020, Thursday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi

Managing Cash Flow In Times of Crisis

24 June 2020, Wednesday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Josua Mateiwai

Resetting your Mindset to Lead your Teams in this Pandemic

25 June 2020, Thursday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Rowena Erasito

Adapt your Marketing Strategy During and After COVID-19

2 July 2020, Thursday, 1-2 PM

Presenter: Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi