



Established March 14, 1879

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
CHAMBER
OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

www.chamber.org.tt

The Voice of **BUSINESS**

CATALYST SME CONFERENCE

TURNING POTENTIAL INTO PERFORMANCE

PLATINUM SPONSOR



DEVELOPMENT BANK
OF LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

GOLD SPONSORS



Business



SILVER SPONSORS



MEDIA PARTNER

BRONZE SPONSORS





TABLE OF CONTENTS

President’s Message1

Concept Overview3

Why Attend?3

Day 1: Wednesday 11th March 20264-5

Day 2: Thursday 12th.March.2026.....6

From Data to Intelligence.Checklist.....8-10

Buyer Meeting Preparation Checklist11

CEO’s Message12

Catalyst’s Speakers14-17



President's Address

Good morning everyone,

It is truly a pleasure to welcome you to the Catalyst SME Conference.

For the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, this conference represents something very important. It represents our commitment to being the Voice of Business and more specifically, the voice of the entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises that power our economy.

Today, SMEs make up roughly seventy percent of the Chamber's membership. That means when we speak about the business community in Trinidad and Tobago, we are in many ways speaking about SMEs their challenges, their ambitions, and their opportunities for growth.

For me, that focus is deeply personal.

My own journey with the Chamber actually began many years ago when I first joined the organisation as a Legal Officer. In those early days, I had the opportunity to work directly with businesses across many sectors — helping them navigate legal frameworks, understand trade rules, and find practical solutions to the challenges they faced.

Those experiences shaped my perspective in a profound way. They allowed me to see, up close, the resilience and determination of entrepreneurs who were building businesses with vision, courage, and often very limited resources.

Since then, my professional path has continued to intersect with the world of business. As an attorney in commercial practice and as someone who has worked in trade policy at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, I have had the privilege of supporting companies that operate not only in Trinidad and Tobago but across the Caribbean region.

And what I have learned through that experience is simple: SMEs are extraordinary engines of innovation and growth. But they cannot thrive in isolation.

They need access to networks. They need access to markets. They need the right information, the right partnerships, and the right support systems to grow and scale.

That is why the Chamber has made SME engagement a central priority.

Over the past year, we have been strengthening the ways in which we listen to our members and respond to their needs. One of the clearest messages we heard from entrepreneurs is that building a business can sometimes feel like a very lonely journey.

In response, we launched the initiative Success Leaves Clues — a programme designed to create a community where entrepreneurs can learn directly from experienced business leaders who have walked the path before them.

The goal is simple: to ensure that the knowledge gained through experience is shared, so that the next generation of business leaders can grow faster and with greater confidence.

At the same time, we have also been focused on expanding opportunities for our SMEs beyond our borders.

Through the Chamber's Export Action Programme, twenty-four companies worked closely with five consultants to develop export strategies and connect with international markets. The results have been extremely encouraging.

The programme has already generated over two hundred and seventy-nine thousand US dollars in export orders, with businesses exploring opportunities in sectors such as maritime services, fashion, film, and the creative industries.

What this tells us is that our SMEs are ready.

They have the ideas. They have the talent. They have the ambition.

What they need are the platforms that allow those ideas and ambitions to translate into real commercial opportunity.

And that is exactly what Catalyst is about.

President's Message

Over the next few days, we will explore some of the most important conversations shaping the future of SMEs from financing and succession planning to data-driven decision making and market access. But beyond the conversations themselves, Catalyst is designed to create real connections.

Connections between entrepreneurs and buyers.

Connections between SMEs and financial institutions.

Connections between businesses across Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region.

Because ultimately, growth happens when businesses connect with opportunity. As a Chamber, our responsibility is to help create those spaces where opportunity can emerge.

We do this through advocacy, through policy engagement, and through initiatives like Catalyst that bring together the people, the ideas, and the partnerships that drive business growth.

So my encouragement to each of you today is simple.

Take full advantage of the opportunities that this conference presents. Engage in the discussions. Ask questions. Share your experiences. Build relationships.

Because the future of our SME sector will not be built by any one organisation or any one entrepreneur alone.

It will be built through collaboration, through innovation, and through a shared commitment to growth.

At the Chamber, we remain deeply committed to being your voice and your advocate.

And together, we can continue building a stronger, more resilient, and more competitive business community in Trinidad and Tobago and across our region.

Thank you, and I wish you a productive and inspiring conference.

Sonji Pierre-Chase

President

Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce

CATALYST SME CONFERENCE

Turning Potential into Performance



When: March 11 and 12, 2026



Where: Leon Agostini Conference Hall, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Westmorrings



Time: 9 am to 3:15 pm



Concept Overview:

“Catalyst” the conference is a transformative two-day event designed to empower Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Trinidad and Tobago with the tools, insights, and connections necessary to drive economic growth in 2026.

Hosted at the prestigious Leon Agostini Conference Hall, this event will bring together key players from the business community, government, and international organizations to create actionable pathways for reducing the food import bill, expanding exports, and unlocking the untapped potential of the cultural and creative economies.



Why Attend?

The conference will highlight:

- **Innovative Models for success:** Practical strategies for SMEs to thrive in agriculture and the orange economy.
- **Real-World Insights:** Lessons from top CEOs who grew small businesses into regional powerhouses.
- **Opportunities for Growth:** Networking with industry experts, investors, and policymakers to foster impactful collaborations.



Wednesday 11th March 2026

Opening Ceremony - 9:00 am – 9:30 am

Masters of Ceremony: Vashti Guyadeen

Welcome Address: Ms. Sonji Pierre-Chase, *President*, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Address: “The Development Agenda: Positioning SMEs at the Heart of Economic Planning”
The Honourable Kennedy Swaratsingh, *Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development*

Ministerial Address

Introduction: Vashti Guyadeen

Ministerial Address: “Boosting SME Competitiveness and Performance”
The Honourable Satyakama ‘Kama Maharaj’, *Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism*

★ **Buy Local Charter Signing** - The TT Chamber of members sign on to the Buy Local Charter

Coffee Break: 10:00 am – 10:15 am

Panel Discussion: Financing SMEs – From Potential to Bankability

10:15 am – 11:00 am

Focus: Access to finance and Credit Readiness

Moderator: **Dr. Christian Stone**, *CEO*, Term Finance

Panelists:

- Dr. Rebeca Vidal, *Senior Executive*, CAF (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean), Commercial Banking Representative (TBC)
- Dr. Stefan Fortune, *Head of Research*, CariCRIS
- Kerwyn Valley, *CEO*, Aspire Fund Management Group



Wednesday 11th March 2026

Mexican Embassy Support for SMEs

11:00 am - 11:10 am

Flavio Abraham González Hernández - *Head of Trade and Cooperation*, Embassy of Mexico in Trinidad and Tobago

Agriculture Track

11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Focus: Agriculture Sector – Food Security Committee

Moderator: Dr. Lorraine Waldrop-Ferguson, Chairman, Food Security Committee

- Presentations:**
- Felicia Smart - *CEO & Founder of AgriAssure* (Facilitated via Zoom)
Topic: Entry into the Canadian Market
 - Andrea Power – *Managing Director*, Hatchman Premium Cheeses Inc (Facilitated via Zoom)
Topic: Pilot Programme Overview – Agriculture in CARICOM

Networking Lunch: 12:15 pm – 1:15 pm

Mine Your Business 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm

Moderator: Crisen Maharaj, *Manager, Capacity Building*, Global Trinidad and Tobago

- Presentations:**
- Ebony De Leon, *Chief Executive Officer*, Data Aura Analytics
Topic: Using data analysis to strengthen internal performance discipline, financial awareness and strategic clarity for SMEs

Crack the Buyer Code: Connecting with Distributors and Corporate Clients

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

- Presentation:**
- Gabriella Gonzales, Export Consultant, Export Action Programme
Focus: From first contact to signed deal - how to position your business for successful negotiations
 - Crisen Maharaj, Manager, Capacity Building, Global Trinidad and Tobago

End of Day Wrap-Up: 3:15 pm



Thursday 12th March 2026

Orange Economy Track - Creative Industries Panel - 9:00 am – 10:25 am

Orange Economy Committee - Carnival 365: Making It a Reality

Special Panel Discussion: “Carnival Catwalk - A Case Study”

Moderator: Kiran Maharaj

Panelists:

- Jerome Rome Precilla - *Creator / Executive Producer, Carnival Catwalk*
- Rodney Seemungal - *CEO, SGP Studios*
- Lorraine O'Connor - *General Manager, C15*
- Gian Franco - *Founder / CEO, Pavillion Entertainment*

Coffee Break: 10:25 am - 10:30 am

Family Business Session - 10:30 am – 11:15 am

“Family Enterprise as the Backbone”

Dr. Annette Rahael – will be facilitated via ZOOM

Family Business Panel Discussion - 11:15 am - 12:00 pm

Moderator: Kiran Maharaj

Panelists:

- Dr. Stephanie Young Nienymer - *Owner, Relaz Med Aesthetics*
- Roger Roach - *Founder and CEO, Lazuri Apparel Limited*
- Dalvi Paladee, *Chief Executive Officer, Pennywise Cosmetics Ltd.*

Lunch: 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

UNICOMER Draw: Shivan Ojah-Maharaj (Director of CBS)

Fund Your Vision - 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm

Presenter: Jody White

Focus: How to present your business idea with the clarity and conviction that turns investors into partners.

Pop Up Like a Boss - 1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

Presenter: Keegan Simon, *Owner, Individual Aesthetic*

Focus: From setup to sell-out - how to maximise every pop-up opportunity.

Policy Next Steps - 2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

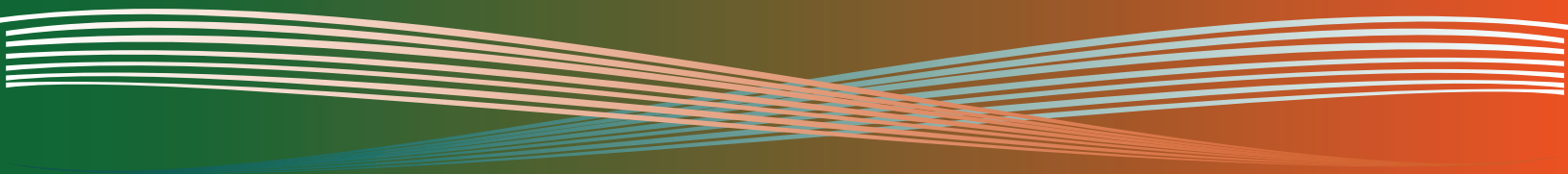
Moderator: Vashti Guyadeen, *CEO, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce*

Panelist: Lisa Marie Daniel, *Head, Fashion, Global Trinidad and Tobago*
Neville Alexander - *Director of Trade, Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism*
Chairpersons, Orange Economy and Food Security Standing Committees

End of Day Wrap-Up: 3:15 pm



From Data to Intelligence *Checklist*





From Data to Intelligence *Checklist*

A practical guide for turning everyday business data into decisions

1. Identify Where Your Data Lives

Most SMEs already collect valuable information without realizing it.

- Customer contacts stored in phones
 - WhatsApp messages and order conversations
 - Excel spreadsheets or accounting files
 - Invoices and receipts
 - POS or payment records
 - Emails and customer inquiries
 - Staff knowledge about customers
-

2. Capture the Data in One Place

Move information from memory into a simple system.

- Create a master customer list (name, phone, email)
 - Track purchase history by customer
 - Record product or service sold
 - Record revenue and cost per sale
 - Maintain a complaint or issue log
 - Track payment timelines
-

3. Structure Your Data

Organize your information so it can answer questions.

- Sales spreadsheet with columns for
 - Add a column for gross margin
 - Create categories for
-

4. Use AI to Extract Insights

AI tools can quickly analyze text or transaction patterns.

- Export WhatsApp conversations
- Paste messages into an AI tool (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini)
- Ask questions such as

From Data to Intelligence *Checklist* (continued)

5. Track the Three Critical SME Metrics

Every SME should know these numbers.

- Most profitable product (not just best-selling)
 - Customer retention rate (repeat customers)
 - Average time to payment
-

6. Implement the Weekly “Data Friday” Routine

Set aside 30 minutes each week to review business performance.

- Ask three questions:
 - What made us money this week?
 - What lost us money this week?
 - What surprised us this week?
-

7. Turn Insights into Decisions

Data should lead to concrete actions.

- Increase promotion of high-margin products
 - Reduce products with weak margins
 - Adjust pricing where complaints are rising
 - Improve service where delays occur
 - Identify peak demand times and staff accordingly
-

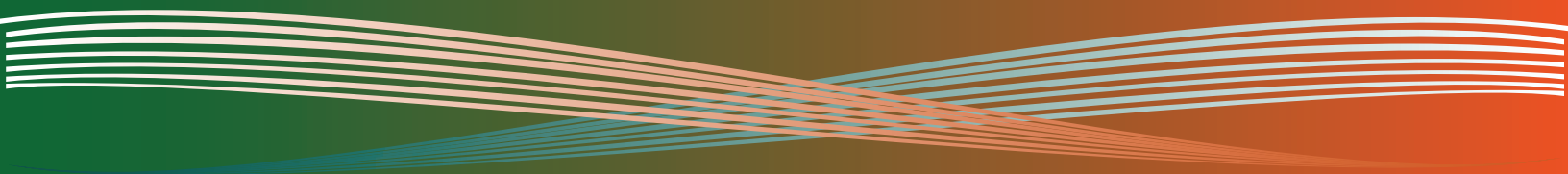
8. Build a Simple SME Intelligence Dashboard

At minimum, track these monthly:

- Total revenue
- Top 5 customers
- Top 5 products
- Average payment days
- Customer complaints by category
- Gross margin by product



Buyer Meeting Preparation *Checklist*





Buyer Meeting Preparation *Checklist*

1. Company

- 30-second business introduction prepared
 - Business cards and contact information
 - One-page company profile
-

2. Product

- Clean, well-presented product samples
 - Shelf-ready packaging
 - Product information (ingredients, features, benefits)
 - Shelf life and storage details
-

3. Pricing

- Wholesale price
 - Suggested retail price
 - Minimum order quantity (MOQ)
 - Distributor/retailer margin
-

4. Supply Capacity

- Monthly production capacity
 - Lead time for orders
 - Ability to scale production
-

5. Compliance

- Proper labelling
 - Barcodes (if selling in retail stores)
 - Relevant certifications or approvals
-

6. Sales Materials

- One-page product sheet
 - Price list
 - Digital copies available
-

7. Buyer Conversation

- Be ready to explain:
 - What the product is
 - Who it is for
 - What makes it different
 - Why customers will buy it
-

8. Follow-Up

- Send a follow-up email within 24–48 hours
- Provide additional information requested
- Share updated samples if required



CEO's Address

Catalyst SME Conference 2026

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Catalyst SME Conference 2026, an initiative of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce dedicated to strengthening the growth and competitiveness of our Small and Medium Enterprises.

When the Chamber launched Catalyst last year, the goal was to create a practical platform that would enable entrepreneurs to access knowledge, partnerships, and opportunities to scale their businesses. The inaugural conference brought together leaders from business, government, and international organisations to explore pathways for innovation, financing, and market expansion.

Catalyst 2026 builds on that strong foundation.

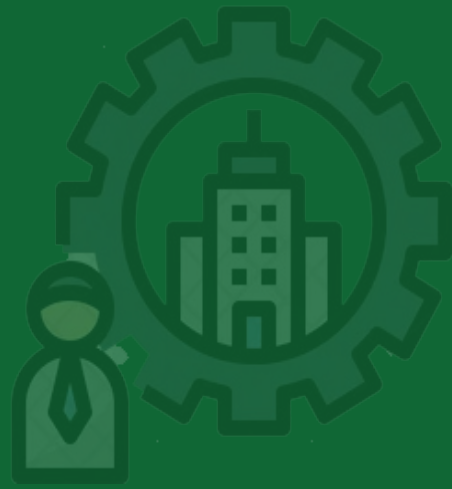
This year's conference places greater emphasis on practical engagement and market access. In addition to thought-provoking discussions on financing, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship, participants will have the opportunity to engage directly through curated B2B meetings with buyers and distributors, as well as the SME Pop-Up Marketplace, which provides businesses with a platform to showcase and sell their products.

These elements reflect the Chamber's commitment to moving beyond dialogue toward real opportunities for SMEs to connect, collaborate, and grow.

I encourage you to take full advantage of the conversations, connections, and opportunities that Catalyst presents.

Vashti G. Guyardcen

Chief Executive Officer
Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of
Industry and Commerce



CATALYST SPEAKERS



Meet the *Speakers*

DAY 1



Sonji Pierre-Chase
President
TT Chamber of Industry
and Commerce



**Senator Dr. The Honourable
Kennedy Swaratsingh**
Ministry of Planning, Economic
Affairs and Development



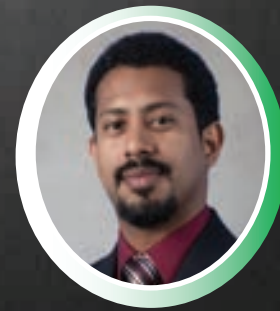
**Senator Dr. The Honourable
Satyakama "Kama" Maharaj**
Minister of Trade, Investment
and Tourism



Dr. Christian Stone
Chief Executive Officer
Term Finance



Dr. Rebeca Vidal
Senior Executive
CAF



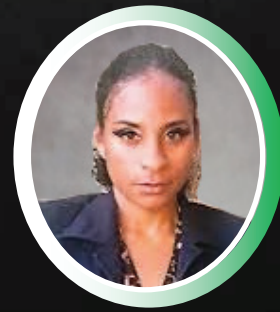
Dr. Stefan Fortune
Head of Research
CariCRIS



Kerwyn Valley
Group Managing Director
Aspire Group of
Companies



**Flavio Abraham González
Hernández**
Internationalist
Benemérita Universidad
Autónoma De Puebla



Dr. Lorraine Waldrop
Managing Director
Green Entrepreneur
Consultancy Ltd.

Meet the *Speakers*

DAY 1



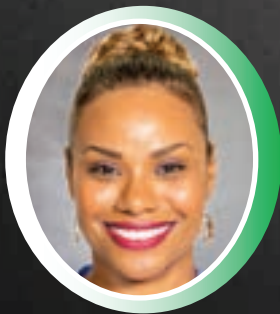
Felicia Smart
CEO & Founder
AgriAssure



Andrea Power
Owner
Hatchman's Premium Cheeses



Crisen Maharaj
*Manager Capacity Building
and Funding*
Global Trinidad and Tobago



Ebony De Leon
Chief Executive Officer
Data Aura Analytics



Gabriella Gonzales
Export Consultant
TT Chamber Export
Action Programme



Vashti G. Guyadeen
Chief Executive Officer
TT Chamber of Industry
and Commerce

Meet the *Speakers*

DAY 2



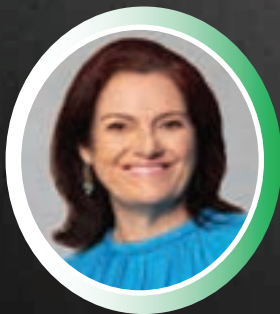
Kiran Maharaj
Immediate Past President
**TT Chamber of Industry
and Commerce**



Jerome Rome Precilla
Creator / Executive Producer
Carnival Catwalk



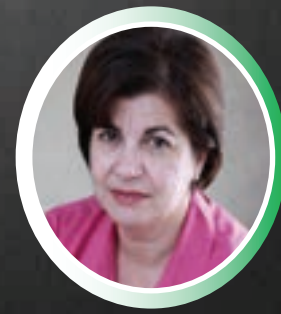
Rodney Seemungal
Chief Executive Officer
SGP Studios



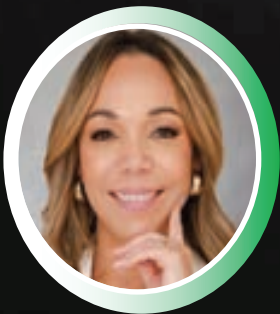
Lorraine O'Connor
General Manager
C15



Gian Franco
Founder / CEO
Pavillion Entertainment



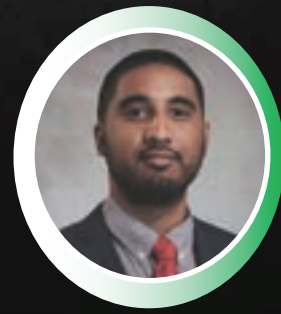
Dr. Annette Rahael
Family Business Advisor



**Dr. Stephanie Young
Nienymer**
Owner
Relaz Med Aesthetics



Roger Roach
Founder and CEO
Lazuri Apparel Limited



Jody White
*Executive in Sustainable
Agriculture
Food, Innovation and Host*

Meet the *Speakers*

DAY 2



Keegan Simon
Owner
1individual Aesthetic



Vashti G. Guyadeen
Chief Executive Officer
TT Chamber of Industry
and Commerce



Lisa Marie Daniel
Head, Fashion
Global Trinidad and Tobago



Neville Alexander
Director of Trade,
Minister of Trade, Investment
and Tourism



Dalvi Paladee
Chief Executive Officer
Pennywise Cosmetics
Ltd.



Columbus Circle Westmoorings, PO Box 499 Port of Spain, Trinidad WI
Tel: 868 637 6966 Fax: 868 637 7425

