Performance Review Study of the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) Scheme

Final Report

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APEC Business Mobility Group

May 2025

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

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1 Executive Summary

The APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) scheme aims to encourage cross-border business activities within the APEC region, to support APEC's overarching goals of creating greater prosperity for the people of the region through economic growth and regional economic integration. Since the ABTC scheme was first introduced as a trial program in 1997, it has grown to include more than 460,000 cardholders across all 21 APEC economies. This study assesses how well the ABTC scheme is functioning and meeting its goals in the post-pandemic era, and provides recommendations for APEC policymakers regarding the areas for potential improvement.

Key Messages

- This report describes the history of the ABTC scheme, and presents case studies about the implementation and management of the ABTC in five economies. The report contains key findings from two surveys, a workshop held in Lima, Peru, and concludes with a set of recommendations for future action by APEC policymakers.

- The ABTC scheme has evolved over time to meet cardholders' needs. Significant milestones since 1997 include the participation by all 21 APEC economies, the launch of a new ABTC Core System in 2006, the extension of the validity of the ABTC from three to five years in 2015, and the launch of the virtual ABTC (vABTC) in March 2021.

- This study found that although the ABTC scheme has been effective in providing travel facilitation services for business travelers, there are several parts identified where the effectiveness of the scheme can be improved. The recommendations cover five areas for improvement, which are described below.

- Card Application and Renewal: These recommendations aim to address challenges such as limited human resources capacity, delays in card application processing, and the repetitive renewal process for cardholders. Activities include capacity-building in ABTC processing staff and gathering information on the key data and system challenges that ABTC processing staff face.

- Technology: The ABTC scheme must maintain its value to travelers, in an increasingly digitalized world. In particular, the expansion and continued improvement of the vABTC is one of the top priorities for the technical modernization of the scheme.

- Card Benefits: These recommendations cover the use of the ABTC, including special lane policies and efforts towards the full participation by the transitional economies.

- Expanding Awareness of the ABTC Scheme: Promoting the ABTC scheme to better reach more users will help to build the overall usage of the ABTC. In addition, increasing the collection and sharing of additional datasets on cardholders and their card usage, will help to better measure whether, and by how much, the objectives of the ABTC scheme to bolster connectivity among member economies are being achieved.

- Sustained Leadership: Implementing the recommendations provided in this report will require an increased level of engagement from all APEC economies, alongside a sustained commitment to incremental improvement moving forward.

2   Introduction

The APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) scheme, in operation since 1997, is commonly cited as one of the most distinctive and tangible outcomes from APEC. Business travelers holding cards benefit from pre-cleared short-term entries to fully participating APEC economies and from fast-track immigration processing at major border entry points in all APEC economies. There is wide consensus among the APEC business community that the ABTC has made travel in the region easier by reducing the time and expense of visa applications and the wait times in border immigration lines.

In 2014, the APEC Business Mobility Group (BMG), which oversees the ABTC scheme, organized an end-to-end review of the ABTC scheme, focusing on policy changes to improve the business operations of the scheme. The review identified numerous policy changes to improve the business operations of the scheme, such as extending the validity of the card to five years, streamlining the application process, exploring wider adoption of online lodgment, and initiating work on a virtual ABTC (vABTC) card.

Since 2014, the BMG has adopted many improvements to the ABTC scheme, such as the introduction of the Mobile ABTC application and improvements to the ABTC Core System, which are providing business travelers with improved wait times for their cards, while also supporting greater security and protection from fraud. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a severe downturn in business travel globally, which had significant impacts on ABTC applications as well, although applications have now recovered and are growing swiftly once more. New technologies and best practices in recent years, such as contact-less travel documentation, also offer new opportunities to improve the ABTC scheme and ensure that the card continues to provide strong value to cardholders.

In recognition of these new developments, the BMG has organized this performance review of the ABTC scheme. The study assesses how well the ABTC scheme is functioning and meeting its goals in the post-pandemic era, and provides recommendations for APEC policymakers regarding the areas for potential improvement. In particular, the study assesses the following four key elements:

- **Effectiveness**: How effectively the ABTC scheme is facilitating travel for businesspeople across the APEC region, and ways to improve the card's benefits or expand its usage.

- **Technology and Digitalization**: The progress on the digitalization of the ABTC card and its related processes, and the potential for further enhancements to reduce processing times, strengthen security, and facilitate data sharing.

- **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**: The ABTC scheme's resilience in the face of pandemic-related challenges, and how to maintain the usefulness and effectiveness of the scheme following the pandemic.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Understanding how ABTC holders, participating economies, and other stakeholders view the current state of the ABTC scheme, and soliciting their feedback for improvements to ensure its continued benefits for all APEC economies.

Following a brief description of the project elements and methodology, this report describes the history of the ABTC scheme, and presents case studies about the implementation and management of the ABTC in five economies. The report then presents the key findings from two surveys and a workshop that was held in Lima, Peru, and concludes with a set of recommendations for future actions by APEC policymakers.

3 Background

This research was carried out by Washington CORE, a policy and research firm based in the Washington DC area, under the oversight of APEC BMG. The project team employed the following methods to gather information on these topics:

a) Literature research, drawing on reports published by major public and private organizations, past work by the BMG, and studies by multilateral organizations;

b) A pair of surveys, conducted with policy officials and private sector associations that are supporting the ABTC application process;

c) Interviews with public and private stakeholders from five economies to understand current practices for the ABTC scheme, including innovative processes;

d) A one-day in-person workshop held in Lima, Peru, which convened stakeholders and policy officials from APEC economies to discuss the ABTC and solicit their views on improvements.

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Project Objectives

This study was designed to assess how well the ABTC scheme is functioning and meeting its goals in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, and to identify areas where improvements are necessary. In particular, the study assesses:

- **Effectiveness**: How effectively the ABTC scheme is facilitating travel for businesspeople across the APEC region, and ways to improve the card's benefits or expand its usage.

- **Technology and Digitalization**: The progress on the digitalization of the ABTC card and its related processes, and the potential for further enhancements to reduce processing times, strengthen security, and facilitate data sharing.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Understanding how ABTC holders, participating economies, and other stakeholders view the current state of the ABTC scheme, and soliciting their feedback for improvements to ensure its continued benefits for all APEC economies.

- **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**: How to maintain and improve the usefulness and effectiveness of the scheme following the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Key Components

The following were the key project components:

Table 1: Key Components

Output	Description
Literature Review	A desktop literature review of studies and statistics on the ABTC scheme, and data about business travel trends since the COVID-19 pandemic.
Surveys	A pair of surveys to understand current ABTC trends. One survey was distributed to public policy officials from all 21 APEC economies, while the other survey was conducted among industry associations.

Case Studies	Interviews with stakeholders from Canada; Japan; Papua New Guinea; Peru; and the U.S. private sector; focusing on the core project review topics of effectiveness, technology and digitalization, how to improve the ABTC in a post-pandemic world, and soliciting stakeholder insights on the ABTC scheme to identify areas for improvement.
Workshop	A one day workshop in Lima, Peru was held on 13 August 2024. The workshop convened stakeholders to discuss key challenges and opportunities to improve the ABTC scheme. The workshop included the project team's presentation of research findings, presentations and discussions involving policymakers and industry stakeholders, and a pair of breakout sessions to discuss key challenges and future actions.
Final Report	This report summarizes the findings from the literature review, surveys, case study interviews, and workshop, and provides recommendations and conclusions for public policy officials on the areas for improvement of the ABTC scheme.

5 The Evolution of the ABTC Scheme from 1997-2024

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief summary of the evolution of the ABTC scheme from its inception through 2024. The research findings are organized as follows:

- A brief overview of the ABTC scheme, including the participating economies, purpose of the ABTC scheme, and general procedures

- A timeline of key events impacting the ABTC scheme, including:

    o The origins of the ABTC scheme

    o The growth and development of the ABTC scheme (1997-2014)

    o The findings from the 2014-2015 review of the ABTC scheme

    o The actions taken to improve the ABTC scheme following the review, up until the COVID-19 pandemic period (2015-2019)

    o The ABTC scheme during the COVID-19 era (2020-2022)

    o The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business travel and the ABTC scheme (2023-present)

This section was based on a review of the existing literature on the ABTC scheme, including the following key resources:

- Reports published by the APEC Business Mobility Group

- Documents from Business Mobility Group meetings

- Recent statistics on the ABTC scheme

- Individual economies' websites describing their implementation of the ABTC scheme

- Reports and statistics on business travel trends from economic research organizations, travel associations, and think tanks

A detailed list of the primary literature resources that were consulted in this research is provided in the annex to this report.

5.2 Overview of the ABTC Scheme

The ABTC scheme aims to encourage cross-border business activities within the APEC region, to support APEC's overarching goals of creating greater prosperity for the people of the region through economic growth and regional economic integration. Currently, there are 19 fully participating economies[1] and two transitional members.[2]

Applicants for an ABTC must hold a valid passport from an APEC economy (or be a permanent resident of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [Hong Kong, China]), engage in regular business travel throughout the APEC region, and have no criminal conviction. The application procedures are conducted in applicants' respective home economy, and application procedures, forms, and fees vary across economies.[3]

Applicants submit an application to obtain a card, which provides access to fast-track immigration processing at a majority of international airports, seaports and border

crossings.[4] Fully participating economies permit cardholders they have pre-cleared to conduct short-term (up to 60 or 90 days) business travel to their economies. Cardholders from fully participating economies can also make multiple short-term entries to APEC economies without requiring separate visas for each destination. The ABTC is valid for five years.[5]

The table below provides a brief summary of the key events over the course of the ABTC scheme, which are further described in the following sections.

Table 2: Evolution of the ABTC scheme, 1994-2024[6]

Year	City	Content
1994	Bogor, Indonesia	APEC set **the Bogor Goals** for free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific.
1995	Osaka, Japan	APEC adopted **the Osaka Action Agenda**, which provides a framework for meeting the Bogor Goals through trade and investment liberalization, business facilitation and sectoral activities, underpinned by policy dialogues and economic and technical cooperation. The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) was established to give advice on business sector priorities.
1996	Manila, the Philippines	**The Manila Action Plan for APEC** was adopted, outlining the trade and investment liberalization and facilitation measures required to reach the Bogor Goals. The first collective and individual action plans were compiled, outlining how economies will achieve the free trade goals.
1997	N/A	**Initial trials** of the ABTC scheme with Australia; Korea; and the Philippines started.
1999	Auckland, New Zealand	**The APEC Business Travel Card scheme** became permanent.
2006	N/A	Australia launched the **ABTC Core System**.
2014	Beijing, China	An **end-to-end review of the ABTC scheme** is conducted, and key findings are presented in Beijing, China.
2015	Manila, the Philippines	The BMG agreed to **extend the validity of the ABTC** from three to five years.
2020	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	The BMG announced the imminent launch of the **virtual ABTC (vABTC)** during the APEC Leaders' Week in November 2020.
2021	N/A	The **virtual ABTC** was officially launched in March 2021.
2021	Bandung, Indonesia	The BMG organized an **online workshop on the ABTC** in September 2021.
2024	Lima, Peru	The BMG commissions a **performance review study of the ABTC**, including a full-day workshop in Lima, Peru.

5.3   The Origins of the ABTC Scheme

In 1994, APEC leaders met in Bogor, Indonesia, and agreed to work towards achieving several common goals for economic cooperation, free and open trade and investment. These targets became known as the Bogor Goals.[7]

In November 1995, at the APEC Leaders' Meeting held in Osaka, Japan, APEC leaders gathered to discuss how to implement the Bogor Goals. APEC also agreed to establish the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), a private sector body which presents recommendations to APEC leaders in an annual dialogue and advises APEC officials on business-sector priorities and concerns.[8] The Business Mobility Group (BMG) was then formed in 1997. ABAC submitted their report, "APEC Means Business: Building prosperity for our community," in October 1996, and APEC responded to it in January 1997, noting the development of a pilot project of the ABTC scheme.

The APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) scheme was initially trialed from April 1997 with Australia; Republic of Korea; and the Philippines. The system was designed to allow member economies to express interest and agree in principle before they were fully committed, allowing economies with domestic restrictions or concerns to join later. The ABTC scheme is designed to operate based on the ABTC Operating Framework, which outlines key principles and procedures.

When the ABTC scheme was first launched, there were several concerns. The stringent criteria required to apply for an ABTC, combined with the need for each economy to approve the cardholders individually, meant that only low-risk participants were approved. Early adopters had relatively little need for the card because they already had visa-free arrangements in place, whereas the economies that were more cautious about border controls often joined after they saw greater value in the system.[9] The ABTC scheme was expanded in April 1998 to include Chile and Hong Kong, China.

5.4   Development of the ABTC Scheme from 1997-2014

The partnership between the BMG and ABAC marked a significant achievement with the creation of the ABTC, streamlining entry for business travelers in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1999, the APEC Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI), which oversees the BMG, decided to make the ABTC program permanent starting from 1 March 1999. New Zealand and Malaysia announced their participation.

Many economies joined the ABTC scheme in the next few years. Brunei Darussalam; Peru; and Thailand joined the scheme in February 2001, China in February 2002, and Indonesia in August 2002. Since then, Chinese Taipei; Japan; Singapore; Papua New Guinea; Viet Nam and Mexico have signed on to the scheme.[10] As shown in the table below, the number of applications also increased from 2000 to 2004.

Figure 1: Application Growth of the ABTC scheme, 2000-2004

APEC Yearly Application Rate
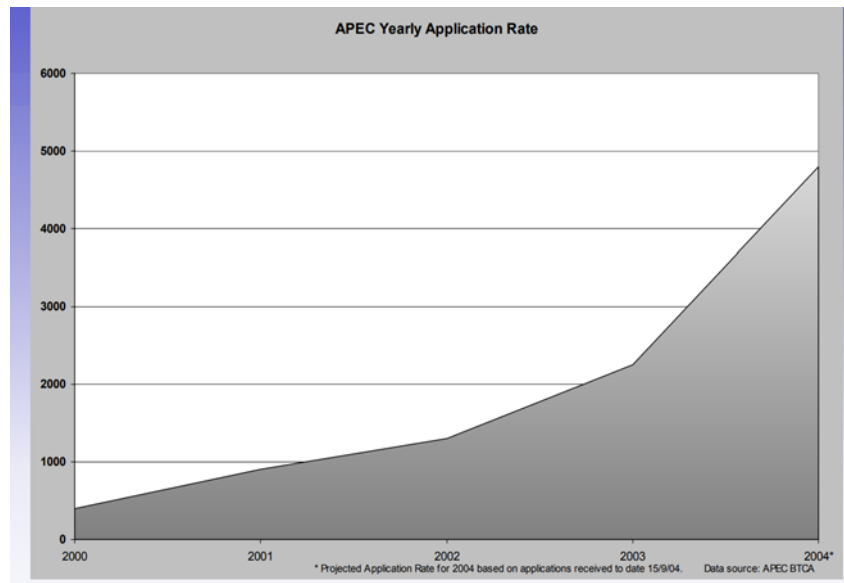
Source: "Regional Trade Facilitation: APEC BUSINESS TRAVEL CARD SCHEME"[11]

In this period, the ABTC Core System required redevelopment due to outdated technology. Australia proposed a new system in 2004 and completed the work in 2006. The new version of the system transitioned from a local desktop application to a centralized, web-based platform which has been more robust and secure. Other key improvements included expanded user roles, better data security, and reduced administrative tasks.

The following table summarizes when each member economy joined the ABTC scheme.

Table 3: Economy and Year of Joining into the ABTC scheme

Economy	Year of Joining
Australia	1997
Republic of Korea	1997
The Philippines	1997
Chile	1998
Hong Kong, China	1998
Malaysia	1999
New Zealand	1999
Brunei Darussalam	2001
Peru	2001
Thailand	2001
Indonesia	2002
China	2002
Chinese Taipei	2002
Japan	2002
Papua New Guinea	2003
Viet Nam	2003
Singapore	2004
Mexico	2007

Economy	Year of Joining
United States*	2007
Canada*	2008
The Russian Federation	2010

*Transitional member

Source: "Reducing Business Travel Costs: The Success of APEC's Business Mobility Initiatives," p.2[12]

5.5 Findings from the 2014-2015 End-to-End Review of the ABTC

The 2014 review study, commissioned by the APEC Secretariat, titled "Supporting Continued Growth in Trade and Facilitation: End to End Review of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme Final Report" provides a comprehensive overview of the ABTC scheme, along with case studies, notable concerns, and recommendations for further development. The study was based on literature review, interviews with officials, surveys with stakeholders, and discussions held at the 2014 SOM meeting.[13]

The researchers identified several concerns/issues raised by member economies and clients. Notable ones include the lengthy process required for pre-clearance, tedious process when cardholders' passport changes or card renewals are needed, slow adoption of technological advances by administrative bodies, and the stalled implementation of online lodgement, among others. To resolve these challenges, the study proposed some recommendations from the process, technical, organizational dimensions, as summarized in the following table.[14]

Table 4: Recommendations for further development of the ABTC scheme, 2014

Items	Recommendations
Process recommendations	· Extend the card validity from three to five years · Enact passport change policies · Streamline and speed up the pre-clearance process · Ease and simplify the process of ABTC renewals · Provide guidance and training to immigration/border officials
Technology recommendations	· Implement an online lodgement system · Establish a card-less scheme · Introduce a biometric scheme · Execute ABTC platform improvements and technical review · Track metrics for ABTC usage
Organizational recommendations	· Establish a technical support group to help ABTC processing staff · Build a client contact center

Source: "Supporting Continued Growth in Trade and Facilitation: End to End Review of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme Final Report"[15]

5.6 The ABTC Scheme from 2015 to the COVID-19 Pandemic (2015-2019)

Following the End to End Review of the ABTC, the BMG extended the validity of the ABTC from three to five years in 2015.[16] Member economies also began working on the development of a Virtual ABTC (vABTC), and began exploring the feasibility of a shared online lodgement system for the card. The total number of cardholders increased from 158,461 in 2014 to 380,017 in 2019, reflecting an average annual growth of 17.5%.[17]

Figure 2: Number of Active ABTC Holders, 1999-2019
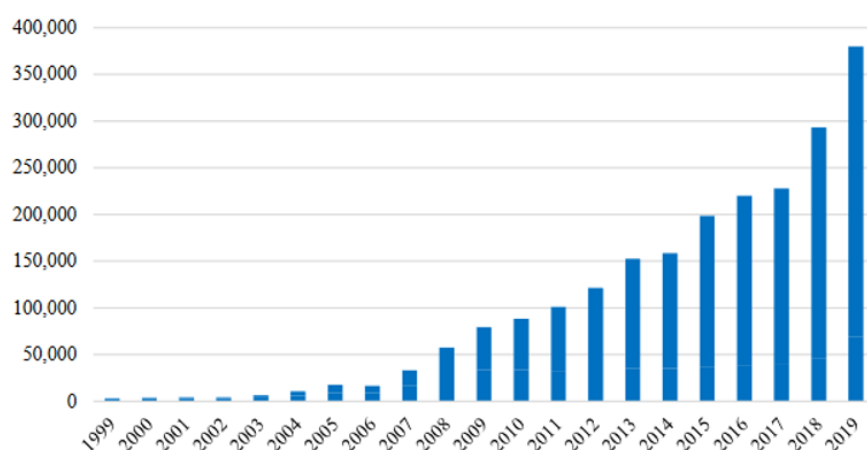
Source: APEC Business Mobility Group data, APEC Policy Support Unit staff calculations.

Source: "APEC Connectivity Blueprint: The 2020 Mid-Term Review", p.85[18]

The growth in cardholders from 2015 to 2019 was driven by high growth in five economies (Chile; Republic of Korea; Mexico; the Russian Federation; and Singapore), while the other 16 economies experienced steady or a declining numbers of cardholders.[19] The overall time required for the pre-clearance process steadily decreased from 119 days (simple average) in 2006 to 17 days, as shown in the following chart.[20]

Figure 3: Average ABTC Pre-clearance Processing Time, 2006-2019

Note: Data do not include ABTC transitional members. Weighted average refers to the average processing time weighted by the number of ABTC holders in the economy.
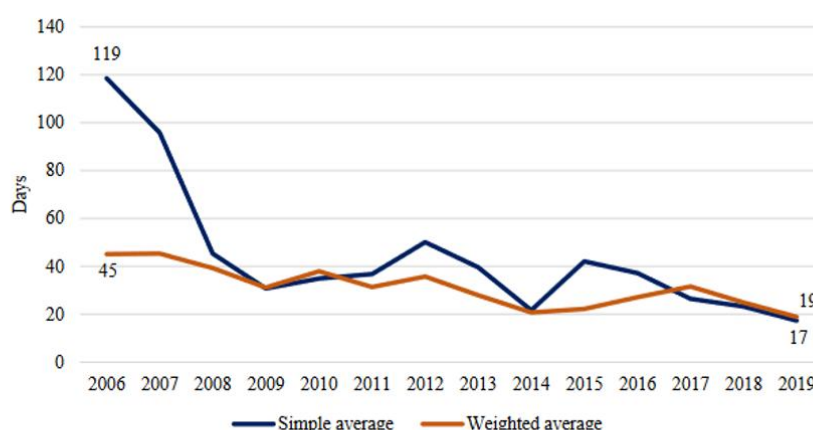Source: APEC Business Mobility Group data, APEC Policy Support Unit staff calculations.

Source: "APEC Connectivity Blueprint: The 2020 Mid-Term Review", p. 86[21]

In short, from 2015 to 2019, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the validity of the ABTC was expanded from three years to five years, and the overall number of cardholders grew, although many economies saw a decline in their cardholder numbers. In addition, the processing time for pre-clearance also decreased, enhancing the card's efficiency. A 2016 study found that 91% of ABTC cardholders were satisfied overall.[22]

5.7   The ABTC Scheme during the COVID-19 Pandemic Era (2020-2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on international business travel worldwide. To cope with this difficult situation, each economy imposed various types of temporary border restrictions, which had an impact on business travel. The following table shows the amount of business travel between 2018 and 2022 to each of the APEC economies. In most of the economies included below, the amount of travel abruptly decreased in 2020, hit its lowest point in 2021, and began to recover in 2022.

Table 5: Business & Professional Travel in APEC, 2018-2022 (Units: Thousands, N/A: data was not available)

Economy	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Australia	1,806	1,842	406	54	737
Brunei Darussalam	44	44	9	2	N/A
Canada	3,519	3,784	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chile	554	488	95	N/A	221
China	6,147	6,285	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hong Kong, China	3,937	3,033	N/A	N/A	N/A
Indonesia	3,455	3,519	2,552	717	595
Japan	1,795	1,757	216	18	422
Republic of Korea	237	253	46	40	108
Malaysia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mexico	2,002	1,891	498	574	1,142
New Zealand	446	499	102	22	144
Papua New Guinea	101	117	32	15	52
Peru	115	114	24	11	59
The Philippines	427	352	47	13	161
The Russian Federation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Singapore	2,617	2,461	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chinese Taipei	906	921	105	20	118
Thailand	2,057	2,044	242	44	N/A
United States	6,979	6,988	1,625	1,129	N/A
Viet Nam	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Tourism Statistics Database[23]

Creation of the Virtual ABTC (vABTC)

The vABTC officially launched in March 2021.[24] Australia was the first economy to transition to it.[25] The vABTC provides cardholders a digital method for accessing their ABTC through a smart device application. This virtual version functions the same as a physical card, while offering some enhanced benefits for cardholders, such as real-time data. The vABTC also applies additional security features, including secure login and user authentication[26]. The economies that have transitioned to the vABTC are summarized in the following table.

Table 6: Adoption of the Virtual ABTC

No.	Economy	Commencement Date
1	Australia	01 March 2021
2	Indonesia	01 April 2021
3	Thailand	01 May 2021
4	Peru	28 May 2021
5	Brunei Darussalam	30 June 2021
6	Chile	30 June 2021
7	Papua New Guinea	30 June 2021
8	New Zealand	02 August 2021
9	The Philippines	24 November 2021
10	Mexico	23 April 2023
11	Malaysia	24 October 2023
12	Viet Nam	25 October 2023
13	Japan	01 April 2024

Source: APEC BMG website[27]

Online Workshop on the ABTC Scheme

In September 2021, the BMG organized an online workshop to discuss the ABTC scheme. Some opportunities that were discussed included the expectations for the vABTC to reduce the time required for pre-clearance and minimize manual errors. At that time, China had already implemented an online application system, while Indonesia was in the process of developing a system to expedite the pre-clearance process.[28]

A pre-workshop survey and post-workshop survey were conducted as part of the workshop. The pre-workshop survey found that the most common priority from survey respondents was to "simplify the application and renewal process," followed by "capacity building to improve vABTC operations" and "ensure a widespread awareness."[29]

Table 7: Priorities to improve the ABTC in the 2021 workshop

In your opinion, what are the top 5 priorities to improve ABTC?

	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank
Simplify application and renewal process	29.06% (34)	29.06% (34)	17.09% (20)	17.09% (20)	77.69% (9)	3.55	1
Capacity building to improve VABTC operations	23.08% (27)	29.06% (34)	19.66% (23)	20.51% (24)	69% (9)	3.39	2
Ensure a widespread awareness	28.21% (33)	22.22% (26)	23.08% (27)	12.82% (15)	13.68% (16)	3.38	3
Additional benefits for VABTC holders	11.11% (13)	8.55% (10)	15.38% (18)	34.19% (40)	30.77% (36)	2.35	4
Expand eligibility to include high skilled workers and/or digital nomad	8.55% (10)	11.11% (13)	24.79% (29)	15.38% (18)	40.17% (47)	2.32	5

Source: "Capacity Building Workshop on Improving the Utilization of APEC Business Travel Card," p.18[30]

The 2021 workshop proposed the following recommendations:

- (i) Expediting and improving the application process by adopting advanced digital technology to simplify procedures and pre-clearance process

- (ii) Strengthening ABTC data and network infrastructure and improving system integrity and security towards a fully integrated travel passport

- (iii) Expanding ABTC utilization and benefit by creating a "second tier" visa card scheme for broader applicants including travelers from middle management of private companies, SME owners, and professionals

- (iv) Standardizing health and safety protocols among economies and considering the addition of more features for the virtual ABTC such as integrating a health passport, linking it for use in virtual e-wallet, etc.

- (v) Encouraging more economies to adopt the virtual ABTC and capacity-building activities to ensure successful practices of the virtual ABTC. [31]

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted business travel across the APEC region. Despite these challenges, there was progress on several fronts to improve the ABTC scheme, including discussions during the 2021 virtual workshop, and the creation of the vABTC, underscoring a trend toward digitalization.

5.8   The ABTC Scheme after the COVID-19 Pandemic Era (2023-present)

As the world enters the post-pandemic phase, business travel is rebounding to pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, there has been an increase in ABTC applications from 2023 to 2024. The transition to vABTC is ongoing, with Japan recently implementing it in April 2024. This section provides recent business travel landscape, the current situation and recent updates regarding the ABTC scheme.

Business Travel Trends
According to the Mastercard Economies Institute's annual report, "Travel Industry Trends 2023", global business travel has largely recovered, and corporate flight bookings in late 2022 and 2023 exceeded those seen in 2019 (Figure 3).[32]

Figure 4: Change in Global Commercial Flight Bookings vs Same Time in 2019
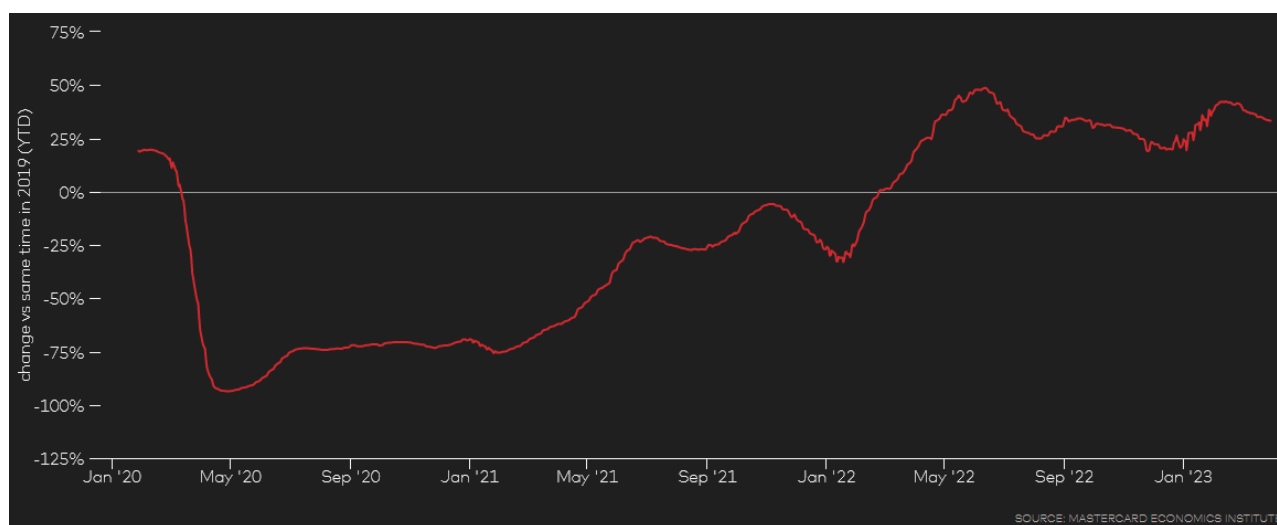
Source: "Travel Industry Trends 2023"[33]

Likewise, the "2023 Business Travel Index Outlook" published by the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) offers their estimates and forecasts regarding global business travel expenditures (see Figure 4 below). The estimated amount of budget spending in 2023 is almost at the level observed in 2019.

Figure 5: Global Business Travel Spend (USD Billions)
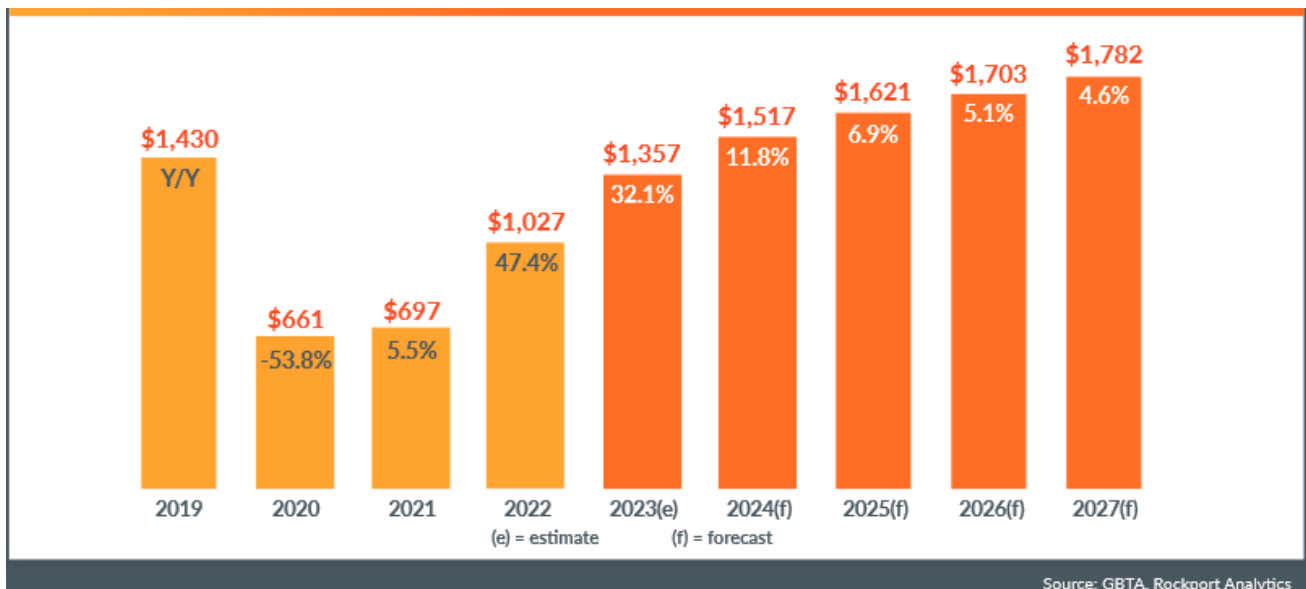
Source: "2023 Business Travel Index Outlook," p.6[34]

The GBTA's report shows that the Asia Pacific[35] region had a slow recovery for business travel spending in 2022. However, business travel in general, including the APEC region, has steadily recovered since 2022.

ABTC Actions & Figures

In the past two years, the ABTC has undergone several developments. Malaysia and Viet Nam started issuing the vABTC in October 2023, followed by Japan in April 2024.

The trends observed during the same period are shown in the next two figures on the following page. The first figure demonstrates that the number of foreign requests has steadily increased from 2023 to 2024.

Figure 6: Foreign Requests per Month- APEC Average
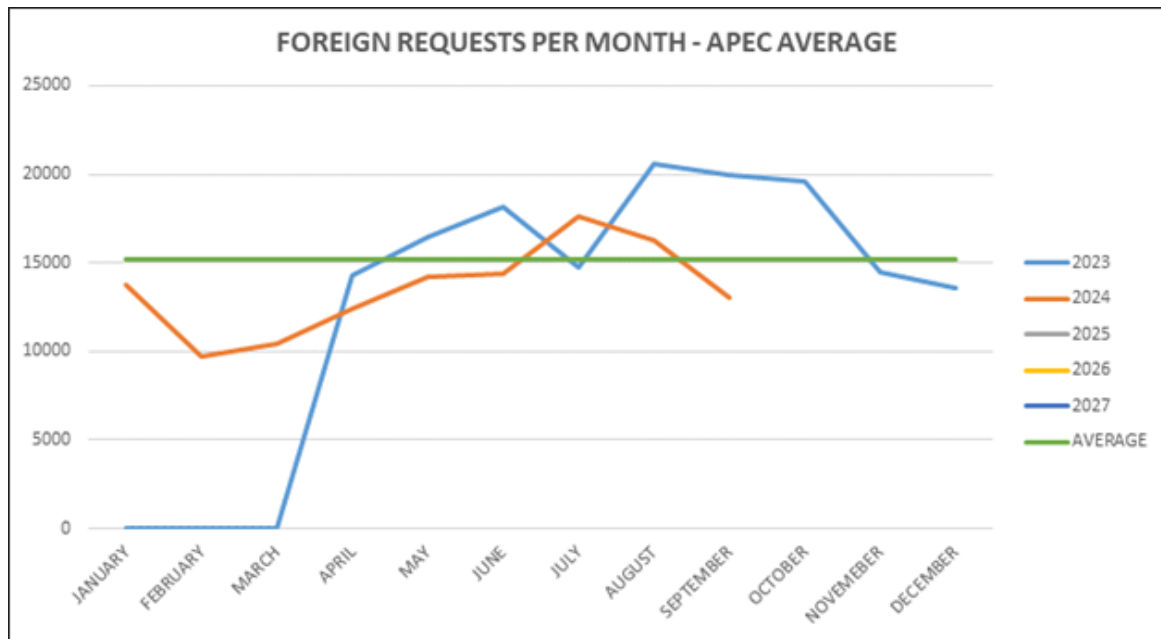
Source: provided by the Australian Department of Home Affairs (Project Overseer)

The number of active ABTC holders has also steadily increased from 2023 to 2024, as shown below.

Figure 7: Home Active per Month- APEC Average
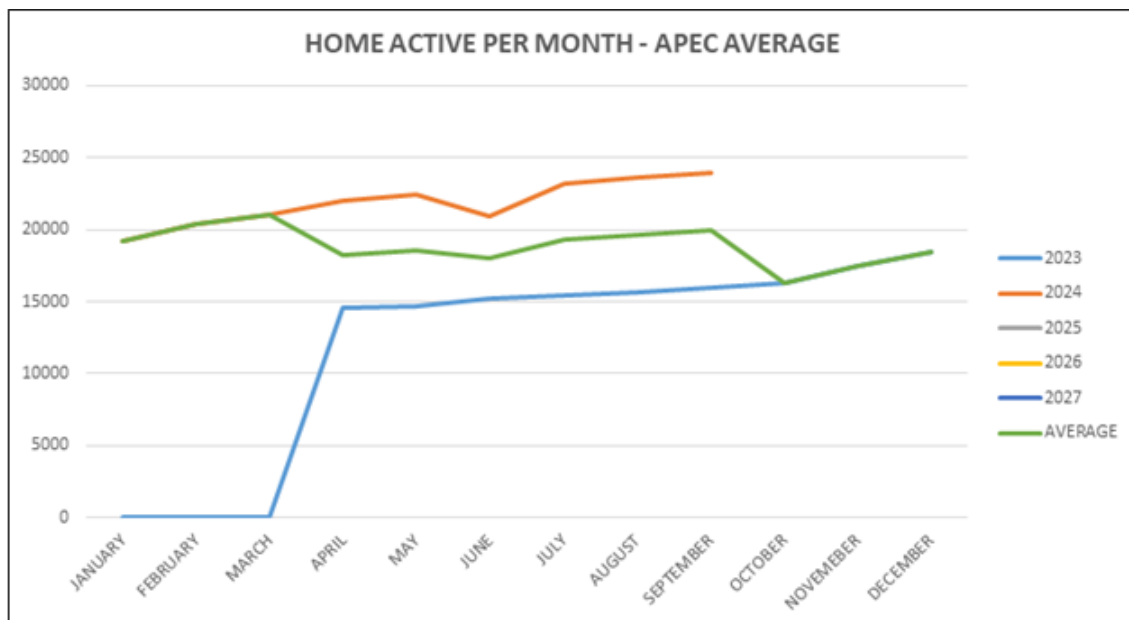
Source: provided by the Australian Department of Home Affairs (Project Overseer)[36]

As business travel continues its recovery and is expected to exceed pre-pandemic levels, the ABTC scheme has retained its appeal to business travelers, with growing numbers of card applications. These trends underscore the need to explore measures to further enhance ABTC's value.

6 Case Studies on ABTC Implementation

6.1 Overview

This section provides an outline of the implementation of the ABTC scheme and related efforts in Canada; Japan; Papua New Guinea; Peru; and the United States.

The case study economies were selected due to their representative nature of different economies across APEC (including geographic distribution, varying economic levels, a combination of large and small populations and geographic sizes), as well as their recent activities or challenges regarding the ABTC scheme.

Table 8: Overview of Case Study Economies

	Canada	United States	Japan	Papua New Guinea	Peru
Region	North America	North America	East Asia & Pacific	East Asia & Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean
Economic levels [37]	High income	High income	High income	Lower middle income	Upper middle income
Population Size (2023)	40,097,761	334,914,895	124,516,650	10,329,931	34,352,719
Geographical Size (km²)	9,984,670	9,833,517	377,727	462,840	1,285,216
ABTC Status	Transitional	Transitional	Full	Full	Full
Notable characteristics	The two transitional members of the ABTC scheme		The most recent economy to introduce the vABTC	Domestic industry associations are closely involved in the application process, and an early adopter of the vABTC	APEC host economy for 2024, and an early adopter of the vABTC

The following case study profiles reflect the information collected during the literature review along with interviews with ABTC officials and a business organization. The interview questionnaires were designed to cover the key topics related to this research project, such as the challenges in administering the ABTC scheme, recent activities, best practices, industry views on the ABTC, and key priorities moving forward.

All of the individuals quoted in this report were representing their economy or organization at a particular time, and the policies or procedures of economies may change over time.

Interviews were conducted with the following organizations:

Table 9: Interviewees from Case Study Economies

Economy	Organizations	Experts
Canada	Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)	Jovana Djermanovic, Policy Analyst, Trust Traveller Programs, Policy and Program Development Division
	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	Saman Fradette, Director, Migration Control and Horizonal Policy, Admissibility Branch
Japan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)	Tatsushi Ryosen-an, Principal Deputy Director, APEC Division, Economic Affairs Bureau
	Support Council for ABAC Japan (SCABAC-J)	Eiichiro Otsuka, Executive Director
Papua New Guinea	PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority	Karu Nao-Jiki, General Manager - Extension, ABTC & PR Branch, Visa, Passport & Work Permit Division; Dessie Timi, Manager for ABTC Dessie Timi, Manager, ABTC, Visa, Passport & Work Permit Division
	PNG Business Council	Chey Scovell, PNG ABAC representative, CEO of Manufacturers Council
Peru	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	César Augusto Recuenco Cardoso, Deputy Director of Consular Procedures of the MFA, and Executive Secretary of the Peruvian ABTC Scheme
	ComexPerú (ABAC Peru)	Guillermo Ferreyros, Peru ABAC member, CEO of Savia Peru, member of the Board of Directors at ComexPerú
United States	National Center for APEC (ABAC USA)	Nicole Vukonich, Policy Director, ABAC Coordinator, Financial Services, Health, Communications, National Center for APEC

6.2 Canada and the United States (Transitional Members)

	Canada	United States
Population (2023)	40,097,761 [38]	334,914,895 [39]
Geographical size (km²)	9,984,670 [40]	9,833,517 [41]
Overall travel (2019) *(000's)*	22,145 [42]	79,442 [43]
Business travel (2019) *(000's)*	3,809 [44]	13,743 [45]
Date of participation in ABTC scheme	2008/June 2014 (Transitional)	2007/2014 (Transitional)
Transition to Virtual ABTC	No	No
Key actors for ABTC scheme	Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA); Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

Overview

Canada and United States are transitional members in the ABTC scheme. Transitional members do not grant pre-clearance to foreign ABTC applicants, and foreign economies do not grant pre-clearance to transitional member applicants. While all cardholders can use APEC fast-track lanes, separate applications for visa or entry permits are required for cardholders travelling to or from transitional economies.

Canada and the United States also share several interrelated components in their implementation of the ABTC application system. ABTC applicants must first apply for, or be an existing member of, one of the following US Trusted Traveler Programs (TTP):

- Canadians and Americans
  - o NEXUS [46], a system that is designed to speed up border crossings into Canada and the United States (US) for low-risk, pre-approved travelers.
- Americans
  - o Global Entry [47] – streamlined international arrival process for travelers to the U.S.
  - o SENTRI [48] (Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection) streamlined international arrival process for travelers from Mexico to the US

NEXUS is jointly run by the CBSA and CBP. Applicants create an account in the CBP TTP System to proceed. NEXUS memberships are valid for five years (the same period as the ABTC), and there is a USD50 application processing fee.

Global Entry and SENTRI are run by CBP. As above, applicants create an account in CBP's Trusted Traveller Program System. Global Entry and SENTRI memberships are both valid for five years, and require USD100 and USD122.25 application processing fees respectively.

TTP applicants visit an Enrollment Center for an interview, and the ABTC application requires providing a digitized signature. If applicants apply for TTP and ABTC at the same time, they only need to visit the Enrollment Center once and can do the interview and signature at the same time. Enrollment Centers are located across Canada (10) and the US (91), many of them at international airports. [49]

Dependent on the location and time of year, the wait time for an Enrollment Center appointment can range from a couple days to a few weeks. Verifying the business need for an ABTC requires an in-person interview in which additional supporting business documentation may need to be presented.

Once an application is approved for the ABTC, the applicant will receive their card by mail,[50] typically within two to three weeks.[51] The card costs USD70, and is valid for five years, unless the cardholder's passport and/or TTP membership expires first.[52][53] ABTC renewals for both economies are also conducted through the TTP System.

6.2.1 Canada

Implementation of the ABTC Scheme

Canada launched its ABTC pilot program on 16 June 2014, and there are 2,066 ABTC holders in Canada as of June 2024.[54] Canadian cardholders must still present all required documents such as passports, visas and permits at border control when using their ABTC.[55] All ABTC holders can use the APEC fast-track line at eight major airports (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax) in Canada.[56]

Recent Activities

Canada is modernizing its border and immigration processes through a Traveller Modernization Initiative. For example:

- an Advance Declaration tool allowing travelers to submit a customs and immigration declaration in advance of flying into Canada.

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) undertaking an important digital platform modernization project.

- a new "client experience platform," which will allow applicants to access all of IRCC's programs and services and to interact with the Department in a centralized location. The platform was built under contracts with Salesforce Canada Corp (USD10.5 million) and Accenture Inc (USD74.9 million).[57] The platform was scheduled to release its first application intake in June 2024 to a limited subset of temporary resident visa clients, including some business visitors.[58]

- Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) seeking to introduce a shift away from primarily paper-based application processes and document issuance towards the issuance of digital visas and immigration permits that can be securely validated by third parties.[59]

- a biometrically anchored digital travel credential (DTC) to facilitate international mobility for Canadian passport holders and visitors to Canada. It can be transmitted ahead of travel and verified along the travel continuum with facial recognition instead of physical document checks.[60]

6.2.2 United States

Implementation of the ABTC Scheme

The APEC Act of 2011 authorized the US ABTC Program and set eligibility criteria. The US began processing US ABTC applications in June 2014, and there are 31,300 US ABTC

cardholders as of June 2024. The program was initially set to run through September 2018; however, the APEC Act of 2017 made the program permanent. The US ABTC Program accepts applications from members of the major CBP "trusted traveler programs" (TTPs): Global Entry, NEXUS, and SENTRI.[61] The application process for these programs includes a comprehensive vetting process, including reviews of Homeland Security and criminal databases.[62]

In addition to the requirement to be a member of a TTP program, US ABTC applicants must also demonstrate that they are either a verified business person or a US government official who is actively engaged with APEC business.[63]

At present, CBP processes approximately 11,000 US ABTC applications per year, of which approximately 350 are rejected, mostly due to questions over the legitimacy of the applicant's business need for the card. Approximately 55% of current applicants are male.

The National Center for APEC (NCAPEC) serves as the Secretariat for U.S. ABAC and reports that among their members, US cardholders highly value the fast-track lane access that ABTC provides, which saves many hours of waiting in APEC airport immigration lines. However, knowledge of the ABTC scheme in the US business community remains low. Most applicants learn of the scheme via word of mouth from current cardholders. NCAPEC also noted that it would be helpful for awareness-building efforts to clarify who operates the ABTC scheme, since they occasionally receive requests and inquiries about the status of ABTC applications, which they have no control over.

One issue commonly faced by US cardholders is the unpredictability regarding whether fast-track lane immigration staff at APEC airports will accept their ABTC cards, since transitional cards do not have any pre-cleared economies listed on the card, unlike fully participating economies. Reportedly the cards are usually accepted without issue, but sometimes the cardholder is challenged about the lack of pre-cleared economies specified on the card, which can cause delays. This suggests that more should be done to build border staff awareness regarding the unique nature of transitional member ABTC cards.[64]

In terms of future improvements to ABTC, the National Center for APEC would welcome the convenience of a virtual card, so that it would always be up to date and could not be lost but recognizes the unlikelihood of this as a transitional member. NCAPEC also noted a previous idea to enhance the ABTC card by including vaccine information, although this has become largely irrelevant since economies have removed their COVID-19 vaccination requirements for travelers.

Recent Activities

CBP has introduced technological enhancements to the Global Entry arrival process, which can be used by US ABTC cardholders. Starting in 2020,[65] CBP has been steadily expanding the implementation of Global Entry Touchless Portals at U.S. airports. These kiosks use biometric facial comparison technology to reduce physical touchpoints and expedite member processing.[66]

For travelers who do not participate in ABTC or US TTP programs, CBP's Mobile Passport Control (MPC) program has also been expanding to provide an alternate means of expediting processing for travelers arriving at US airports. MPC allows eligible travelers to submit their travel document, photo, and customs declaration information through a free,

secure app on their smartphone or other mobile device. As a result, travelers may experience shorter wait times, less congestion and efficient processing. Unlike TTP, the use of MPC does not require pre-approval. Originally launched in August 2014 and now available at 51 US airports, the MPC app is expected be available to travelers flying into all 77 US international airports by the end September 2024.[67]

6.3 Japan

Population (2023)	124,516,650[68]
Geographical size (km²)	377,727 [69]
Overall travel (2019) *(000's)*	3,832 [70]
Business travel (2019) *(000's)*	422 [71]
Date of participation in ABTC scheme	2002[72]
Transition to Virtual ABTC	April 2024[73]
Key actors for ABTC scheme	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

Implementation of the ABTC Scheme

Japan has issued almost 100,000 ABTCs since joining the ABTC scheme in 2002. ABTC fast-track lanes are available at several major international airports in Japan.[74]

The number of applications has increased drastically after the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in the following table. This surge in applications was so high that in December 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Japan warned applicants that it was dealing with significant delays in issuing and delivering ABTC cards due to the rapid increase in the number of ABTC applications at the time.[75] In 2024, there has been an approximately 80% increase in the number of applicants from January through May 2024, compared to the same months in 2023.[76]

Table 10: Number of ABTC applications from 2016 to 2023[77]

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number	7,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	3,300	3,400	10,000	21,000

In 2023, the domestic pre-clearance took four to six months, and the verification from other economies took an extra three to four months, resulting in about nine months from ABTC application to issuance in Japan. To resolve this lengthy process, the MOFA increased staffing and asked other staff in other work areas to assist the process, leading to a smoother application process.[78]

Overall, 86% of cardholders are new applicants, and 14% are repeat applicants (those who have made more than two applications). The cardholders are predominantly male (male 91.5% vs female 8.4%). As the following table summarizes, individuals from manufacturing companies constitute the highest percentage of ABTC applicants, followed by those working at trading companies and real-estate companies.[79]

Table 11: ABTC applicants by industry category during 2021 and 2023[80]

Percentage	Industry category
54%	Manufacturing companies
24%	Trading companies
7%	Real-estate companies
3%	Retail companies
3%	Construction companies
2%	Finance and Insurance companies
7%	Other type

Japanese ABTC applicants need to submit a designated online application form. Each individual must then buy a revenue stamp of JPY (Japanese Yen) 13,000 and send it via mail to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) within two weeks from submitting the online application. If a Japanese person residing abroad wants to acquire a card, the person needs to ask someone in Japan (e.g., a family member or a colleague) to submit the revenue stamp and necessary documents on behalf of the applicant. [81]

Japan transitioned to the vABTC in April 2024.[82] This is the most recent transition to the vABTC, in the APEC region. Japan now issues the vABTC, and does not issue physical ABTCs. After receiving a notification email that informs them of the successful issuance of the ABTC, cardholders access the card on the vABTC app. The whole process takes around two or three months.[83]

Employees from member companies of four business associations (Keidanren, Keizai Doyukai, Kansai Economic Federation, and the Chamber of Commerce) have streamlined documentation requirements. They are exempt from providing a Commercial Register and a company's financial documents.[84]

Recent Activities

The number of foreign applicants to Japan increased from 81,000 (2022) to over 200,000 (2023). Despite this surge, Japan reduced the time for the application processing from 80 days to 21 days.[85]

Japan has also undertaken recent measures regarding public awareness of the ABTC scheme:

- MOFA improved the content of its website to increase public awareness.
- MOFA conducted an online lecture for economic groups in March 2024, shortly before the introduction of the vABTC.
- MOFA has been holding regular meetings with the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to discuss the ministry's plans for the ABTC and to maintain close ties. [86]

ABAC Japan plays a significant role in promoting the ABTC scheme. ABAC Japan includes a link on their homepage that directly connects with MOFA's ABTC website. Additionally, ABAC Japan hosts two sessions every half year for ABAC members, where invited speakers from MOFA and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) occasionally deliver presentations, and MOFA often mentions the ABTC scheme during these presentations.[87]

This year, Japan has been implementing an integrated kiosk pilot project where travelers can simultaneously submit their passport information, biometric data, and declarations at a single kiosk. This pilot is currently being undertaken at Terminal 2, Haneda Airport.[88]

6.4 Papua New Guinea

Population (2023)	10,329,931 [89]
Geographical size (km²)	462,840 [90]
Overall travel (2019) *(000's)*	69 [91]
Business travel (2019) *(000's)*	52 [92]
Date of participation in ABTC scheme	2003 [93]
Transition to Virtual ABTC	June 2021 [94]
Key actors for ABTC scheme	Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority (ICSA); approved business organizations for PNG citizen applicants (PNG Business Council, PNG Chamber of Commerce, PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum, PNG Fisheries Association, PNG Forestry Association)[95]

Implementation of the ABTC Scheme

The number of ABTC holders has been gradually increasing with 284 (predominantly male) cardholders. The Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority is collaborating with the PNG Business Council, an industry body that endorses the ABTC applications in Papua New Guinea (PNG), to raise awareness of the ABTC scheme.[96]

Applications must be lodged at the Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority head office in the Central Government Office, Waigani.[97] As part of the application process, applicants lodge the completed application, and pay a Migration Service Fee of PNG Kina (PGK) 400. The application package includes the official receipt and documentary evidence that the cardholder is a legitimate business person.[1] There are specific requirements for government ministers or officials applying for the ABTC.[2]

Recent Activities

Papua New Guinea transitioned to the vABTC in June 2021.[98]

The domestic application processing takes fewer than five days, which the Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority attributed to the relatively few number of applications compared to other economies.

The Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority is in discussion with the PNG Business Council about new ways to encourage applications from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The PNG Business Council

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[1] Documentary evidence includes a supporting letter from an approved business organization, Investment Promotion Authority (IPA) registration documents (where applicable), a valid passport, and two passport sized photos.

[2] Government ministers or officials must submit a formal letter from the relevant section that deals with the affairs of Members of Parliament/Cabinet Ministers; a supporting letter from the Police Commissioner; a completed ABTC application form; a copy of their biographic data page in their current official passport; provide a Migration Service Fee of PGK400 with an official receipt from the Finance Cash Office; and an ID-sized photo.

is also interested in opportunities to improve the ABTC to better accommodate dual-citizens who have multiple passports, since they tend to face more difficulties in applying for the ABTC, and at border control.[99]

6.5 Peru

Population (2023)	34,352,719 [100]
Geographical size (km²)	1,285,216 [101]
Overall travel (2019) *(000's)*	2,009 [102]
Business travel (2019) *(000's)*	59 [103]
Date of participation in ABTC scheme	2001 [104]
Transition to Virtual ABTC	May 2021 [105]
Key actors for ABTC scheme	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); ComexPerú; authorized business entities

Implementation of the ABTC Scheme
The number of new cardholders is on average 700-800 per year, except for 2021 when the number drastically decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[106]

Table 12: Number of ABTC requests and eligible applicants from 2021 to 2024[107]

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024 (1 January to 4 July)**
Requests	466	786	755	374
Eligible	445	737	720	345

Most cardholders (~71.5%) are male. Approximately 70% of applicants hold senior positions (high-ranking officers), and the age of cardholders ranges between 30 and 70 years old. The most common industry categories for ABTC holders are mining, oil and gas, trade, retail services, and tourism services.[108]

Peruvian ABTC applicants complete an eligibility form[109], and pay an application fee of Peruvian Sol (PEN) 260.00.[110] Applications must be submitted physically at one of the 13 offices in 13 provinces.[111]

Eight business associations[112] play a role as authorized business entities that may provide sponsorship for the card as part of the ABTC application process: [113] Among these organizations, ComexPerú (which is also the home of ABAC Peru) plays a vital role by providing comprehensive and customized services for issuing ABTCs, and has a dedicated office for managing these processes.[114]

Recent Activities
Peru was one of the early adopters of the virtual ABTC scheme, having transitioned to the vABTC in May 2021.[115] Peru also provides a very smooth review process for pre-clearance requests from other economies, typically completing foreign applications within 15 days.

Peru is the host economy for APEC in 2024, and has set the following priorities relevant to the ABTC scheme:

- Trade and investment for inclusive and interconnected growth

- Innovation and digitalization to promote transition to the formal and global economy

7 Survey Findings

7.1 Survey Methodology

This study conducted a pair of surveys to examine the current implementation of the ABTC scheme in each economy. One survey was provided to officials responsible for the operation of the ABTC scheme (ABTC offices) in all APEC economies. The other survey was provided to business associations that play a valuable role in the ABTC application process as screening or certification organizations, or the economy's ABAC office in the economies where the business associations do not play a role.

The surveys covered the following four key topic areas:

1. Organization and cardholder data
2. Status of ABTC implementation
3. Changes to the ABTC scheme
4. Future research areas

The following sections include an analysis of the survey responses. Some survey items were omitted due to overlapping topics or a lack of definitive responses.

7.2 Results – Government Officials

The government survey received responses from the 14 economies listed below.

Table 13: Government Survey Responses

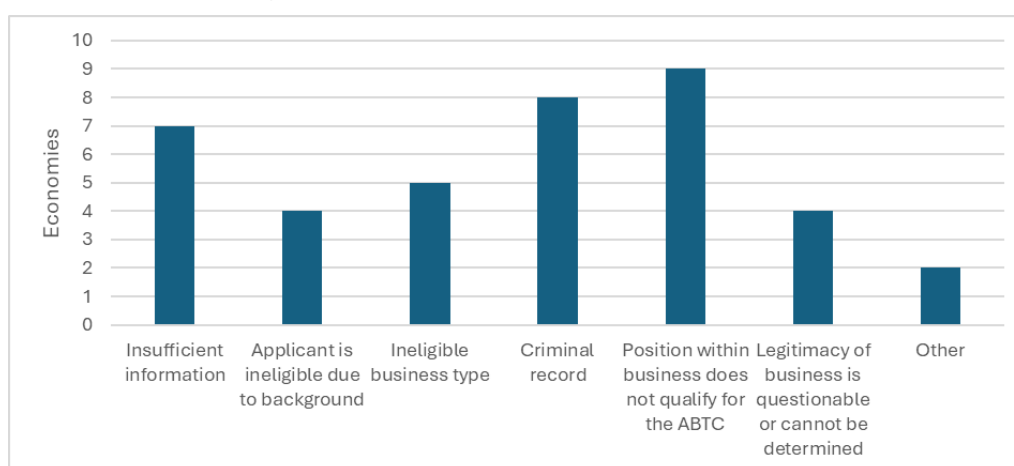| Economy |
| --- |
| Australia |
| People's Republic of China |
| Indonesia |
| Japan |
| Mexico |
| New Zealand |
| Papua New Guinea |
| Peru |
| The Republic of the Philippines |
| The Russian Federation |
| Singapore |
| Chinese Taipei |
| United States |
| Viet Nam |

7.2.1 Cardholder Data

This sub-section summarizes the survey results related to ABTC cardholder data.

7.2.1.1 ABTC Home Economy Applications and Rejections

The survey requested data from economies on the number of applications that are processed and rejected. Overall, economies approve 95% or more of ABTC applications. The most common reason for rejections was "position within business does not qualify for ABTC," followed by "criminal record" and "insufficient information." This underscores the importance of clear instructions and shared rules/requirements for applicants, and that these documents should be easily accessible on the application documents/websites.

Figure 8: Top Reasons for Rejections[116]

7.2.1.2 Growth of the ABTC from 2022-2024

The following figure summarizes the growth rate of ABTC holders in the post-pandemic era (2022-present). Six out of 14 economies have experienced significant growth of 11% or more, and six economies experienced 6-10% growth in cardholders. This trend reflects the recovery of business travel after the pandemic period.

Figure 9: The current trend for the number of active ABTC cardholders since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic period (approx. 2022-present)
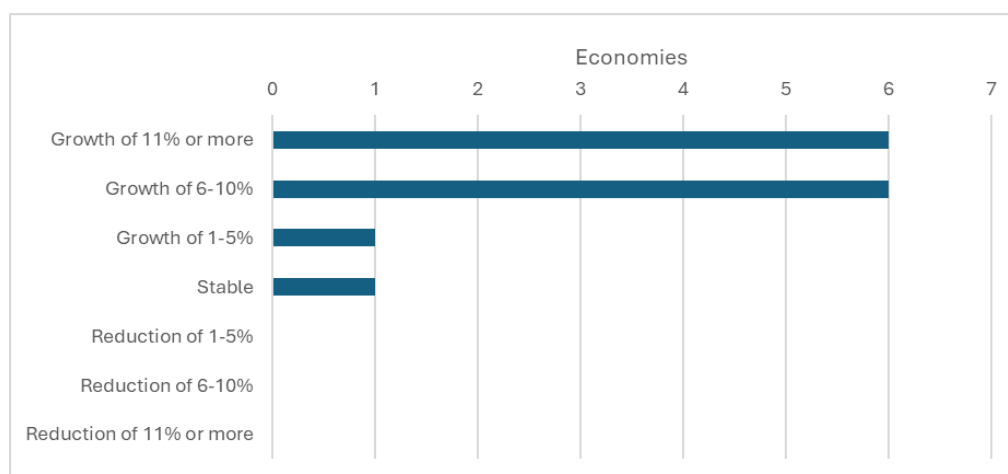
7.2.1.3 Seniority of Cardholders

Most cardholders are management-level staff, although about half of the responding economies (six out of 14) responded either 'Not known' or 'Other'. This suggests the need for more consistent data collection across economies to better understand the client base.

Figure 10: The approximate level of seniority of most cardholders
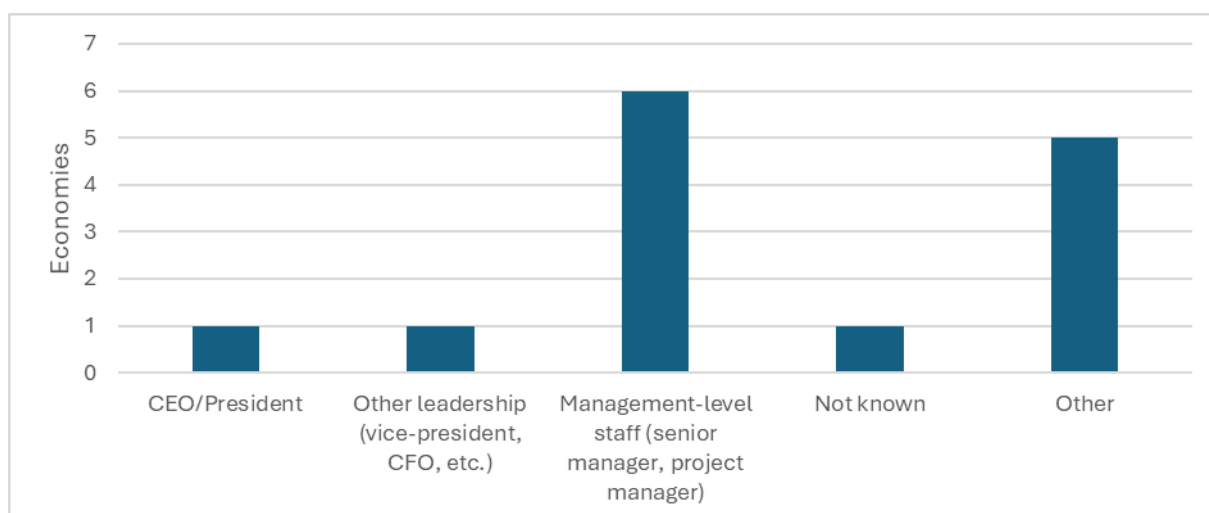
7.2.1.4 Cardholder Travel

The following figure shows that cardholders typically make at least two to three trips within the APEC region per year, and many make four to six or more than seven trips annually. Importantly, six of the responding economies do not collect data about cardholders' average travel frequency within the APEC region. It could be valuable to begin collecting this data at the time of renewals.

Figure 11: The average frequency of travel within the APEC region for most cardholders
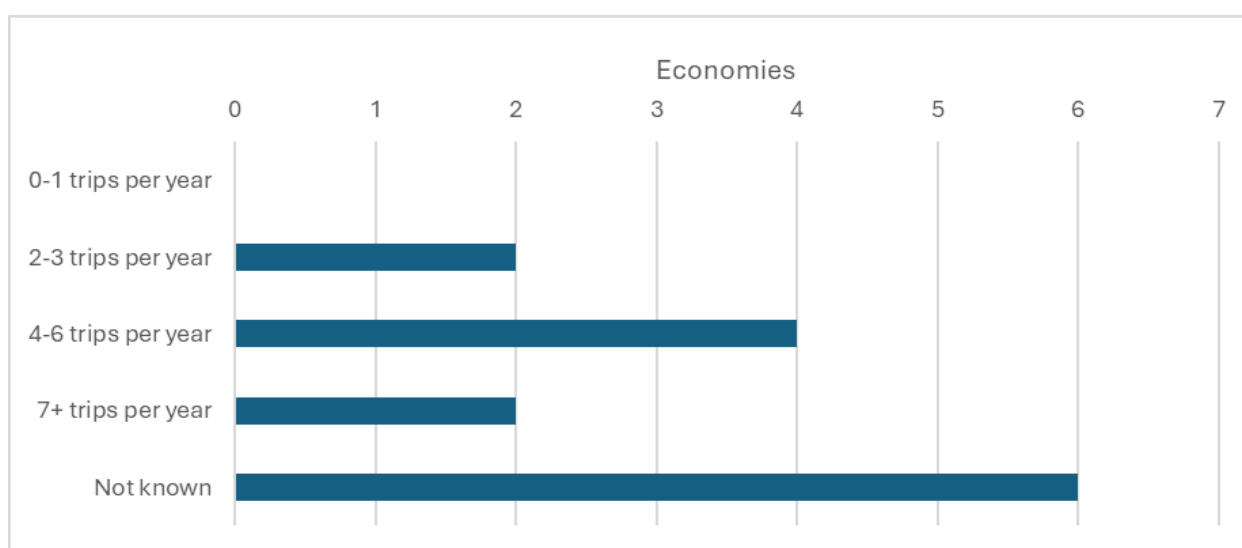
The following figure summarizes the top destinations for ABTC holders in the APEC region. A total of 15 economies were noted as priority economies, which reflects the wide range of active movement by cardholders in the APEC region. China (eight economies); Australia and Japan (six economies each) were the most popular cited destinations.

Figure 12: The Top priority economies for cardholders from APEC economies
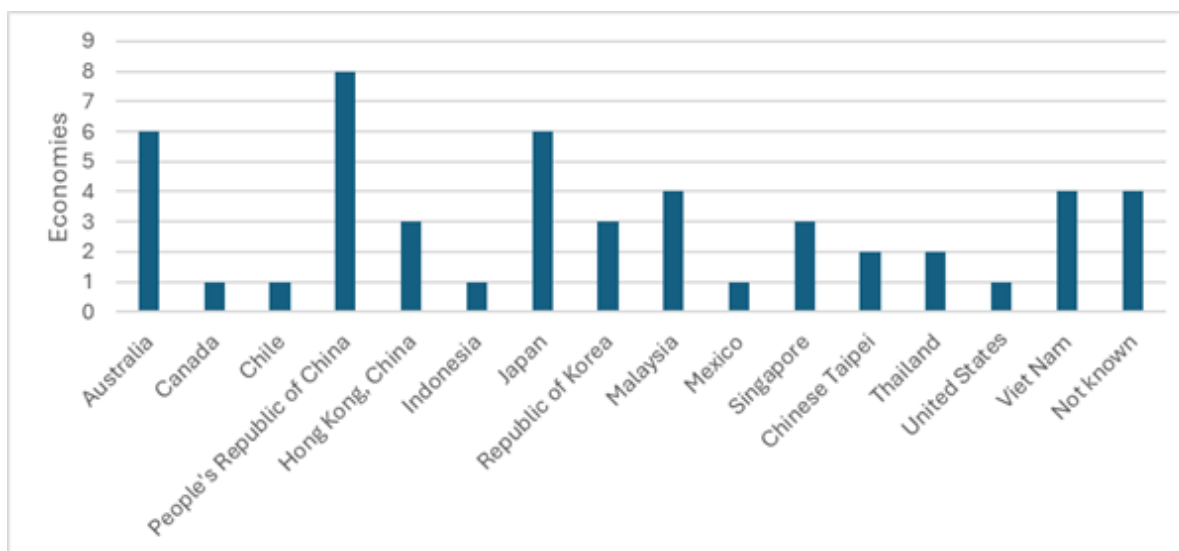
7.2.1.5 Balance of Male and Female Cardholders

The following figure provides the approximate male and female balance of applicants. It shows a low number of female applicants (10 out of 14 responding economies had a majority of male cardholders). This data suggests that there may be opportunities to increase the number of female applicants for the ABTC through outreach.

Figure 13: The approximate male and female balance of most cardholders
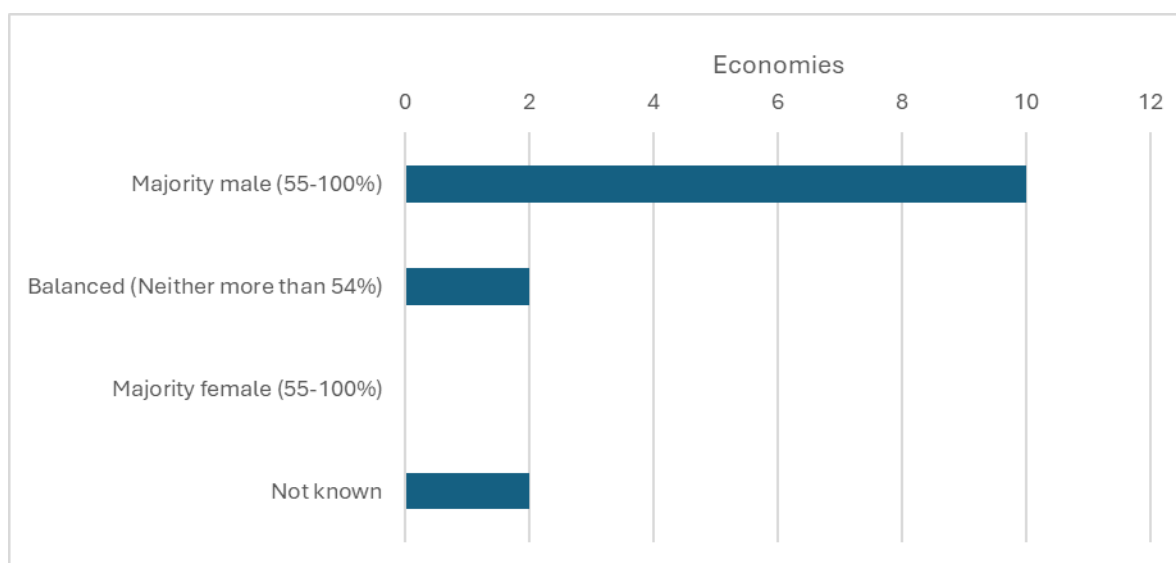
7.2.1.6 Percentage of Cardholders from SMEs

Although small and medium enterprises (SMEs) constitute more than 97% of companies within the APEC region, most economies do not have many ABTC holders from SMEs. In addition, six responding economies selected 'Not known', underscoring the need to collect more data.

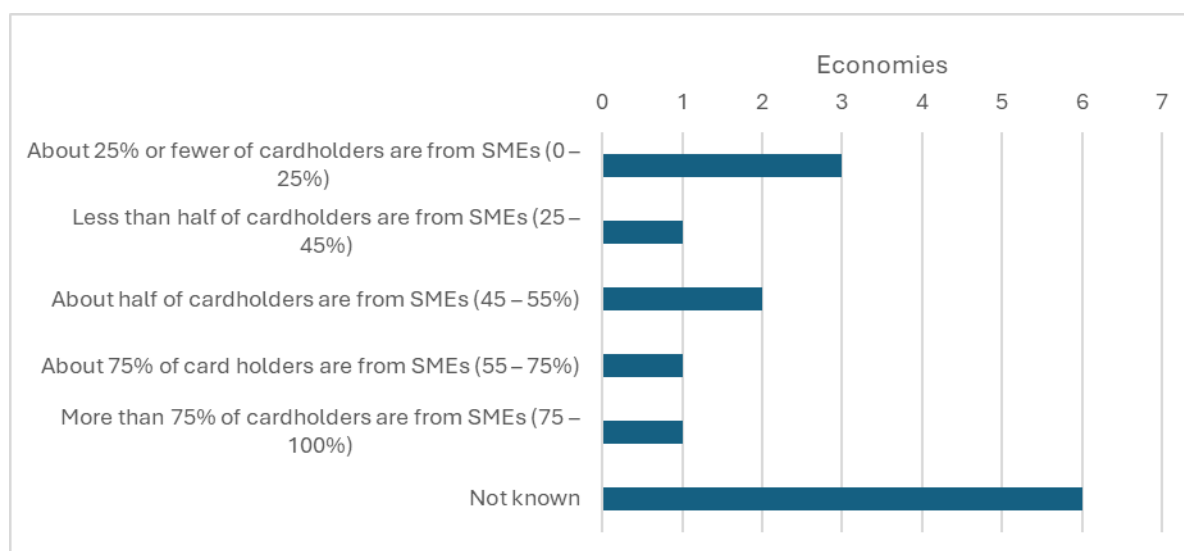Figure 14: The approximate representation of SMEs among cardholders

7.2.2 ABTC Applications and Renewals

The survey collected responses from governments regarding the feedback that they received from cardholders about topics such as application processing times and the general tone of feedback from ABTC holders. The responses are described below.

7.2.2.1 Processing time to receive an ABTC

The required time for applicants to receive their ABTCs varies significantly across economies. As the following figure illustrates, while five responding economies process ABTC within two weeks, three economies take four to eight weeks and other three do eight to12 weeks. The primary reasons for delays in processing card applications or renewals were:

- Manual processing of applications and renewals;
- The lengthy pre-clearance approval process in a single economy will affect all of the other economies;
- Learning how to use the ABTC system properly

Figure 15: Approximate processing time for cardholders to receive their ABTC[117]
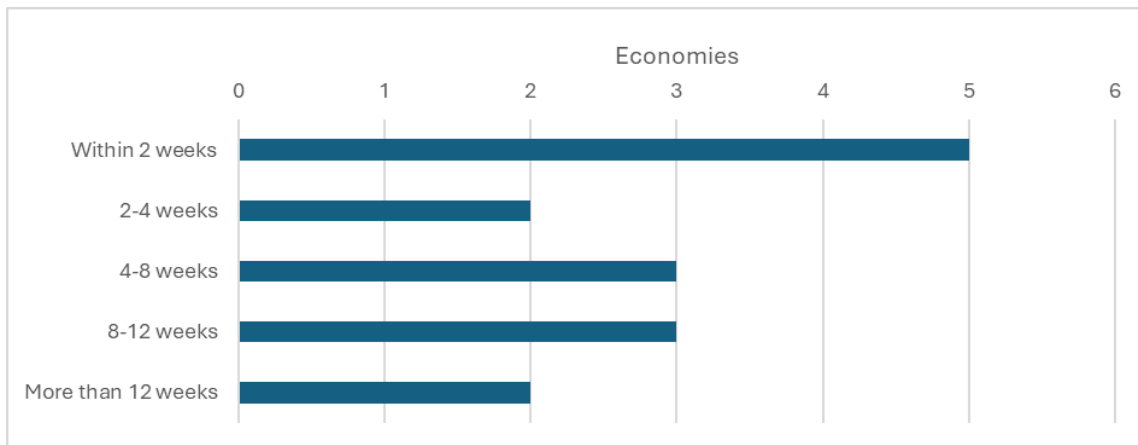
The general tone of feedback from cardholders about the speed of the ABTC application and vetting process was mixed, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 16: General tone of feedback from cardholders regarding the speed of the ABTC application and vetting process
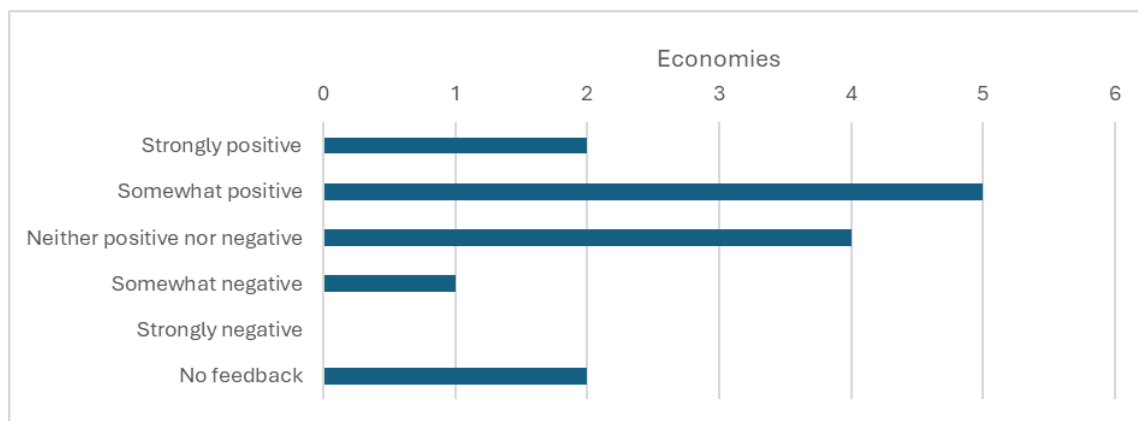
7.2.3 Technology and the ABTC

According to the survey responses, border e-gates are the most likely technology to have an impact on the ABTC scheme in the next one-five years. Respondents also highlighted the potential for AI applications and biometric technologies to impact the scheme.

Figure 17: Technologies expected to have an impact on the ABTC scheme
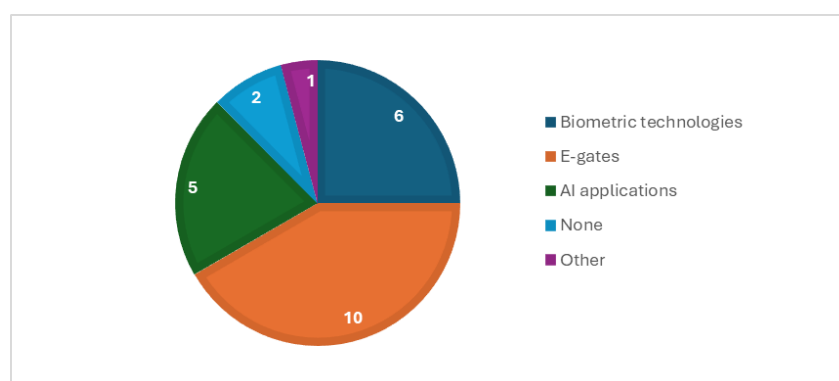
7.2.4 Changes to the ABTC Scheme

This sub-section explores the possible changes that should be made to the ABTC scheme, collected from government officials' responses. The top items noted for consideration were to shorten the time needed for card application/renewal and to improve communication through the ABTC system. Two respondents chose "other" and stated that "Improving technology (ABTC platform)" and "Include foreigners with permanent residence in our territory."

Figure 18: Highest priorities for improvement for the ABTC
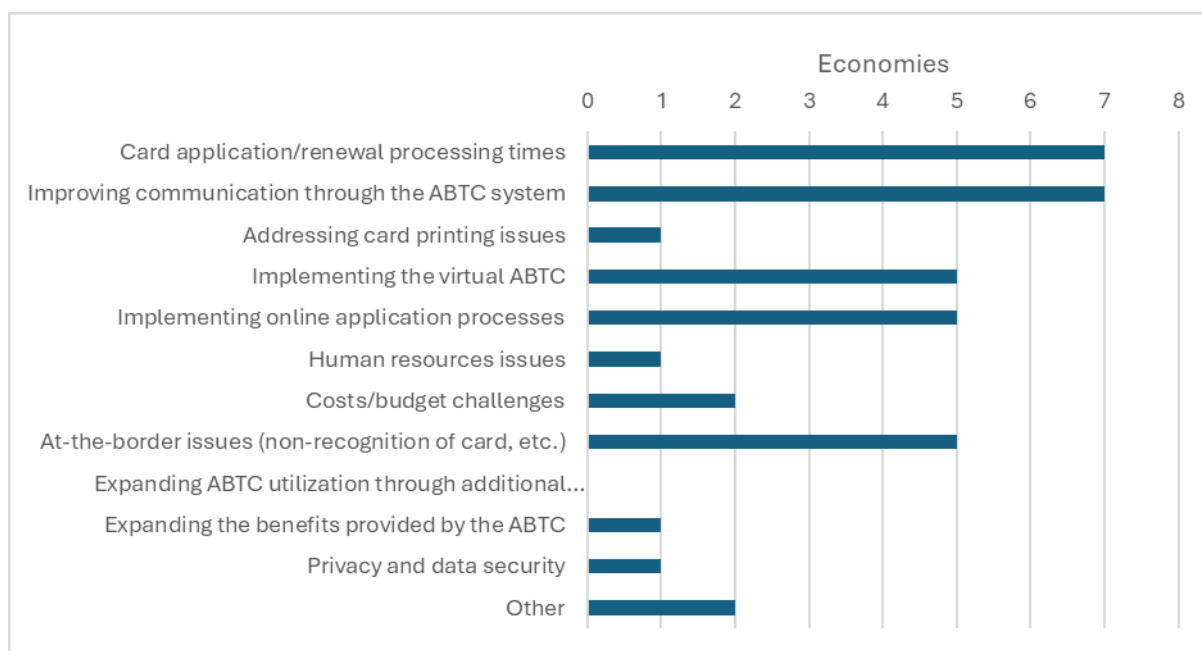
As shown below, 11 out of the 14 responding economies agree that it would be significantly beneficial for their cardholders if the two transitional member economies were to become full members.

Figure 19: Transitional members (the US and Canada) become fully participating economies (Blue: Yes, Orange: No, Green: Unsure)
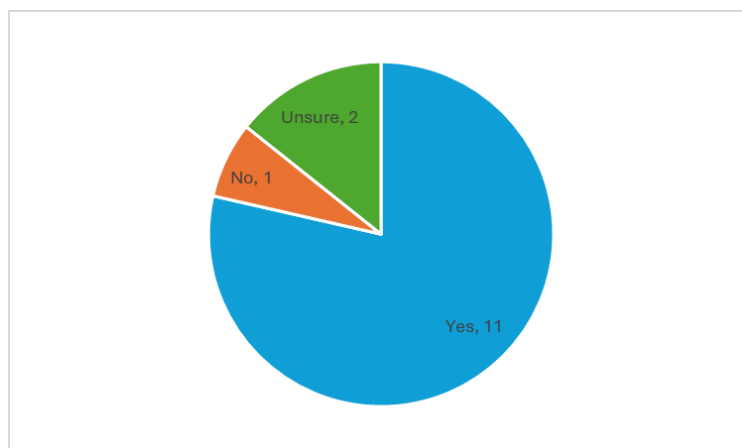
7.3 Results – Industry Associations

This section summarizes the notable findings from a targeted survey of 39 industry associations in the APEC economies. The survey collected eight responses from six economies (Malaysia [2]; New Zealand; Peru; Singapore; the Republic of the Philippines [2]; Viet Nam).

7.3.1 Cardholder Data

This sub-section summarizes the survey results related to ABTC cardholder data, including the level of seniority, the average frequency of travel within the APEC region, and the approximate male and female balance of most cardholders.

7.3.1.1 Seniority of Cardholders

Compared with the government survey, the responding industry organizations' cardholders are more likely to be at the CEO/President-level.

Figure 20: The approximate level of Seniority of most cardholders
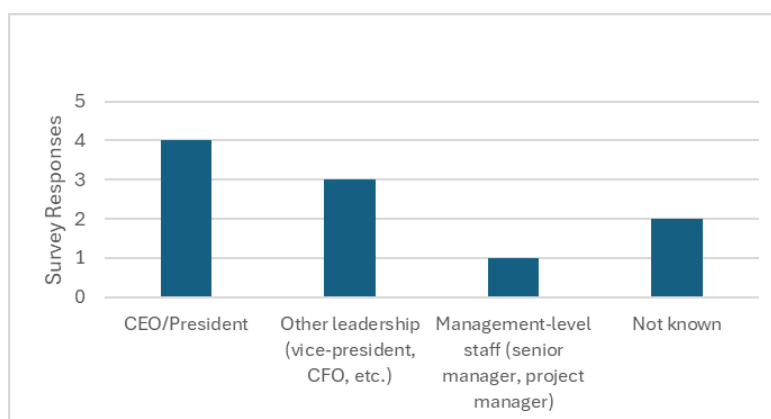
7.3.1.2 Cardholder Travel

Most cardholders take around four to six trips per year.

Figure 21: Average frequency of travel within the APEC region for most cardholders
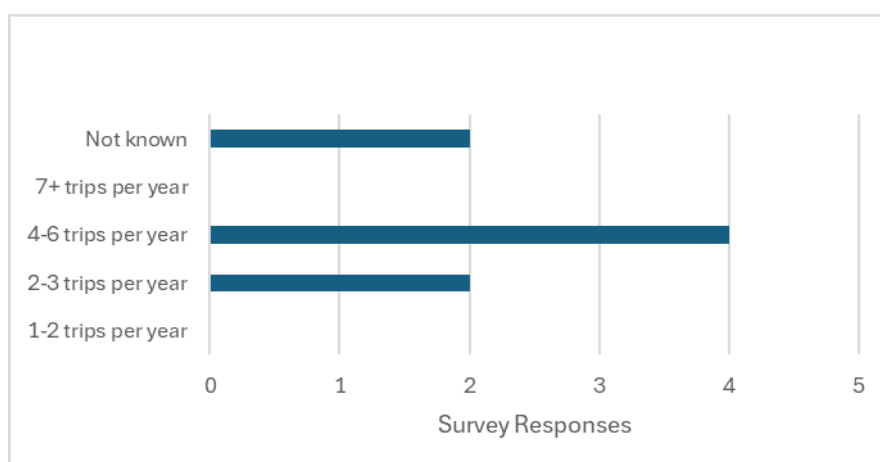
The following figure shows the top priority economies for cardholders in respective economies. All the respondents/economies selected China, underscoring its importance in regional trade and the relative lack of bilateral visa arrangements. Similar to the government survey responses, Australia and Japan were also listed as priority destinations.

Figure 22: The top priority economies for cardholders
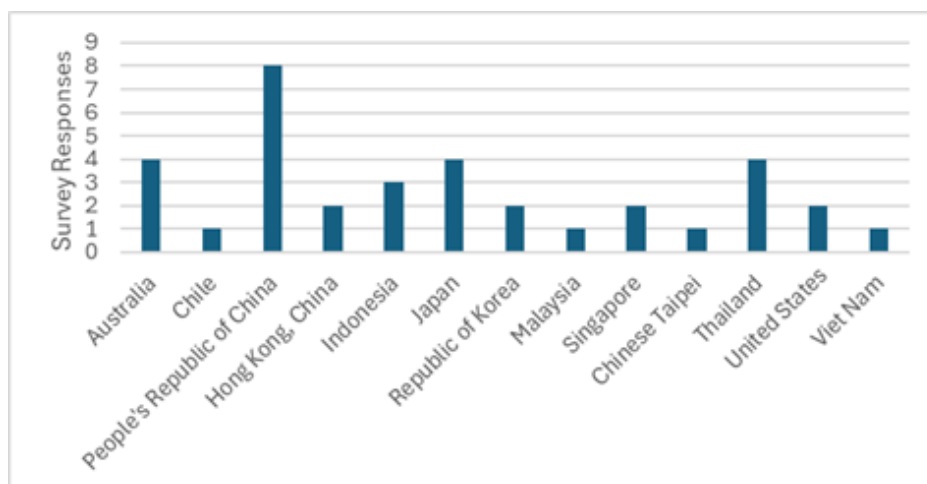
7.3.1.3 Balance of Male and Female Cardholders

Men constitute the majority of ABTC holders, underscoring the opportunities for outreach to women businesspersons.
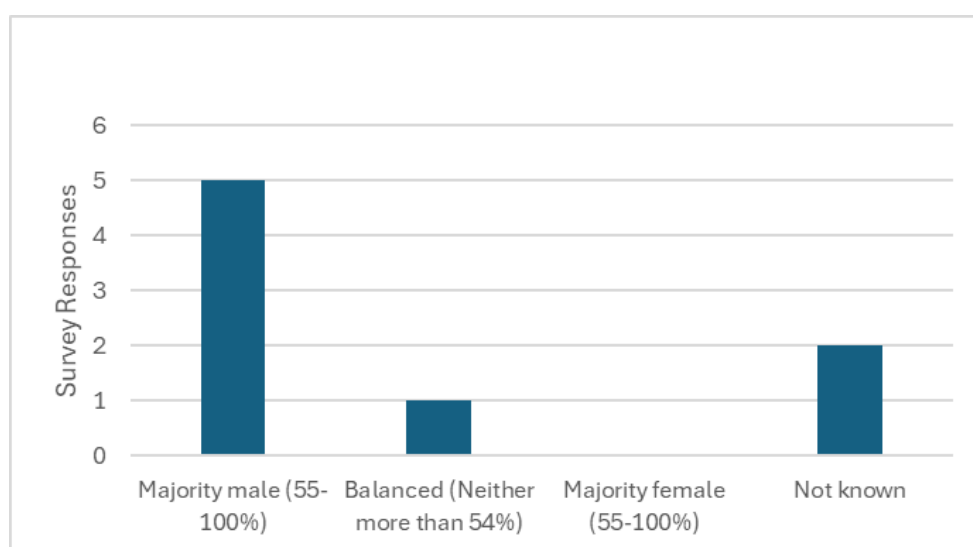
Figure 23: The approximate male and female balance of most cardholders

7.3.2 Status of ABTC Implementation

This sub-section summarizes the status of ABTC implementation in APEC economies.

7.3.2.1 Processing time to receive an ABTC

The survey asked the approximate processing time for cardholders in respective respondent's economy to receive their ABTC once they have submitted their application. The approximate time for most applicants to receive their ABTC, including both domestic

processing and the full preclearance process, is eight weeks or more. This lengthy process delays applicants' access to benefits from the ABTC scheme and possibly could impact their business travel and investment activities.

Figure 24: Approximate processing time for cardholders to receive their ABTC
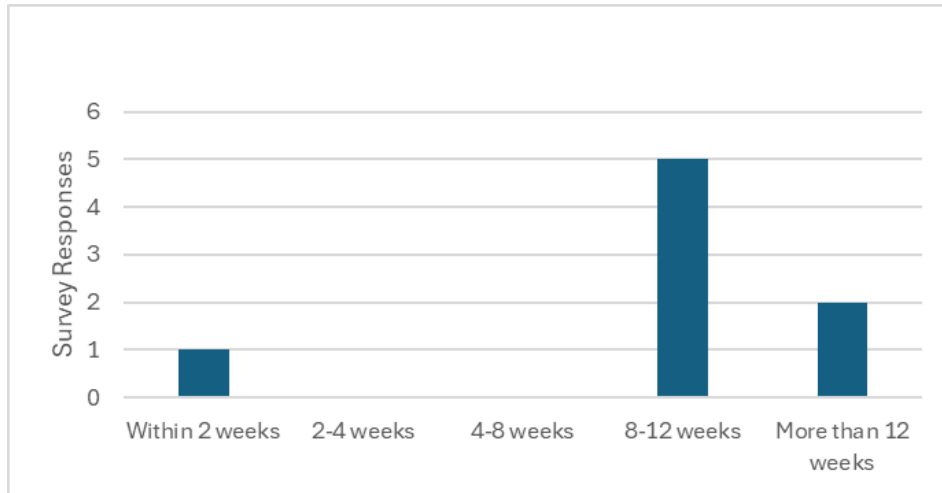
Over half of the responding industry organizations said that they have received negative feedback from cardholders on the speed of the ABTC application. This result highlights the applicants' frustration towards the delays encountered in obtaining their ABTC.

Figure 25: The general tone of feedback regarding the speed of the ABTC application and vetting process
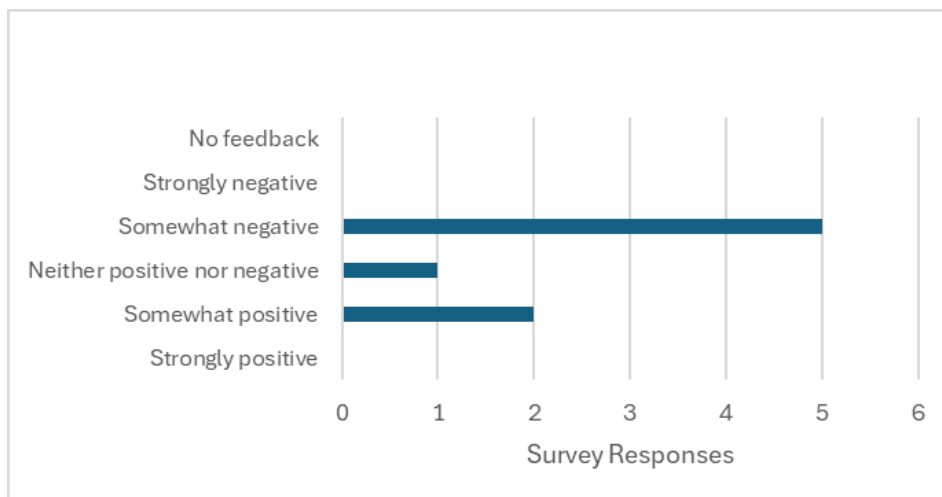
7.3.3 Technology and the ABTC

All of the responding organizations expect that at least one of the technologies of biometric technologies, E-gates, or AI applications will have an impact on the ABTC scheme in the future.

Figure 26: Technologies expected to have an impact on the ABTC scheme in the next one to five years
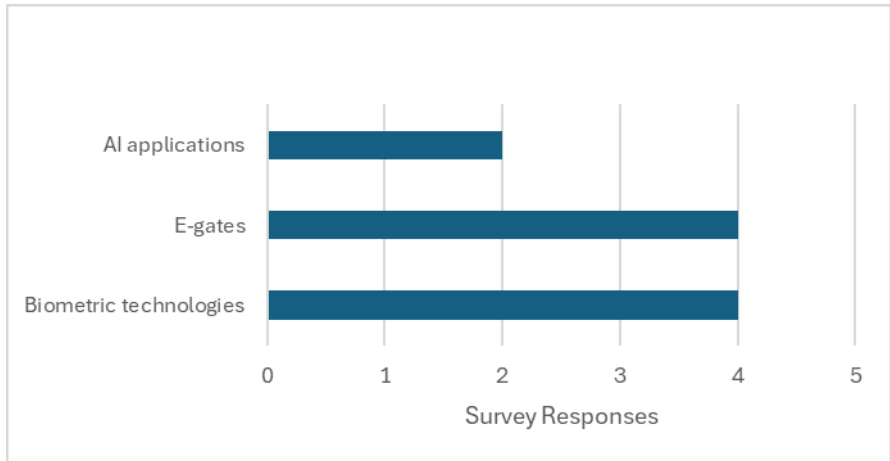
7.3.4 Changes to the ABTC Scheme

Respondents raised "Card application/renewal processing times" as their highest priority for improvement. This aligns with the other components of this current study. The second-highest priority is "Expanding the benefits provided by the ABTC", followed by "Implementing online application processes." In the government survey, expanding the benefits of the card was listed as a low priority, whereas this survey found that cardholders listed it very high. This illustrates a possible gap between the users' needs and government priorities.

Table 14: Highest Priorities for Improvement
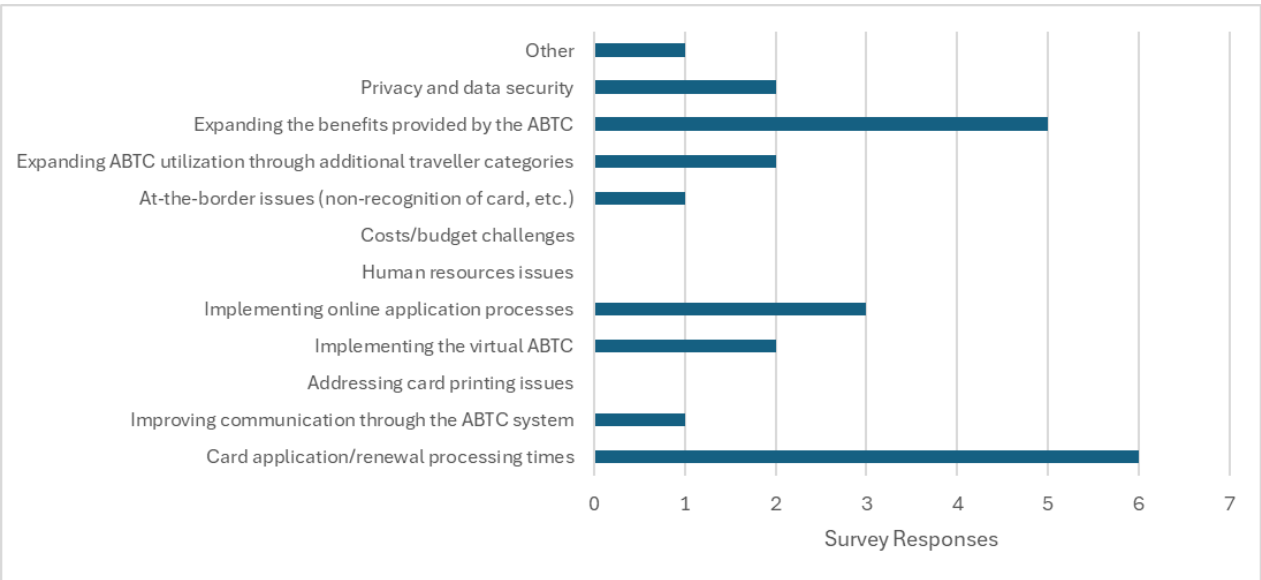
None of the respondents indicated a strong preference on the expansion of this scheme to other professionals or mid-level businessperson.

Figure 27: Views on the expansion of the ABTC card to other professions or mid-level business persons
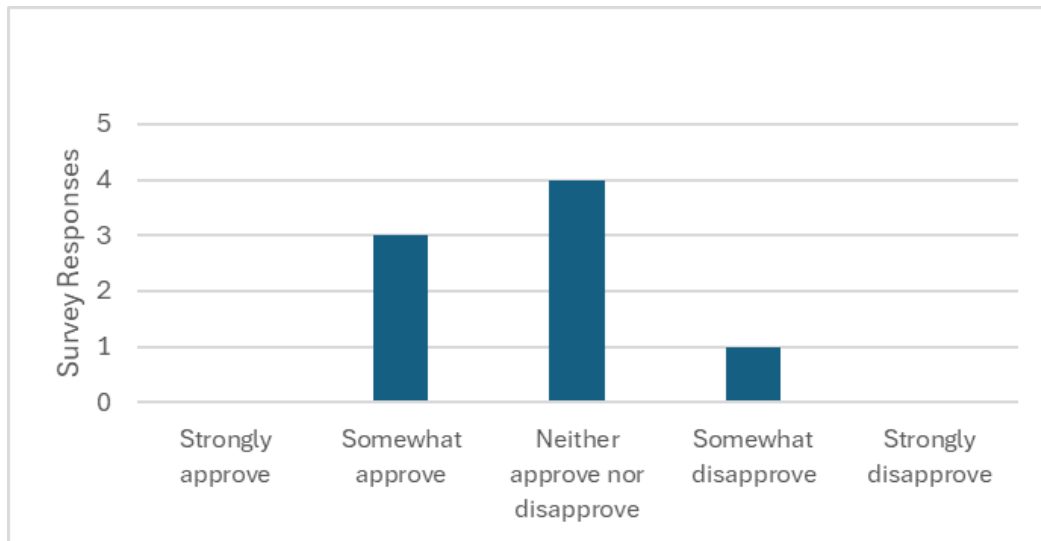
As the following figure shows, four out of eight responses disagree with the idea of allowing family members of ABTC holders to use fast-lanes at the airport with the cardholder. This aligns with the findings from the government survey.

Figure 28: Permission for family members of ABTC cardholders to accompany them in fast-track lane at immigration
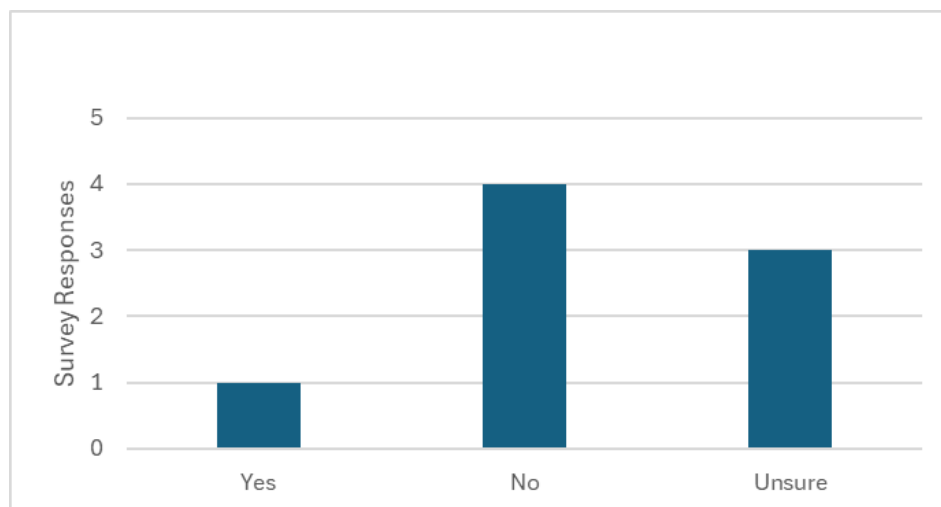
Seven out of eight responses agreed that it would be significantly beneficial for their cardholders if the two transitional member economies were to become full members.

Figure 29: Whether there would be significant benefits for cardholders if the two transitional member economies were to become full members (Blue: Yes, Orange: No)
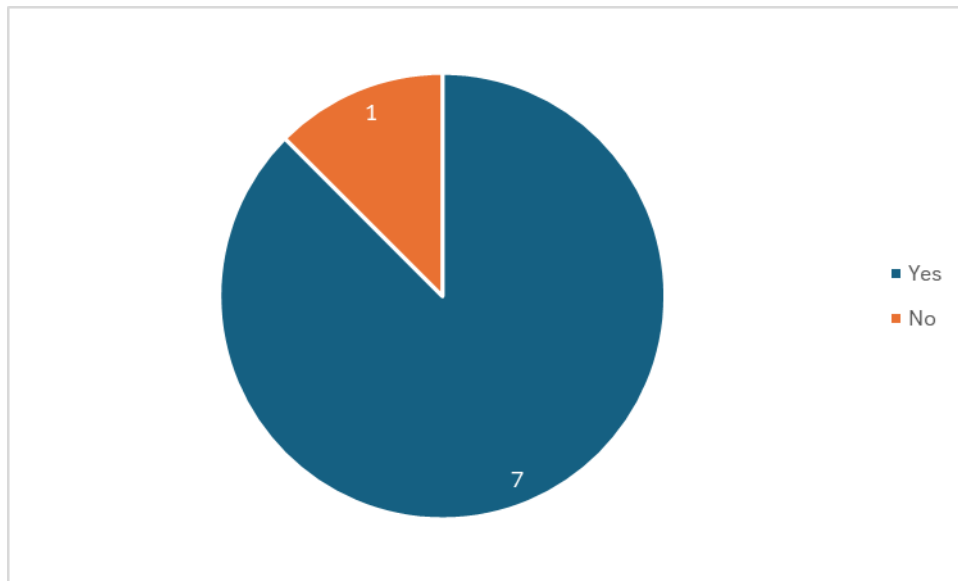
8 Workshop Findings

The workshop on Performance Review Study of the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) Scheme was held on the margins of Senior Official Meeting (SOM) 3 at the Lima Convention Centre in Lima, Peru on 13 August 2024. This in-person workshop was designed as an opportunity for officials from member economies to discuss concerns for economies and stakeholders, how to address them, and recommendations for further development of the scheme.

Workshop Agenda

Introduction from the organizer
Update on the ABTC System and Q&A   Mr Conagh MCMAHON-HOGAN, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Home Affairs (Australia)
Introductory Presentation on Research Report and Q&A   Mr James TETLOW, Senior Research Analyst, Washington CORE
Breakout Groups: Identifying Challenges in Operating the ABTC Scheme
Presentation of Breakout Group Findings
Discussion with: Dr Pratit SANTIPRABHOB, Deputy Convenor of Business Mobility Group   Mr Naruchai NINNAD, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Consular Affairs of Thailand
Expert Presentation: Mr Cormac POWER, Embassy of Australia to Peru and Bolivia,   Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
Expert Presentation: Mr Sebastian ELIAS Ibañez, Corporate Affairs Analyst at ComexPerú / ABAC Peru
Breakout Groups: Identifying Solutions to ABTC Challenges
Presentation of Breakout Group Findings
Concluding Remarks and Survey Reminder   Washington CORE

Forty five participants attended from 11 economies, including Australia; Brunei Darussalam; People's Republic of China; Indonesia; Malaysia; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Republic of the Philippines; The Russian Federation; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and ABAC.

Update on the ABTC Scheme and Q&A

Mr Conagh MCMAHON-HOGAN of Australia's Department of Home Affairs provided an in-depth historical overview of the ABTC scheme. In 1993, APEC leaders sought to establish a Pacific Business Forum, leading to the Bogor Goals, which set a long-term goal of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific. After discussing how to implement the goals, the 1995 Osaka Action Agenda was adopted, focusing on business facilitation and streamlining visa processes, which set the stage to create the ABTC.

Introduced as a concept by Australia in 1995, the ABTC was designed to simplify business travel within the APEC region, promoting trade and investment. The project was supported by the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in 1996. The initial pilot of the ABTC began

in 1997 with Australia; Korea; and the Philippines, and expanded to include additional economies.

In March 1999, the ABTC became a permanent program. The ABTC Core System underwent a significant technological upgrade in the 2000s. A 2014 End to End Review study of the ABTC highlighted the need for future updates, and the 2021 capacity-building workshop provided updated recommendations. The ABTC Core System currently supports over 450,000 ABTC holders, and 13 economies have transitioned to the virtual ABTC (vABTC).

After the presentation delivered by Mr Conagh McMahon-Hogan, Mr Takahiro NAKAMURA, a Project Manager from Washington CORE, led a Q&A session. First, Mr Nakamura asked whether the challenges that led APEC and the BMG to create the ABTC, highlighted in the Bogor Goal and Osaka Action Agenda, still stand today. Mr McMahon-Hogan believes that some of the challenges still exist, and that it is important for the BMG to monitor and update the scheme with accurate evidence. Next, Mr Nakamura asked about the social and global issues that the ABTC can address in the future. Mr McMahon-Hogan noted that the ABTC and the BMG can play a key role in securing border security and reducing fraudulent movement.

Mr Nakamura then asked whether the results highlighted in the 2014 study and 2021 workshop are still relevant today. Mr McMahon-Hogan believes that they are relevant today, and that the outcomes of those past review studies will continue to assist the BMG in identifying trends and preventing them from "reinventing the wheel." Lastly, Mr Nakamura asked Mr McMahon-Hogan about his expectations for the workshop breakout groups, and his hopes for participants' takeaways. Mr McMahon-Hogan encouraged the participants to consider the challenges, opportunities, and what is missing in the current ABTC scheme.

Introductory Presentation on Research Report and Q&A

Mr James TETLOW, a Senior Research Analyst at Washington CORE, delivered an overview of the ABTC, findings from the literature research and case studies, the survey component, and possible discussion topics for the breakout sessions.

Mr Takahiro NAKAMURA then led a Q&A session, starting with a question about the challenges in conducting this research. Mr Tetlow responded that since each economy has their own approach to the implementation of ABTC, differing levels of available resources, and different types of collected data, it makes it difficult to grasp the big picture and produce ideas that are helpful for all member economies. Additionally, since long-term data is missing, it was challenging to understand the trends and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Nakamura then asked whether there were any notable changes since the 2014 research. Mr Tetlow answered that there has been noteworthy progress, such as extending the card validity to five years and introducing online application processes. In addition, the introduction of the virtual ABTC and improvements in pre-clearance times are advancements, though in the short term the post-pandemic increases in business travel have impacted processing times due to limited staff capacity.

Dr Pratit SANTIPRABHOB, the Deputy Convenor of the Business Mobility Group, raised a question about whether the study had any insights about the declining number of ABTC applications in some economies, despite the card's growing popularity. After noting the

difficulties of capturing the opinions of those who did not renew their ABTC, because they were not included as survey respondents, Mr Tetlow speculated that some challenges in renewing cards might be a reason for the declining number of applications. Other economies experienced growth in applications, possibly because of the overall business travel recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and more applicants from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Dr Santiprabhob added that bilateral trade agreements can lift visa requirements, so cardholders from economies that no longer have visa requirements to travel to their most-needed destinations may choose not to apply for an ABTC. Mr Tetlow noted that if bilateral agreements were the cause for declines in cardholders from some economies, it would reflect overall progress rather than a failure of the ABTC itself.

Mr Kiyoshi NAKASAKA, a participant from the private sector, suggested exploring how social media could boost the promotion of travel cards, similar to how the TSA PreCheck gained popularity in the United States. He also noted the potential benefits of digitizing and streamlining the application process to make the card more accessible to those working at SMEs, emphasizing that increased awareness and promotional efforts could greatly enhance the card's usage. Mr Tetlow added that raising awareness and advertising, potentially through social media or partnerships, could also address current gaps in card usage.

Breakout Groups: Identifying Challenges in Operating the ABTC scheme & Presentation of Breakout Group Findings

The first session aimed to highlight obstacles and difficulties faced by government officials and stakeholders in the implementation of the ABTC scheme. The participants were divided into three breakout groups, and each group was moderated by Washington CORE staff. One of the group members presented the discussion results after an hour-long discussion at each table.

First, Ms Kittima CHUAYCHOO, an Attaché from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, shared the challenges that her group identified.

- Limited awareness and knowledge of the ABTC scheme's benefits among potential cardholders due to insufficient external outreach and public relations efforts

- Confusion from (potential) cardholders due to inconsistent pre-clearance processes (e.g., the variability in requirements and fees) across economies

- The preference for physical cards over virtual cards among some (not all) cardholders, due to the perceived safety concerns, causing some economies to pause and rethink their transition to the vABTC

- (Especially in the economies that are introducing the vABTC) Different card numbers and the lack of linkage between a physical card and the vABTC card issued to an individual can confuse immigration officers in destination economies and potentially lead to a rejection of entry at the border

- Challenges in introducing fast-track lanes at land borders where most travelers pass in vehicles, limiting the implementation of ABTC to ports of entry other than airports

- Unclear and inconsistent rules on how many people an ABTC holder can travel with (e.g., whether ABTC holders can travel with their family members through fast-track lanes)

- Decreased numbers of applicants for the ABTC in some economies
- Challenges in processing the applications for persons residing outside their home economy

Next, Mr Conagh McMahon-Hogan shared the discussion of his group.

- The lack of knowledge among authority officials who are implementing/ processing ABTC applications in practice
- Cardholders' complaints about the tedious repetition of the application process for the card renewal, even though most of their information is the same as their previous application
- Insufficient promotional activities, so companies and industries may not be aware of and applying for the card
- The possible reduced perceived benefits of the ABTC scheme among potential cardholders due to an increase in other types of visa waiver programs or bilateral agreements in the APEC region
- Challenges transitioning to vABTC due to a lack of shared lessons or best practices that economies can refer to
- Difficulties in preventing fraudulent activities that use advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI)
- The varied level of knowledge of border officials, especially about the virtual ABTC and how to identify fraudulent vABTCs at the border
- Insufficient data to understand the core root issues of the underrepresentation of certain cardholder demographics (e.g., women, people with disabilities, and dual citizens)
- The registration requirements in some economies make it challenging for employees at SMEs to apply for ABTC

Last, Ms Leilani Feliciano, a Director of the OCA Visa Division at the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of the Philippines, presented what her group discussed.

- Delays in completing the pre-clearance approvals due to insufficient supporting information and lack of human resources
- Unclear or confusing information on whether applicants can apply for the ABTC and a visa simultaneously, potentially leading to the automatic and unintended cancellation of ABTC applications
- Confusion among border officials due to different reference numbers or ID numbers between the physical and virtual ABTC
- Vulnerabilities in the ABTC system in each economy to cybersecurity threats
- Human resource constraints and budgetary constraints in each economy
- Limited data and information to understand the potential market for ABTC, making it difficult for economies to draft a plan and allocate resources adequately
- Limited data-sharing between economies

- The possible reduced perceived benefits of the ABTC scheme among potential cardholders due to an increase in other types of visa waiver programs or bilateral agreements in the APEC region
- Challenges in processing ABTC applications for individuals living outside their home economy

Discussion with Dr Pratit Santiprabhob and Mr Naruchai Ninnad

This Q&A session with Dr Pratit SANTIPRABHOB and Mr Naruchai NINNAD was moderated by Mr James TETLOW, and aimed to understand how the ABTC system is implemented in Thailand, as well as their priorities for the ABTC scheme moving forward.

Mr James Tetlow first asked the two speakers to provide a summary of the implementation of the ABTC scheme in Thailand. Mr Naruchai Ninnad explained that Thailand began implementing the ABTC in 2002, following the APEC Committee of Trade and Investment (CTI)'s decision to make the program permanent. While maintaining the physical ABTC card, Thailand also adopted the virtual ABTC in May 2021, becoming the third economy to do so, after Australia and Indonesia. Thailand issues around 18,800 active cards (12,737 physical and 6,102 virtual cards). There has been a 42% decrease in new applications compared to 2023, which may be partly due to the introduction of visa exemption agreements.

Thailand approved 91,121 out of 98,278 foreign pre-clearance requests (an acceptance rate of 92%), and has significantly reduced its pre-clearance processing time from 14 days to seven working days, in part by allowing officials to process pre-clearances remotely.

Mr Tetlow then asked about the benefits and challenges of providing both physical and virtual cards. Mr Ninnad mentioned that some users prefer physical cards because they feel more comfortable with them, such as for their perceived safety. It is still uncertain when Thailand will transition to a fully virtual mode due to concerns regarding technology disruption and cybersecurity.

Next, Mr Tetlow asked about best practices regarding technologies in Thailand. Mr Ninnad spoke about Thailand's online platform, a website where people can apply for ABTC, and an online lodgement scheme to connect Thailand's ABTC system and ABTC Core System and electronic visa (e-visa) system, which are expected to streamline the process and achieve seamless mobility for cardholders. Mr Tetlow asked about any challenges or barriers to connecting the two systems. Mr Ninnad mentioned technology and regulation as obstacles. Dr Santiprabhob noted the two ways of connecting platforms: 1) Thailand's application lodgement and ABTC Core System and 2) Thailand's e-visa system and ABTC pre-clearances. He hopes Thailand will upgrade these systems within the next few years.

Lastly, Mr Tetlow asked for their ideas on the top priorities that BMG should work towards for the ABTC moving forward. Mr Ninnad mentioned this workshop will help to reduce pre-clearance processing times, and suggested organizing a capacity-building program for border officials who need to take care of both physical and virtual cards. Dr Santiprabhob suggested brainstorming the cause of delays in pre-clearance, and adding an alert system for pending applications to the ABTC Core System.

Expert Presentation by Mr Cormac Power

Mr Cormac POWER from the Australian Embassy in Lima focused on the ABTC scheme and its importance from an Australian perspective. First, he noted that APEC was formed to encourage a prosperous regional economy, cross-border trade, and economic and technical cooperation. APEC economies constitute around 75% of Australia's total trade in goods and services, underscoring the importance of APEC to the Australian economy.

The ABTC, introduced in 1996, was developed in response to business demands for travel at short notice, fast and easy transit on entry and departure, and multiple entries. It also addressed government requirements for maintaining border security, and facilitating the mobility of businesspeople. Over the past two decades, the number of ABTC holders has increased significantly from 90,000 in 2011 to 150,000 in 2014 and nearly 460,000 today across the APEC region. Mr Power highlighted that ABTC is the most tangible achievement of APEC, and serves the business community and government sector for trade facilitation. Australia has played an integral role in developing and maintaining the ABTC Core System, and is committed to the future of the ABTC.

Australia aims to boost female representation among its cardholders, which currently stands at around 20% in the APEC region and only 14% in Australia. Additionally, Australia is promoting the update and acceptance of the vABTC. These measures are essential to support economies with untapped economic potential.

Expert Presentation: Mr Sebastian Elias Ibañez

Mr Sebastian ELIAS Ibañez spoke about Peru's experience with the ABTC, and the results from a recent survey of ABTC user perspectives. First, he outlined Peru's experience with the ABTC. Peru approved the ABTC scheme in 2003, and was an early adopter of the vABTC in 2021. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues the ABTC, and the National Superintendency of Migration is responsible for immigration control, while there are eight private sector institutions responsible for issuing sponsorship letters. The main challenges in Peru include a complex and time-consuming process to acquire and renew the card, and the preference for a physical ABTC over a virtual card, especially among seniors.

ABAC Peru conducted a survey of cardholders across APEC, and the findings have been endorsed by ABAC. The survey received 3,823 responses and used 542 for analysis.[118] The survey revealed the following findings from cardholders:

- 97% find the ABTC an effective tool in facilitating travel in the APEC region

- 55% perceived preferential access for immigration as a main benefit of ABTC[119]

- 58% of users reported that they used ABTC between three to 10 times in the past 12 months

- 61% of users experienced delays of over four weeks for application processing

- 25% noted the need to enhance the renewal process, which often feels like reapplying for a new card

Based on the results, Mr Elias proposed two recommendations:

1) APEC economies should implement mechanisms to streamline the application and issuance process and reduce waiting times. This can be achieved by improving information flow between responsible institutions, ensuring real-time data exchange, and establishing standardized procedures to enhance user experience; and

2) APEC economies should expand the implementation of the virtual ABTC and promote visibility of their benefits.

After the presentation, Mr Takahiro NAKAMURA moderated a Q&A session. First, he asked what businesspeople think about the long waiting times for the ABTC. Mr Elias shared that many businesspeople cannot wait such a long time, causing them to lose patience with getting the card. Next, Mr Nakamura asked how the government side can raise the visibility of ABTC among those unfamiliar with it. Mr Elias noted the importance of information sharing among institutions and the establishment of a digital solution for ABTC issuance and updates.

Dr Pratit SANTIPRABHOB raised a question about the ABTC renewal process in Peru, regarding passport changes. He noted that the ABTC Core System should already accommodate passport updates, allowing changes to be reflected in virtual ABTC and requiring only a re-login. Mr Elias responded that the process is not streamlined in Peru. He explained that businesspeople must notify one of the eight institutions, which then informs the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to update the ABTC. This step causes delays in updates. Mr Elias agreed that guidelines or standardization could be helpful in reducing delays.

Breakout Groups: Identifying Solutions to ABTC Challenges & Presentation of Breakout Group Findings

The second session focused on soliciting ideas about potential solutions to address the challenges raised during the first session and improve the overall operation of the ABTC scheme. Each group discussed this topic for about 45 minutes and presented their outcomes after the respective discussions.

Ms Karu NAO-JIKI, a General Manager at the Papua New Guinea Immigration and Citizenship Authority, shared the following discussions on viable solutions.

- Promote the ABTC scheme through social media to business communities by working with ABAC, and raise awareness among border officers through a workshop

- Implement a method for verifying vABTCs in offline environments without Wi-Fi, since the internet connection is unstable at some airports

- Establish common guidelines on secure data storage and collaborate with large technology companies to protect the system from cyber attacks

- Expand the ABTC Core System to include additional categories of applicants' characteristics (e.g., more business types) and to enable the automated generation of gender and business type statistics, since currently government officials need to manually calculate them

- Allow government officers to edit information directly in the Core System, not asking administrators to edit information on their behalf or redo an application, to reduce delays in pre-clearance

- Agree on common rules to permit ABTC holder's family members to use APEC special lanes at an airport in a destination economy when they are travelling with the ABTC holder
- Allow missions or embassies in foreign economies to submit applications on behalf of individuals residing abroad

Next, Mr Khairul Helmi BIN MOHAMAD TOHID, Deputy Assistant Director of Immigration at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaysia, presented the outcomes of the group session.

- Develop one APEC-wide non-binding standard, guideline, or framework on how to implement the ABTC scheme domestically to harmonize the implementation of the ABTC across different economies
- Arrange a seminar or workshop, in addition to social media, to promote the benefits of ABTC among business people and to educate government officials (especially the front-line immigration officers) of the purpose and methodology of the ABTC scheme.
- Conduct more research, such as the current performance review, with a broader perspective, capturing the ABTC scheme in a global context with other similar regional and multilateral programs and initiatives in mind, to measure whether and how much the original goal and objectives of the ABTC scheme is achieved.
- Consider adding distinctive and additional benefits to the ABTC scheme, similar to other competing bilateral and regional visa-waiver programs, as well as technological advances like e-gates, to keep the ABTC relevant.
- Address gender imbalances in the number of ABTC applications in an economy-specific manner.

Mr Muhamad ADIBNAJWAN Bin Azman, Assistant Director of Immigration, Immigration Department of Malaysia, Ministry of Home Affairs, shared the following discussion outcomes.

- Advance towards a fully virtual ABTC (some economies, such as Malaysia and Thailand, operate the ABTC scheme in a hybrid mode [issue both physical and virtual cards]), leading to problems at the border)
- Provide support and training to resolve pre-clearance issues, including capacity building, training on how to use of technologies (e.g., AI), and staff training
- Create and share a multilingual video about the ABTC scheme for front-line border officers via the APEC BMG repository
- Organize a capacity-building session about the detection of fraudulent cards, possibly together with online training support
- Study the possibility of integrating the ABTC with existing e-visa systems, operated in each economy using today's technology-enabled passports as a part of its broader border management system, and advocate for such integration
- Compare data usage in ordinary visa processing with ABTC pre-clearance to identify minimum standard process and necessary data sharing

Concluding Remarks

At the end of the workshop, the workshop summary and closing comments were delivered by Mr Takahiro NAKAMURA, Project Manager at Washington CORE.

Post-Workshop Survey

After the workshop, the attendees were asked to complete a participant survey to provide their feedback on the event and help APEC in making meaningful future improvements. In the two-week period after the workshop, 14 participants (35% of total) of an almost even gender breakdown from nine economies responded to the survey.

The first half of the survey consisted of a series of multiple-choice (required) and free-form (optional) sections that asked respondents to evaluate the workshops. The results from the multiple-choice suggest that attendees were quite satisfied with the overall contents of the workshop. The responses to the free-form prompts are also summarized below.

Figure 30: The workshop helped me understand better the past achievements, current benefits and challenges of the ABTC scheme.

🔵 Strongly agree	8	
🟠 Agree	6	
🟢 Disagree	0	
🔴 Strongly disagree	0	
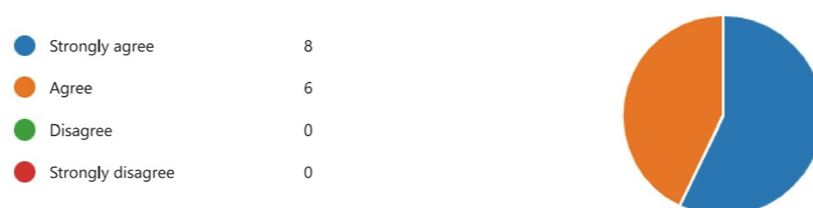
Figure 31: Evidence-based improvements to the ABTC scheme will be beneficial for business in my economy.

🔵 Strongly Agree	7	
🟠 Agree	7	
🟢 Disagree	0	
🔴 Strongly disagree	0	

Figure 32: The presentations and discussions helped me understand the challenges faced in the current implementation of ABTC.

🔵 Strongly Agree	7	
🟠 Agree	7	
🟢 Disagree	0	
🔴 Strongly disagree	0	
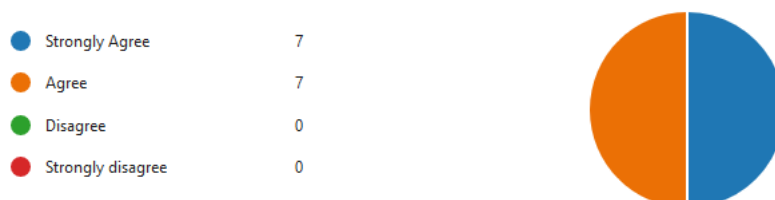
Figure 33: The presentations and discussions helped me think constructively of effective ways forward for the ABTC scheme.

🔵 Strongly agree		7
🟠 Agree		7
🟢 Disagree		0
🔴 Strongly disagree		0

In the free-form survey sections, audience members were asked about their impressions of the workshop. Many audience members noted that the workshop was helpful to better understand the past achievements, current benefits and challenges of the ABTC scheme. Several attendees noted the importance of evidence-based improvements to the ABTC scheme, with strong support for sharing numerical data to build a solid evidence base. In addition, respondents expressed their appreciation for the presentations and discussions, which were instrumental in generating constructive ideas for improving the ABTC scheme.

The survey also invited comments on the most useful insights from the workshop. Participants highly valued the opportunity to learn from other economies so that they could understand how they are facing similar challenges, and noted the importance of technology as a potential tool to resolve some challenges.

In the last section of the participant survey, the attendees were asked about the future steps that APEC can take to address member economy's concerns on this subject. There was a call for more research to deepen the understanding of the status of bilateral entry agreements and the entry rules and procedures in each economy. Improving the communication channels among APEC economies was also noted as an important item, since this will facilitate ongoing dialogue and collaboration. The need to develop guidelines was also highlighted.

Furthermore, multiple respondents expressed their hope to have more workshops or discussion forums, on topics such as domestic vetting and pre-clearance processing, as well as the most effective operations of the ABTC system.

9   Recommendations and Conclusion

9.1   Recommendations

The goal of these recommendations is to identify potential best practices and areas to improve the performance of the ABTC scheme, based on the challenges that were identified through the literature research, surveys, interviews, and the in-person workshop in Lima, Peru. The recommendations are organized into the following five categories, based on the aspect of the ABTC scheme that they impact:

Figure 34: Recommendations

Category		Actions
A	**Card Application and Renewal**	Explore Ways to Improve the Processing Time for Card Approvals
		Streamline the Card Renewal Process
		Capacity-Building for ABTC Processing Staff
B	**Technology**	Improve Data Collection
		Expansion and Improvement of the Virtual ABTC
		Updates to the ABTC Core System
		Prevention of Fraud and Cyberattacks
C	**Card Benefits**	Set Shared Rules for ABTC Usage at the Border
		Training for Border Officials
D	**Expanding Awareness**	Promoting the ABTC Scheme
		Outreach to Better Reach More Users
E	**Sustained Leadership**	Assigning Roles for Achieving Recommendations
		Future Studies

Most of these recommendations can be implemented at the individual economy level, however, some recommendations will require collective efforts or consensus among the BMG member economies.

9.1.1   Card Application and Renewal Process

These recommendations address challenges such as human resources capacity, delays in card applications, and the repetitive renewal process.

Recommendation 1: Explore Ways to Improve the Processing Time for Card Approvals

The single biggest cardholder complaint is the time taken to receive their ABTC. Resolving this issue is challenging, because often the biggest cause of delay is that a small number of economies are struggling to complete their pending pre-clearance approvals due to various factors, such as human resources limitations, or insufficient supporting information in the cardholders' application.

Providing capacity-building[3] support to these economies is an integral part of resolving these challenges (See Recommendation 3 below). Beyond that, there are some additional steps that the BMG can take:

- Gather information among ABTC offices about the key data challenges that most often require them to take additional (manual) steps during the pre-clearance process. If there is consensus on the most common unmet data requirements, the BMG can build these data into a common application process (see the following point) in the future.

- Develop a non-binding, APEC-wide framework on how to implement the ABTC scheme domestically, to better harmonize the implementation of the ABTC, including cardholder data requirements, across different economies.

Recommendation 2: Streamline the Card Renewal Process

Cardholders often complain that they must repeat the entire application process for the card renewal, although most information is the same with that used in the previous application. Especially for economies that have adopted partial or full online application processes, it would be helpful for renewal applications to have an option to confirm 'same as prior application' to save cardholders the time and effort in filling out applications. In economies without online processes, the application form should have instructions to only fill out the sections in the form that have changed since the last application.

Economies should also provide advance notice to cardholders ahead of the expiration of their cards to support convenience and help them to avoid a lapse in cardholder status. A related issue that has been raised is unclear or confusing information whether applicants can apply for the ABTC and a separate visa simultaneously, potentially leading to the automatic and unintended cancellation of ABTC applications. The BMG should discuss the appropriate approach for these cases so that individual economies can warn cardholders about the best approach on their individual websites.

Recommendation 3: Capacity-Building for ABTC Processing Staff

Some economies have encountered challenges processing a high number of ABTC applications, or have a significant backlog due to factors such as suspended operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, or due to the recent prioritization of related activities, such as the transition to the vABTC. These economies would benefit from support and training that explore best practices and the use of technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence [AI]) that could assist them in managing high caseloads.

This assistance could be implemented through various methods, such as:

- Workshops, virtual or in-person, in which experienced staff from APEC economies provide their advice and guidance for best practices.

- Creation of a "capacity building group" within the BMG consisting of a small number of experts that could help develop multilateral capacity among ABTC processing staff, and

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[3] In the APEC context, capacity building is defined as activities - for example workshops, training courses and seminars - that enable people, businesses and government departments to improve their skills and knowledge to better engage in trade and investment. See:
https://www.apec.org/press/features/2008/0901_what_apec_is_doing_to_promote_capacity_building

support future recommendations for best practices, such as through training programs and similar exercises.

- Reviewing the notable differences in ABTC processes and systems across economies to identify potential areas for increased standardization, which will assist knowledge-sharing across economies and reduce cardholder confusion.

- Based on the above steps, once there is a greater level of conformity across APEC economies, it would be beneficial to create a series of online training videos, ideally available in multiple languages, that would provide specific best practices and processes for ABTC processing staff, so that new staff could quickly learn the basics of the process.

9.1.2 Technology

These recommendations consider how to best utilize technologies to improve the performance of the ABTC, such as through data collection, increased uptake of the vABTC, updates to the ABTC Core System, and new technologies to detect fraud and protect the integrity of the ABTC.

Recommendation 1: Improve Data Collection

Currently there are significant gaps in economies' data about useful metrics, such as the cardholders' business size (i.e., SME, large firm, etc.), occupations, and organization, which may be useful information for future planning by the BMG. There are various approaches that the BMG should explore to improve its data collection. These include:

- Additional data requests as a part of the ABTC application process. These requests for data could be required or optional, depending on whether all member economies are comfortable with instituting and managing new data requirements;

- Implementing regular detailed surveys of a large population of current cardholders;

- Implementing brief (1-5 minute) user experience surveys for cardholders about their experiences following card applications and after their card usage for travel

As a first step, the BMG should hold discussions on the types of data that would be most beneficial to collect and share, taking into account cardholder privacy. Some data items for consideration are:

- Occupation

- Position

- Sponsor/organization

- Additional types of business/industry sectors (expanding from the current list in ABTC Core System options)

- Size of business (Micro, Small, Medium, & Large (MSME))

- Data relevant to better reach more users (e.g., women, people with disabilities, or dual citizens)

In addition, within the legal frameworks that each economy follows, economies should implement tools to regularly compare ABTC usage information with regional trade and investment data. This will help economies with planning, and will lead to a better understanding of the extent to which the scheme is fulfilling its goals to support regional trade and investment.

Recommendation 2: Expansion and Improvement of the Virtual ABTC

At the time of writing, 13 economies have transitioned to using the vABTC. Overall, there are clear benefits to the vABTC over the physical card, such as real-time data for cardholders and additional security features, including secure login and user authentication.

Some economies, such as Malaysia and Thailand, are currently operating in a hybrid scheme, issuing both physical and virtual cards. This has some benefits, since some cardholders (especially older users) prefer the physical cards over virtual cards, due to the perceived safety or prestige of having a physical card. However, the hybrid operation has also led to challenges for these economies. For example, border entry officials may object when there is a conflict between the identification number on the physical card and the vABTC, potentially leading to the rejection of entry at the border. Technical issues that have arisen include incompatibility with some smartphone models, the user forgetting their App password, or losing their smartphone.

With these opportunities and challenges in mind, the following actions are recommended:

- Bilateral or multilateral engagement by economies, that have adopted the vABTC, with economies that are interested but unsure about the process or technology challenges, including past experiences and best practices;

- Creation of a workshop that focuses specifically on vABTC challenges and improvements;

- Establish training across APEC economies for border entry staff on processing hybrid cardholders (such as Malaysia and Thailand), so that the vABTC is not rejected when it does not match the physical card.

- Move towards full adoption of the vABTC across all fully participating member economies.

Recommendation 3: Updates to the ABTC Core System

Staff from several economies provided suggestions for adjustments to the ABTC system that would be helpful to consider. These suggestions include the following:

Table 15: Upgrades to ABTC Core System

#	Suggestion	Benefits
1	Allowing high-quality photos to be uploaded to the system	Staff could upload photos received from applicants without needing to change the file type.
2	Automate data file importing from the ABTC portal	Having a more streamlined process will help reduce the manual work and improve processing times.
3	Adding new data fields, such as occupation or sponsor/organization	Collecting and sharing additional data can help economies to better understand their users and their needs. Once these data fields are enabled, the system should support the automated generation of statistics.
4	Creating an edit/amend function for system users	Allowing staff to edit application data could help to avoid delays in the processing of applications and help to reduce the re-registration of applications.
5	Enabling the automated generation of male and female and business type statistics	Currently government staff manually select the cardholder's sex on the ABTC Core System. Having this feature will reduce the manual work.

Recommendation 4: Prevention of Fraud and Cyberattacks

One of the common recommendations raised in the survey of government officials was that the BMG should review its policies and capabilities to prevent fraud and protect against cyberattacks. Possible actions include the following:

- Establish a common guideline on secure data storage, and collaborate with large technology companies to protect the system from cyber-attacks.

- Conducting further research on ways that advanced technologies, including AI, may be utilized by criminals for fraud, and studying the vulnerabilities to cybersecurity threats in the ABTC system in each economy.

- Organizing a capacity-building session about the detection of fraudulent cards, possibly in tandem with online training support.

9.1.3 Card Benefits

These recommendations discuss the ways that the BMG can set shared rules and expectations about the use of the ABTC including special lane policies.

Recommendation 1: Set Shared Rules for ABTC Usage at the Border

Currently, some economies permit cardholder's family members to use the APEC special lanes at an airport in a destination economy when they are travelling with the cardholder, while others do not. Permitting cardholders travelling with family members to use the APEC

fast track lanes would potentially increase the value of the card, however, doing so may conflict with the policies for tourist visas in some economies.

Similarly, the policies for cardholders to use their cards when not on business travel vary across economies. The BMG should discuss the pros and cons of establishing a uniform policy for whether cardholders can use the fast-track lane even when they are not traveling on business.

The BMG should review the associated policies and common practices among member economies and develop clear and consistent guidelines that can be shared with border officials. These guidelines should be included on the physical ABTC or within the vABTC to clearly state the information in case some border officials are not aware of them.

Recommendation 2: Training for Border Officials

Border officials sometimes lack sufficient knowledge of the ABTC scheme, such as not recognizing that the "APEC card" and the "ABTC" are the same card, or preventing transitional economies' cardholders from entering the fast-track lanes. In addition, the special lanes at airports are sometimes difficult to find or recognize.

In addition to individual economies undertaking more efforts to train their border officials about the card, the BMG should create and share a multilingual video about the ABTC scheme for border officers, which could be accessed via the APEC BMG repository.

9.1.4 Expanding Awareness of the ABTC Scheme

These recommendations are targeted at expanding the awareness of the ABTC scheme among the business community, and outreach to better reach more users.

Recommendation 1: Promoting the ABTC Scheme

According to discussions with industry associations, currently there is limited awareness of the ABTC scheme among potential cardholders, so there is significant room for growth if the BMG invests in further external outreach and public relations efforts. Some recommendations for further action include:

- Create a leadership group within the BMG to spearhead the promotion of the ABTC through APEC channels and individual economies' social media, as well as collaboration with ABAC, and through APEC-organized seminars or workshops. Given that this work does not require special technical capabilities, this leadership group would ideally include some of the economies which have been less active in the development of the ABTC in recent years.

- Conduct research to better understand the potential market for ABTC, so that economies can allocate resources adequately.

- Study the ways that other travel facilitation or trusted traveler programs (such as USA's Global Entry) are marketing to low risk/business travelers.

- Promote the ABTC scheme to business communities through social media.

- Establishing an ABTC Service Desk, based at APEC headquarters, with a contact number/email that can answer general customer questions and promote the benefits of

the card. This can help to build knowledge about the card and its benefits and reduce confusion from cardholders about the ABTC and its uses.

- Work with ABAC to conduct a study of ex-users of the card, to understand why they stopped being a cardholder.

Recommendation 2: Outreach to Better Reach More Users

In addition to expanding the overall promotion of the ABTC to business persons, the BMG should increase targeted outreach to better reach more users, such as women, or business persons from SMEs. This work should include a review of the registration requirements for the card to ensure that the existing requirements are not creating difficulties for SMEs to access the ABTC, and considering how to restructure existing outreach efforts to better reach a more users, such as outreach through women professionals' networking organizations.

9.1.5 Sustained Leadership

These recommendations are targeted at ensuring that the BMG has the internal capacity to undertake the above recommendations, and to continue exploring new ways to improve the ABTC scheme.

Recommendation 1: Assigning Roles for Achieving Recommendations

Currently a small number of economies play an outsized role in driving forward the development of the ABTC. This report has provided various recommendations for actions that the BMG and individual economies can undertake to improve the performance of the ABTC scheme. However, if only a small number of economies take the lead in pushing these recommendations forward, they will face immense challenges in achieving the goals while maintaining their other responsibilities.

This recommendation therefore highlights the need for BMG members to work together to shoulder the burdens and responsibilities for the development of the ABTC scheme. Given the wide range of recommendations above, the BMG should work together to assign each economy one or two priority items for oversight, building on the shared vision for improvement. The work could be divided by topic area (i.e., application renewals), or by the type of task (i.e., information collection about multiple topics, or creating capacity-building videos for multiple audiences, or setting up one or more workshops).

Recommendation 2: Future Studies

This performance review lays out several possible areas for improvement. However, there are several data gaps that the BMG can work to address in the future. These include the following:

- Studying the correlation of ABTC usage with regional trade and investment flows, to understand the impacts of the ABTC on trade, and to measure whether, and how much, the original goals and objectives of the ABTC scheme are being achieved.

- Market research to understand the scope of the potential market for ABTC cardholders and key groups to target, so the BMG can plan and allocate outreach resources

adequately. This research should also include several of the other items described in the recommendation 'Promoting the ABTC,' such as understanding how other travel facilitation or trusted traveler programs (such as USA's Global Entry) are being marketed to low risk/business travelers, and studying the reasons why ex-users have not renewed their cards.

- Conducting a review that captures the ABTC scheme in a global context, alongside similar regional and multilateral programs and initiatives. Taking into account the increased uptake of new technologies such as e-visas, to understand best practices from outside APEC, and how to align the card with the changing technologies for visa schemes in the future.

9.2 Conclusion

Since the ABTC scheme was first introduced as a trial program in 1997, it has grown to include more than 460,000 cardholders across all 21 APEC economies. Regular BMG meetings, along with detailed reviews and workshops in 2014 and 2021, have helped the BMG to ensure that the ABTC scheme has evolved over time to better serve cardholders' and economies' needs. This section briefly covers some of the key findings from this study on the next steps for the ABTC scheme.

Effectiveness of the ABTC Scheme
One of the key goals of this performance review has been to assess the effectiveness of the ABTC card scheme in providing business travelers with a streamlined entry process into APEC economies.

This performance review study was conducted at the same time as an ABAC survey of cardholders' views. Both this study and the ABAC survey found that cardholders are overall satisfied with the ABTC scheme, but that there is room for improvement in areas such as the speed and convenience of card applications and renewals. According to the government survey of this study, the overall tone of feedback from cardholders was typically positive or neutral, with only one economy noting 'somewhat negative' feedback from cardholders. Similarly, the ABAC survey of cardholders found that 97% believe that the ABTC is an effective tool in facilitating travel in the APEC region.

In addition, the research conducted during the performance review, as well as the findings from the in-person workshop in Lima, Peru, led to additional recommendations for policymakers regarding existing and emerging technologies, the benefits for cardholders, expanding awareness of the ABTC scheme, and ways to implement the recommendations and future studies through sustained leadership.

In brief, this study has found that the ABTC scheme has been effective in providing travel facilitation services for business travelers, but there are several ways that the effectiveness of the scheme can be improved. The detailed recommendations for improvement are listed in the prior section of this report. In particular, the recommendations laid out in section 8.1.1 "Card Application and Renewal Process" propose actions to address the complaints from cardholders regarding these processes.

Vulnerabilities of the ABTC Scheme

As a travel facilitation program, the ABTC scheme is affected by overall business travel flows. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, cardholder applications dropped, alongside the overall halt to most business travel, and some economies shifted human resources from their ABTC programs, and/or put application processing on hold. Once business travel began to quickly revive throughout the Asia-Pacific region, this created issues for economies with limited human resources to handle the renewed growth in ABTC application volumes. If a future global crisis leads to a similar drop in business travel, the need for flexibility in human resources during, and after a crisis, should be taken into consideration.

The ABTC scheme must also maintain its value for travelers in an increasingly digitalized world. The expansion and continued improvement of the vABTC is one of the top priorities for the technical modernization of the scheme. In addition, ICT-driven process improvements such as the automation of back-end processes will also help to reduce the human resource workload for ABTC staff. Section 8.1.2 "Technology" provides additional recommendations for the digitalization of the ABTC scheme.

Building Deeper Regional Trade and Investment Ties

The survey and workshop findings indicated that ABTC cardholders travel to a range of economies across APEC (rather than just a few popular economies), and many cardholders travel four or more times within the APEC region annually. These findings align with the ABAC cardholder survey, in which 58% of users reported that they used the ABTC between three to 10 times in the past 12 months. Along with the popularity of the ABTC scheme among cardholders, these findings indicate that the ABTC scheme is continuing to provide a valuable role in supporting the ease of business travel within the region. However, given the existing data constraints, it is not possible to fully assess the extent to which the ABTC scheme is contributing to regional trade and investment flows.

Additional research needs to be undertaken regarding the depth of the correlation of ABTC usage with regional trade and investment flows, in order to measure whether, and how much, the original goals and objectives of the ABTC scheme to bolster connectivity among member economies are being achieved. Building up the collection and sharing of additional datasets on cardholders and their card usage may also help to better understand these trends. The Recommendations section of this report (especially the recommendation "Build Data Collection") outlines several approaches to collect key performance indicators that should be taken in the near term.

Closing Note

Support for the ABTC among cardholders is certainly high, and the participants in the workshop in Lima, Peru, demonstrated a strong level of interest and commitment to sharing best practices, collecting additional data, and improving upon existing processes and technologies. The ABTC scheme has clearly been effective in achieving its purpose as a travel facilitation program for business travelers within APEC. Improved data collection and further research can help to better understand the linkage between the ABTC scheme and regional trade and investment.

Implementing the recommendations provided in this report will require increased engagement from all APEC economies, and a sustained commitment to incremental improvement by the BMG moving forward. It will also be important to continue to periodically review the ABTC scheme's progress in meeting the BMG's goals to encourage cross-border

business activities within the APEC region, and to identify new actions to undertake to address key priorities. Through these continued efforts, the ABTC scheme will continue to have a promising future as a key APEC initiative to create greater prosperity for the people of the region through economic growth and regional economic integration.

10 References

The project team has conducted a review of available literature on the current situation of the ABTC, and opportunities for improvement. These have included:

- Documents produced by the APEC BMG directly discussing the ABTC scheme, including the ABTC Mobile Application, Thailand's proposal on the APEC Frequent Travel Card (AFTC), online lodgment, ABTC system improvements, and other topics;
- Web materials from economies intended for cardholders;
- Reports on similar international travel facilitation programs;
- Recent trends in new technologies that are relevant to the ABTC scheme;
- Data and statistics on business travel during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

The following tables present the notable literature items reviewed to date.

Table 16: APEC Official Publications

Title	Organization	Summary
COVID-19 and Cross-Border Mobility in the APEC Region: Addressing Uncertainties at the Border (2022)	APEC	Reports the impact of border policies on visitor arrivals in APEC economies.
Capacity Building Workshop on Improving the Utilization of APEC Business Travel Card (2022)	APEC	Summarizes the 2021 workshop on the ABTC scheme.
Passports, Tickets and Face Masks: COVID-19 and Cross-Border Mobility in the APEC Region (2021)	APEC	Describes cross-border movement and bilateral trade and economic growth during the COVID-19 era.
APEC Connectivity Blueprint: The 2020 Mid-Term Review	APEC	Reviews the progress at the halfway mark of the APEC Connectivity Blueprint's implementation.
Second-Term Review of APEC's Progress towards the Bogor Goals - Progress by Economy (2016)	APEC	Includes findings on the ABTC scheme. It found that 91% of card holders were satisfied overall.
Supporting Continued Growth in Trade and Facilitation: End to End Review of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme (2014)	APEC	Reviews the APEC Business Travel Card scheme, through research activities, key findings, travel study strategy and economy visit reports.
Reducing Business Travel Costs: The Success of APEC's Business Mobility Initiatives	APEC	Reports findings from the Final Assessment conducted by the APEC Policy Support Unit

Title	Organization	Summary
2021 Review: Findings from the 2014 APEC Business Travel Card End-to-End Review	Washington CORE, L.L.C.	A review of the 2014 APEC study and updates to the scheme from 2014-2021.
ABTC Economy Information Table (2020)	BMG Convenor	A table that summarizes ABTC entry information in all APEC economies (e.g., validity, entry mechanism).
Letter from Business Mobility Group Convenor on Digitisation of the APEC Business Travel Card (2020)	BMG Convenor	A letter regarding the introduction of digital ABTC.
APEC Business Travel Card Mobile Application - Communications and Supporting Products Presentation (2020)	BMG Convenor	Covers the soft launch and hard launch of ABTC Mobile Application and introduces information sources, such as social media accounts and YouTube.
Frequently Asked Questions - The APEC Business Travel Card Mobile Application for Cardholders (2020)	BMG Convenor	This document covers some FAQs and a step-by-step guide on how to use the ABTC Mobile Application.
Business Mobility Group Convenor's Letter to APEC Business Advisory Council - APEC Business Travel Card Mobile Application (2020)	BMG Convenor	A letter that announces a new convenor of the Business Mobility Group (BMG) and covers some details about the ABTC App.
Cross Border Mobility in the APEC Region (2021)	Policy Support Unit, APEC Secretariat	Covers the background of the study on cross-border mobility and its results, numerical data/graphs on cross-border mobility, impacts of COVID-19 border restrictions on the number of arrivals and trips, policy discussions, and the importance of ABTC as a digital health pass.
APEC Business Travel Card Scheme Operations of the Republic of Korea (2021)	Korea	Covers the ABTC timeline in Korea, Korean ABTC statistics, management authorities in Korea, foreigner pre-clearance procedure in Korea, pre-clearance confirmation system in Korea, and a concluding remark that raises Korea's strategy for streamlined ABTC processing.
Introduction and Experience Sharing on China's APEC Business Travel Card Work (2021)	China	Describes China's ABTC background information (e.g., ministry in charge, number of applications), the qualifications for acquiring ABTC, application process, supervision,

		online lodgement (how it works, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' responsibilities, future development directions), and their experiences.
APEC Business Travel Card Management in Viet Nam (2021)	Viet Nam	Provides a brief historical background with APEC, issuance and management of ABTC (decision number, validity, permission, regulations, conditions), statistics and regulations in COVID-19 context (the trends in issued ABTCs and approved applications in Viet Nam, reasons for rejects, specific measures during the pandemic), and possible future directions.
Indonesia APEC Business Travel Card (2021)	Indonesia	Covers historical backgrounds and eligibility for ABTCs in Indonesia, the number of Indonesian ABTC holders, requirements for acquiring an ABTC, benefits for ABTC holders, some designated checkpoints in Indonesia, application process in Indonesia, and the implementation of virtual ABTC.
Opportunities and Challenges of APEC Business Travel Card Implementation with the Resumption of International Travel Post COVID-19 (2021)	Chile	Describes Chilean responsible organizations, the number of cross-border travels, ABTC process at Chilean border controls, and consular certificate system.
Future Travel Facilitation with APEC Business Travel Card? (2021)	Thailand	Describes the ABTC, eligibility, future directions, technologies, and suggestions of having two products, the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) and the APEC Frequent Travel Card (AFTC).
Reopening Borders: Current Development and Future Engagement of APEC Business Travel Card in Post COVID-19 Era (2021)	Australia	Covers some of the impacts and opportunities that the COVID-19 brought to the ABTC system, the timeline of the virtual ABTC and its features, and Australia's work on improving online lodgement and ABTC system enhancements.
Summary Report – Capacity Building Workshop on Improving the Utilization of APEC Business Travel Card 2021 (2021)	N/A	Summarizes the capacity building workshop on improving the utilization of APEC Business Travel Card in Indonesia held on 14-15 September 2021.
Agenda (2023)	BMG Convenor	The agenda for APEC SOM 3 / BMG meeting 2, which took place in Seattle, USA from 29 & 30 July 2023.

Table 18: Other Notable Reports/Papers

Title	Organization	Summary
2023 Business Travel Index Outlook: Annual Global Report & Forecast	Global Business Travel Association	This annual report covers the trends and forecast of business travel worldwide, covering 72 economies.
Navigating toward a new normal: 2023 Deloitte corporate travel study (2023)	Deloitte	The third edition of Deloitte's study on corporate travel trends.
IATA Annual Review 2023 (2023)	International Air Transport Association	The IATA's latest annual review discusses the issues that the air industry is facing since the COVID-19 pandemic.
Immigration: The U.S. Entry-Exit System (2023)	Congressional Research Service	Report on the U.S. immigration system, including the adoption of new biometric technologies for border security.
Two decades of biometrics: a story of responsible use (2021)	Biometrics Institute	A series of over 30 case studies on biometrics and security.
Adapting To Endemic Covid-19: The Outlook for Business Travel (2021)	World Travel and Tourism Council	A report on the impacts of the pandemic on business travel.
Time to Fly: The Impact of Covid–19 on the Present and Future of Business Travel (2021)	Chubb	Discusses the COVID-19 pandemic and business travel.
Development of Business Travel During the Covid -19 Pandemic and after the Ease of Restrictions (2021)	Geintech	Describes the types of business travel, its role in the overall turnover of the tourism business, and the need to create a modern infrastructure for the market.
Safe and seamless travel and improved traveler experience: OECD REPORT TO G20 TOURISM WORKING GROUP (2020)	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	A report on travel experience within the OECD, including multilateral or bilateral agreements on business travel.
Enabling Seamless Travel to the European Union: Research Monitoring Report (2020)	EU-LISA	A report on travel authorization processes, including the digitalization of the visa procedure, and pre-border checks.
Global Guidelines for Safe & Seamless Traveller Journey: A global effort: The adoption of innovative digital technologies to	World Travel and Tourism Council	Discusses digital technologies to enable seamless travel, including best practices recommendations.

enable seamless travel (2020)		
International Conference on Biometrics for Borders: Morphing and Morphing Attack Detection Methods Proceeding (2020)	FRONTEX	Discusses the outputs of a recent conference on biometrics and border security.
Towards a Borderless Africa? Regional Organisations and Free Movement of Persons in West and North-East Africa (2019)	German Institute of Development and Sustainability	Discusses travel facilitation initiatives in ECOWAS (West Africa) and IGAD (North-East Africa).
Study on the feasibility and implications of options to digitalise visa processing: Final report (2019)	European Commission	Discusses the digitalization of visa processes in the European Union.
Visa Facilitation: ENABLING TRAVEL & JOB CREATION THROUGH SECURE & SEAMLESS CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL (2019)	World Travel and Tourism Council	A report on visa policies worldwide, including a description of the ABTC scheme.

11 Appendices

11.1 Survey Questionnaires

The following two survey instruments were shared with public and private sector stakeholders as described in the Survey Findings section.

11.1.1 Survey of Government Officials

Performance Review Study of the ABTC Scheme:
Survey Questionnaire for Economies' ABTC Officials

By completing and returning this form, I consent to the collection, use and disclosure of the personal data provided below to the APEC Secretariat, for the purposes of project administration and evaluation and to be handled in accordance with the APEC Secretariat Personal Data Protection Policy.

1. ORGANIZATION AND CARDHOLDER DATA

Please <mark>highlight your responses</mark> to each question or enter your response.

1. What is your economy?
   - Australia
   - Brunei Darussalam
   - Canada
   - Chile
   - People's Republic of China
   - Hong Kong, China
   - Indonesia
   - Japan
   - Republic of Korea
   - Malaysia
   - Mexico
   - New Zealand
   - Papua New Guinea
   - Peru
   - The Republic of the Philippines
   - The Russian Federation
   - Singapore
   - Chinese Taipei
   - Thailand
   - United States
   - Viet Nam

2. What is your organization and/or department?

3. Approximately how many ABTC home economy applications do you **process** per year?

>

4. Approximately how many ABTC home economy applications do you **reject** each year?

>

5. What are the top reasons for rejections? Please select all that apply.
- Insufficient information
- Applicant is ineligible due to background
- Ineligible business type
- Criminal record
- Position within business does not qualify for the ABTC
- Legitimacy of business is questionable or cannot be determined
- Other:

>

6. What is the approximate rate of applications to ABTC holders? (e.g. 1:1, 2:1, etc.)

>

7. What is the current number of active ABTC cardholders in your economy?

>

8. How would you describe the current trend for the number of active ABTC cardholders in your economy since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic period (approx. 2022-present)?
- o Growth of 11% or more
- o Growth of 6-10%
- o Growth of 1-5%
- o Stable
- o Reduction of 1-5%
- o Reduction of 6-10%
- o Reduction of 11% or more

9. What is the approximate level of seniority of most cardholders from your economy?
- o CEO/President
- o Other leadership (vice-president, CFO, etc.)
- o Management-level staff (senior manager, project manager)
- o Not known

o   Other:

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10. What is the average frequency of travel within the APEC region for most cardholders from your economy?
- o   0-1 trips per year
- o   2-3 trips per year
- o   4-6 trips per year
- o   7+ trips per year
- o   Not known

11. From the following list of APEC economies, what are the top priority economies for cardholders from your economy? Please select up to 5, excluding your own economy.
- Australia
- Brunei Darussalam
- Canada
- Chile
- People's Republic of China
- Hong Kong, China
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Peru
- The Republic of the Philippines
- The Russian Federation
- Singapore
- Chinese Taipei
- Thailand
- United States
- Viet Nam
- (Not known)

12. What is the approximate gender balance of **most of the cardholders** that you process?
- o   Majority male (55-100%)
- o   Balanced (Neither more than 54%)
- o   Majority female (55-100%)
- o   Not known

13. What is the approximate gender balance of **total applicants** (including rejections)?
- o   Majority male (55-100%)
- o   Balanced (Neither more than 54%)
- o   Majority female (55-100%)
- o   Not known

14. What is the approximate representation of SMEs among cardholders from your economy?
- o About 25% or fewer of cardholders are from SMEs (0 – 25%)
- o Less than half of cardholders are from SMEs (25 – 45%)
- o About half of cardholders are from SMEs (45 – 55%)
- o About 75% of card holders are from SMEs (55 – 75%)
- o More than 75% of cardholders are from SMEs (75 – 100%)
- o Not known

2. STATUS OF ABTC IMPLEMENTATION

15. What is the approximate time for cardholders in your economy to be issued their interim **physical** ABTC once they have submitted an application?
- o Within 2 weeks
- o 2-4 weeks
- o 4-8 weeks
- o 8-12 weeks
- o More than 12 weeks
- o Not applicable (Virtual ABTC or does not issue interim cards)

16. What is the approximate processing time for cardholders in your economy to receive their ABTC once they have submitted an application?
- o Within 2 weeks
- o 2-4 weeks
- o 4-8 weeks
- o 8-12 weeks
- o More than 12 weeks

17. Are there any significant challenges or bottlenecks that you currently face in processing card applications or renewals? If so, please describe them here.

18. What is the general tone of feedback from cardholders from your economy regarding the speed of the ABTC application and vetting process?
- o Strongly positive
- o Somewhat positive
- o Neither positive nor negative
- o Somewhat negative
- o Strongly negative
- o No feedback

19. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for potential opportunities to improve ABTC processing times for foreign applicant pre-clearance?

20. Have you implemented the virtual ABTC and/or an online lodgement process? Please select all that apply.
- Virtual ABTC
- Online lodgement
- Neither

21. If you have not implemented the virtual ABTC, what are the notable barriers/concerns? Please enter 'N/A' if this question does not apply to your economy.

22. If you have implemented the virtual ABTC, are you experiencing any notable challenges? If yes, please describe the challenges. Please enter 'N/A' if this question does not apply to your economy.

23. If you have not implemented an online lodgement system, what are the notable barriers/concerns? Please enter 'N/A' if this question does not apply to your economy.

24. If you have implemented an online lodgement system, are you experiencing any notable challenges? If yes, please describe the challenges. Please enter 'N/A' if this question does not apply to your economy.

25. Are there any technologies that you expect to have an impact on the ABTC scheme in the next 1-5 years? Please select any from the list below.
- Biometric technologies
- E-gates
- AI applications
- None
- Other:

26. Has your economy made any improvements to airport IT and/or infrastructure that may impact ABTC holders? (Implementation of e-gates, etc.) If so, please describe them here.

27. If you are taking any special actions regarding cardholder privacy and data security, please describe them here.

28. Are there any notable best practices about the implementation of the ABTC scheme in your economy that would be helpful for other economies to learn from? (For example, application processing, at-the-border practices, new technologies, raising awareness of the card, human resources training/development, or others) If so, please describe the practices here.

3. CHANGES TO THE ABTC SCHEME

29. What do you believe are the highest priorities for improvement for the ABTC? Please select up to 3.
- Card application/renewal processing times
- Improving communication through the ABTC system
- Addressing card printing issues
- Implementing the virtual ABTC
- Implementing online application processes
- Human resources issues
- Costs/budget challenges
- At-the-border issues (non-recognition of card, etc.)
- Expanding ABTC utilization through additional traveler categories
- Expanding the benefits provided by the ABTC
- Privacy and data security
- Other:

30. What are your views on the expansion of the ABTC card to other professions or mid-level business persons?

- o   Strongly approve
- o   Somewhat approve
- o   Neither approve nor disapprove
- o   Somewhat disapprove
- o   Strongly disapprove

31. Does your economy allow the family members of ABTC cardholders to accompany them in fast-track lanes at immigration?

- o   Yes
- o   No
- o   Unsure

32. The ABTC has two transitional participants in the scheme (the U.S. and Canada), which do not provide pre-clearance for travelers to those economies, though cardholders may use the diplomats' lane on arrival. Would the ability to receive pre-clearance to these economies significantly increase the benefits of the ABTC to business travelers from your economy?

- o   Yes
- o   No
- o   Unsure

33. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for potential opportunities to improve the ABTC scheme?

4. FUTURE RESEARCH

34. Would you or a colleague from your organization be interested in participating as a speaker at an APEC workshop on the ABTC scheme to be held in mid-August 2024 in Lima, Peru? If so, please list the name and email of the person to contact.

11.1.2 Survey of Industry Associations

Performance Review Study of the ABTC Scheme:
Survey Questionnaire for Industry Associations

By completing and returning this form, I consent to the collection, use and disclosure of the personal data provided below to the APEC Secretariat, for the purposes of project administration and evaluation and to be handled in accordance with the APEC Secretariat Personal Data Protection Policy.

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1. ORGANIZATION AND CARDHOLDER DATA

Please <mark>highlight your responses</mark> to each question or enter your response.

1. What is your economy?
- Australia
- Brunei Darussalam
- Canada
- Chile
- People's Republic of China
- Hong Kong, China
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Peru
- The Republic of the Philippines
- The Russian Federation
- Singapore
- Chinese Taipei
- Thailand
- United States
- Viet Nam

2. Organization name

3. What is the role of your organization in the ABTC scheme? Please select all that apply.
- Certifies that the card applicant meets the conditions for the ABTC (through a supporting letter, letter of sponsorship, etc.)
- Directly submits application on behalf of cardholders
- Communicates about concerns of ABTC cardholders to government officials

- Other:

  [   ]

4. **What is the approximate level of seniority of most cardholders from your economy?**
   - CEO/President
   - Other leadership (vice-president, CFO, etc.)
   - Management-level staff (senior manager, project manager)
   - Not known
   - Other:

     [   ]

5. **What is the average frequency of travel within the APEC region for most cardholders from your economy?**
   - 0-1 trips per year
   - 2-3 trips per year
   - 4-6 trips per year
   - 7+ trips per year
   - Not known

6. **From the following list of APEC economies, what are the top priority economies for cardholders from your economy? Please select up to 5, excluding your own economy.**
   - Australia
   - Brunei Darussalam
   - Canada
   - Chile
   - People's Republic of China
   - Hong Kong, China
   - Indonesia
   - Japan
   - Republic of Korea
   - Malaysia
   - Mexico
   - New Zealand
   - Papua New Guinea
   - Peru
   - The Republic of the Philippines
   - The Russian Federation
   - Singapore
   - Chinese Taipei
   - Thailand
   - United States
   - Viet Nam
   - (Not known)

7. **What is the approximate gender balance of most of the cardholders from your economy?**
   - Majority male (55-100%)

- o Balanced (Neither more than 54%)
- o Majority female (55-100%)
- o Not known

2. STATUS OF ABTC IMPLEMENTATION

8. What is the approximate time for cardholders in your economy to be issued their interim **physical** ABTC once they have submitted an application?
- o Within 2 weeks
- o 2-4 weeks
- o 4-8 weeks
- o 8-12 weeks
- o More than 12 weeks
- o Not applicable (Virtual ABTC or does not issue interim cards)

9. What is the approximate processing time for cardholders in your economy to receive their ABTC once they have submitted an application?
- o Within 2 weeks
- o 2-4 weeks
- o 4-8 weeks
- o 8-12 weeks
- o More than 12 weeks

10. What is the general tone of feedback from cardholders from your economy regarding the speed of the ABTC application and vetting process?
- o Strongly positive
- o Somewhat positive
- o Neither positive nor negative
- o Somewhat negative
- o Strongly negative
- o No feedback

11. Are there any technologies that you expect to have an impact on the ABTC scheme in the next 1-5 years? Please select any from the list below.
- • Biometric technologies
- • E-gates
- • AI applications
- • None
- • Other:

3. CHANGES TO THE ABTC SCHEME

12. What do you believe are the highest priorities for improvement for the ABTC? Please select up to 3.
    - Card application/renewal processing times
    - Improving communication through the ABTC system
    - Addressing card printing issues
    - Implementing the virtual ABTC
    - Implementing online application processes
    - Human resources issues
    - Costs/budget challenges
    - At-the-border issues (non-recognition of card, etc.)
    - Expanding ABTC utilization through additional traveler categories
    - Expanding the benefits provided by the ABTC
    - Privacy and data security
    - Other:

13. How do you feel about the eligibility requirements for the ABTC in your economy?
    - ○ Too strict
    - ○ Somewhat too strict
    - ○ Neither too strict nor too permissive
    - ○ Somewhat too permissive
    - ○ Too permissive

14. What are your views on the expansion of the ABTC card to other professions or mid-level business persons?
    - ○ Strongly approve
    - ○ Somewhat approve
    - ○ Neither approve nor disapprove
    - ○ Somewhat disapprove
    - ○ Strongly disapprove

15. Does your economy allow the family members of ABTC cardholders to accompany them in fast-track lanes at immigration?
    - ○ Yes
    - ○ No
    - ○ Unsure

16. The ABTC has two transitional participants in the scheme (the U.S. and Canada), which do not provide pre-clearance for travelers to those economies, though cardholders may use the diplomats' lane on arrival. Would the ability to receive pre-clearance to these economies significantly increase the benefits of the ABTC to business travelers from your economy?
    - ○ Yes
    - ○ No
    - ○ Unsure

17. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for potential opportunities to improve the ABTC scheme?

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4. FUTURE RESEARCH

18. (For organizations from Canada; Japan; Papua New Guinea; or Peru) Would you or a colleague from your organization be willing to participate in an interview on the implementation of the ABTC scheme in your economy? If so, please list the name and email of the person to contact. Please enter 'N/A' if this question does not apply to your economy.

11.2 Workshop Presentations and Handouts

11.2.1 Workshop Presentations

The following workshop presentations are available for download through the APEC BMG database:

"APEC Business Travel Card: History and Workshop Goals"
Mr Conagh MCMAHON-HOGAN, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Home Affairs (Australia)
Link: https://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2024/BMG/BMG2/24_bmg2_014.pdf

"Performance Review Study of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme"
Mr James TETLOW, Senior Research Analyst, Washington CORE, L.L.C.
Link: https://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2024/BMG/BMG2/24_bmg2_015.pdf

"Value of the APEC Business Travel Card"
Mr Cormac POWER, Embassy of Australia to Peru and Bolivia,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
Link: https://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2024/BMG/BMG2/24_bmg2_013.pdf

"APEC Business Travel Card Survey Results - User Experience"
Mr Sebastian ELIAS Ibañez, Corporate Affairs Analyst at ComexPerú / ABAC Peru
Link: https://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2024/BMG/BMG2/24_bmg2_012.pdf

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Workshop for Performance Review Study of the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) Scheme

Breakout Session Discussion Items

1. <u>Identifying challenges in operating the ABTC</u>

This session aims to highlight obstacles and difficulties faced by government officials and stakeholders in the implementation of the ABTC scheme. Some possible discussion items include the following:

- Identifying barriers for potential applicants to apply for ABTC and renew it
- Assessing the progress of adoption of the ABTC/VABTC in each APEC economy, and the challenges of transitioning from the physical ABTC to the VABTC
- Identifying obstacles for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employees, women, people with disabilities or with dual citizenship, and those residing in a foreign economy to apply for ABTC
- Identifying barriers to the adoption of new technologies such as online lodgement
- Analyzing the factors that hinder systems standardization or harmonization across the APEC member economies
- Addressing a lack of knowledge among government officials and at-the-border staff about the ABTC scheme
- Identifying gaps in data about card usage

2. <u>Breakout Groups: Identifying solutions to ABTC challenges</u>

This second session will focus on soliciting ideas about potential solutions to address the challenges raised during the first session and improve the overall operation of the ABTC scheme. Some possible discussion items include the following:

- Considering strategies for enhancing the public awareness of the ABTC scheme, especially among under-represented travelers
- Simplifying and streamlining the ABTC's application process and necessary procedures for pre-clearance (in the home economy and in destination economies) and renewal
- Seeking how to design ABTC fast-track special lanes at airports so that ABTC holders can easily recognize and utilize them
- Seeking best practices of using VABTC in practice
- Discussing the ABTC's future refinements, such as expanding the scope of possible users, extending the validity of the ABTC (e.g., 10 years), and allowing cardholders' family to use the fast-track lanes along with ABTC holders
- Establishing a support group to build capacity among ABTC processing staff
- Conducting additional review studies to evaluate progress and disseminate essential information to all economies
- Considering measures for sharing best practices and information with other APEC economies, such as through workshops or meetings

11.2.3 Participant Survey

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed in the table below by circling the number that applies. Please feel free to leave comments to supplement your responses.

The workshop helped me understand better the past achievements, current benefits and challenges of the ABTC scheme.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree

Comment:

Evidence-based improvements to the ABTC scheme will be beneficial for businesses in my economy.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree

Comment:

The presentations and discussions helped me understand the challenges faced in the current implementation of ABTC.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree

Comment:

The presentations and discussions helped me think constructively of effective ways forward for the ABTC scheme.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree

Comment:

What were the most useful insights that you learned from today's workshop?

Are there any additional topics that were not covered in this workshop that you would like to see addressed in future workshops?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

<u>What further steps should APEC take to address member economy concerns on this subject?</u>

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Participant information

Delegation: _____

Organization type: (Please select one that applies from below)

Government Agency	International Organization (APEC, etc.)	Private Company or Industry Organization	Educational / Research Institution	Other
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If "Other", please specify.
_____
_____

The following information is optional.

Name/position:
_____
_____

Organization:
_____
_____

Email Address:
_____
_____

Gender: Male / Female / Other

Thank you. Your evaluation is important in helping us assess this project, improve project quality and plan next steps. Please send this survey form, and any questions or additional comments you may have, to:
apec@wcore.com

12 End Notes

[1] The full participants in the ABTC scheme are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Chile; China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; the Philippines; the Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

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[95] "Application for APEC Business Travel Card by PNG Citizens," Papua New Guinea Immigration & Citizenship Services Authority, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://ica.gov.pg/apec/application-for-apec-business-travel-card-by-png-citizens

[96] Interview with ICSA.

[97] "Application for APEC Business Travel Card by PNG Citizens," Papua New Guinea Immigration & Citizenship Services Authority, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://ica.gov.pg/apec/application-for-apec-business-travel-card-by-png-citizens

[98] "Business Mobility Group," APEC, accessed 9/17/2024. Web:https://www.apec.org/groups/committee-on-trade-and-investment/business-mobility-group

[99] Interview with PNG Business Council.

[100] "Population, total - Peru," World Bank Group, accessed 9/17/2024. Web:https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PE

[101] "Peru," The World Factbook, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/peru/

[102] "145 key tourism statistics," UN Tourism, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/key-tourism-statistics

[103] Ibid

[104] "Supporting Continued Growth in Trade and Facilitation: End to End Review of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme Final Report," APEC, 2024. Web: https://www.apec.org/publications/2014/11/supporting-continued-growth-in-trade-and-facilitation-end-to-end-review-of-the-apec-business-travel1

[105] "Business Mobility Group," APEC, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.apec.org/groups/committee-on-trade-and-investment/business-mobility-group

[106] Interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

[107] Interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

[108] Interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

[109] Required documents include a letter of introduction from the applicant's company, an original letter of sponsorship from an authorized business entity, and a letter signed by a holder and by a general manager and/or legal representative of the company. The applicants must also provide copies of pages 1, 2 and 3 of their valid passports, copies of their ID cards (both sides), and color, passport-sized photographs. See: https://www.comexperu.org.pe/archivos/abtc/Anexo%201%20-%20REQUISITOS.pdf

[110] "Tarjeta ABTC," Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: http://portal.rree.gob.pe/sitepages/abtc.aspx

[111] Interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

[112] These eight associations are the Sociedad de Comercio Exterior del Perú (ComexPerú, which is also the ABAC Peru office); Cámara Nacional de Comercio, Producción, Turismo y Servicios (PERUCÁMARAS); Sociedad Nacional de Pesquería (SNP); Cámara de Comercio de Lima, Sociedad Nacional de Industrias (SNI); Sociedad Nacional de Minería, Petróleo y Energía; Confederación Nacional de Instituciones Empresariales Privadas (CONFIEP); Asociación de Exportadores (ADEX).

[113] "Tarjeta ABTC" (Spanish language), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.gob.pe/institucion/rree/informes-publicaciones/2804818-tarjeta-abtc

[114] "APEC Business Travel Card," COMEXPERU Sociedad de Comercio Exterior del Perú, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.comexperu.org.pe/en/servicioabtc

[115] "Business Mobility Group," APEC, accessed 9/17/2024. Web: https://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/Business-Mobility-Group

[116] The responses listed as "other" referred to the lack of evidence regarding their positions (e.g., Senior Business Person [SBP]) and the failure to provide valid ID documents and ID photos.

[117] Note: Chinese Taipei selected two items.

[118] 3,417 responses were submitted only from South Korea, and ABAC Peru therefore did not use all of the responses to have a more balanced representation of economies.

[119] 55%: Preferential access for immigration, 40%: Exemption of visa in 19 APEC economies, 4%: Digital access, 1%: Other