

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Key Conclusions

When measured against its original objectives, the International Trade Business Plan acts as a useful means of communicating the government's plan with respect to international business development. It also consolidates the government's trade, investment and technology assistance activities in a single document. In its current format, the International Trade Business Plan serves the needs of groups with an overall policy interest (e.g. policy analysts, government employees, associations, sectoral advisory groups). However, it does not address the primary needs of businesses for commercial information (e.g. sales leads, competitive information, information on the business environment). While most business people understood the need for government to communicate its overall plan, the research showed that there are other objectives (such as providing businesses with information that will help them become more competitive on the international market) which could be pursued using existing or new information products and services. In particular, small businesses feel there is a role for government in collecting and delivering information that will help them penetrate new markets.

One of the key challenges in delivering commercial information is to ensure that it meets the specific needs of end-users. On one hand, information categorized under broad sectors may be of marginal use to many businesses, particularly small niche players. On the other hand, it would be difficult to define sectors which adequately describe each business operation. The answer lies in designing a system (whether electronic or personal) that offers the flexibility to respond to business and situation-specific enquiries.

At the same time, it is clear that business clients do not wish the government to allocate more resources to the delivery of information. This implies using existing resources, products and services to better address client needs.