



Legal Watch

DTI BRIDGES MSMEs AND STARTUPS THROUGH SMARTBRIDGE BUSINESS MATCHING SESSION



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SUMMARY

The Department of Trade and Industry–Bureau of Policy Research and Innovation (DTI-BPRI) launched the pilot of “SMARTBridge”, an initiative aimed at connecting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with startups to accelerate digital transformation and inclusive growth. The pilot, conducted on 24 March 2026 with DTI Region III, addresses the gap between MSMEs needing technological solutions and startups offering scalable innovations.

SMARTBridge uses a structured, needs-based matching approach, beginning with assessing MSME digital readiness, identifying operational gaps, and linking businesses with suitable startup solutions. Initial participants included startups YuFin, Bentamo, and JuanderGo, which presented digital tools directly to MSMEs for potential collaboration.

The program will run in three phases: diagnostic assessment, business matching, and post-implementation monitoring. By fostering direct collaboration, the initiative aims to enhance MSME competitiveness, support startup commercialization, and strengthen the broader innovation ecosystem. Expansion to other regions is planned following the pilot.

ACTIONABLE ADVICE

MSMEs should assess their digital readiness and consider participating in matching programs to access cost-efficient technology solutions. Businesses must conduct due diligence on startup partners, particularly on data privacy, cybersecurity, and service reliability.

Startups and investors should ensure clear contractual terms on intellectual property, data ownership, and performance obligations. Companies and financial institutions may also explore partnerships and funding structures that support digital adoption while managing operational and compliance risks.

* Agency Name

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

* Issuance Title

DTI bridges MSMEs and startups through SMARTBridge business matching session

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