



VAT Simplifying the collection of Tax.

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

HIGHLY TECHNICAL TEAM ADMINISTERS VAT IMPLEMENTATION

Castries, May 09, 2012; During its official press conference to fully demystify the significant aspects of VAT Implementation, the VAT Project Office also took to the opportunity to formally present the Technical Team charged with the mandate to mobilize the citizenry and prepare the country for the implementation of the Value Added Tax (VAT) in Saint Lucia from September 1, 2012.

The VAT Implementation Project Office falls under the purview of the Ministry of Finance, and as such was formally introduced by Permanent Secretary Finance, Isaac Anthony.

Tax Administrator and Chartered Accountant Adria Rose Sonson is at the helm bringing to the office a wealth of experience. As Deputy Comptroller of Inland Revenue Department, Ms. Sonson has also served as Chairperson of the Department's Legislative Review Committee as well as St. Lucia's representative on the Technical Working Group of the Caribbean Organization of Tax Administrators and Secretary to the Insurance Appeal Tribunal. She was also Inland Revenue's Representative on the Cabinet appointed Committee to ensure that St. Lucia successfully complete the phases of the Global Forum Peer Review, with a specific focus on process transparency in exchange of tax information.

Providing guidance to the Technical Team, Steering and Operations Committees on all project components, the new VAT Coordinator is also responsible to ensure an extensive and thorough stakeholder engagement programme that touches all aspects of the implementation process.

Customs Specialist Brian Wardrope is responsible for the modification of Customs Procedures, forms and systems, pursuant to the collection of the VAT on imports. His role is integral to the development of transitional rules and procedures consequent upon the implementation of the VAT system. Mr. Wardrope advises the Project Team on all matters relating to the Customs and Excise Department. He also advises on the current arrangements for any modification of existing provisions for Importers, Exporters, Manufacturers and other Customs clientele.

As Chief Economic Analyst within the VAT Implementation Project Office Fleur Simmons directs the conduct of analyses on the impact of changes in tax policy on economic activity, government revenue, prices and competitiveness. Ms. Simmons provides counsel to the Operations and Steering Committees and chairs the Social Policy Committee, on various fiscal policy issues.

As the Inland Revenue Specialist, Augustus Amedee, Chartered Accountant spearheaded the development of the relevant forms, guides and other material for use by potential VAT registrants and provided quality assurance on the appropriate legislation for the introduction of the VAT system. He was also integrally involved in providing guidance on the ideal organizational structure for the establishment of the VAT Unit and the development of operations manuals needed to administer the VAT; He is also engaged in the development of Training for the Business Sector.

The process of communication between the VAT Project Office and its diverse constituents is coordinated by Lisa Goodman. Ms Goodman is a seasoned Tax officer; she has given many years of service to the Inland Revenue Department especially in the area of Customer Service and Taxpayer Relations. Ms Goodman's role will prove vital in the development and delivery of an extensive public education campaign. This communication thrust also includes training for VAT registrants and their accountants, sectoral talks, seminars, lecturers as well as traditional and new media outputs to ensure a pervasive public outreach programme on the implementation of the VAT.

With the support of our PR Consultants Right Angle imaging, Ms. Goodman will ensure that the VAT Team meets its mandate of educating the Saint Lucian public and ensuring a high level of awareness on VAT and VAT related issues.

As the Financial Consultant employed with the Project Office from March 2011, Ms Rita Hawkins, Chartered Accountant has a wealth of experience in the VAT environment having worked in the UK as a VAT Consultant for more than 15 years. As a former business owner she is also well versed in issues related to local business.

Providing Administrative support to the Team is Ms Joan Justin and Ms Joshann Charles.

In formally meeting local press, Coordinator Adria Sonson issued a call for mutual facilitation and cooperation, mindful of the specific mandate of the VAT Project Office.

“Part of our mandate is public education; inherent in that mandate is an appreciation for the process of engagement and mutual facilitation so that as a country, we can implement VAT as seamlessly as possible. It is important to understand we are not here to accommodate intrigue and speculation. We are well past that. Our role is to tell you what you need to do to prepare. On that you can depend,” She said.

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