

How To Engage the Tobago FDIC — Your First Step as an Investor

Start here. This guide explains what the Commission is responsible for, how those responsibilities are organised, and the four practical touchpoints available to a prospective investor: pre-application briefing, project submission, approval facilitation, and ongoing monitoring. Written for investors, referring bodies, and local partners who want to know exactly what the Commission owns, and how to bring a proposal into its pipeline.

Key Points

- The Commission is the body responsible for foreign direct investment in Tobago, established within the Office of the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly.
- Its three mandate functions under the Governance Charter are Evaluate, Facilitate, and Monitor & Advise, each performed as an owned responsibility.
- The Commission owns the coordination of the multi-agency approvals a project requires; it does not itself issue statutory licences, but sequencing and delivering the approvals is its job.
- The most valuable point of engagement is the pre-application briefing, engage the Commission BEFORE you commit to land, an operator, or a jurisdiction.
- There are four touchpoints: (1) pre-application briefing, (2) formal project submission, (3) approval facilitation, (4) ongoing monitoring.
- Every submission is treated confidentially and evaluated against the Commission's published criteria.
- The Commission does not charge application or facilitation fees.

1. The Commission's responsibilities

The Tobago Foreign Direct Investment Commission is the body responsible for foreign direct investment in Tobago. It is constituted under a formal Governance Charter and operates within the Office of the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. Its responsibilities are:

- Setting the criteria against which FDI proposals, joint ventures and public-private partnerships are evaluated for Tobago.
- Receiving, qualifying, and evaluating proposals against those criteria, assessing financial, legal, technical, operational, environmental and socio-economic dimensions.

- Assigning a Protocol to qualifying projects, the coordinating framework that ties each project to a Relationship Manager and a Project Manager inside the Commission.
- Sequencing and coordinating the multi-agency approvals a project requires, Foreign Investor Licence, Fiscal Incentives, planning permission, environmental clearance, THA-issued permits, and sector-specific licences.
- Convening the counter-party Ministries, agencies, THA Divisions and vetted service providers required to advance a project.
- Maintaining the Commission's registers, investors, entities, projects, approvals, and the vetted service-provider directory.
- Monitoring approved projects through construction, commissioning and ongoing operation against the commitments made in the submission.
- Advising the Executive Council and the Tobago House of Assembly on the state of the pipeline, sectoral opportunities, and the reforms Tobago's investment competitiveness requires.
- Reporting periodically on the delivery of Tobago's development priorities through the FDI pipeline.

These responsibilities are exercised as the Commission's own, not as an advisory role subordinate to any other body. The Commission's Charter empowers it to lead the FDI portfolio for Tobago, and it is accountable to the Executive Council for the integrity of that portfolio.

2. Touchpoint 1, Pre-application briefing

This is the highest-value engagement the Commission offers. Before you commit to a site, an operator, or a jurisdictional structure, request a pre-application briefing.

In a briefing the Commission will:

- Confirm whether the sector and location fit Tobago's development priorities.
- Map the approvals you will need, Foreign Investor Licence, planning permission, environmental clearance, sector-specific licences, incentive applications.
- Introduce you to the counter-party agencies and, where useful, to service providers on the vetted directory.
- Flag any red-flag issues, coastal setback constraints, protected areas, land title complications, or beneficial-ownership disclosures, that must be resolved up-front.

Briefings are typically 60–90 minutes, held either in Tobago, in Trinidad, or by video call. Request one through the Access Request form or by direct email to the Commission secretariat.

3. Touchpoint 2, Formal project submission

Once your concept is defined, the next step is a formal submission. The Commission accepts submissions using a light-touch structured template that captures:

- Investor identity, corporate structure, and beneficial ownership.
- Project description, sector, location, sizing, phasing, capex, employment.
- Land control, deed, option, lease or heads of terms.
- Funding structure, equity, debt, and any co-investors.
- Team and operators.
- Approvals sought.
- Ask of the Commission, what specific facilitation you need.

The Commission evaluates the submission internally, may request supplementary information, and, where the project passes the evaluation criteria, assigns a Protocol (a coordinating package that ties the project to a Relationship Manager and a Project Manager inside the Commission).

4. Touchpoint 3, Approval facilitation

Once a project has a Protocol, the Commission takes ownership of coordinating the required statutory approvals. That work includes:

- Convening pre-application meetings with the relevant Ministry or agency (Foreign Investment Directorate at the Ministry of Finance, Town & Country Planning, Environmental Management Authority, Ministry of Trade & Industry, THA Divisions).
- Assembling multi-agency working groups where a project spans several approvals.
- Sequencing workstreams so approvals happen in the right order and dependencies are respected.
- Tracking each approval against its expected timeline and escalating delays.
- Reporting the state of each project's approvals to the Commission's leadership and, at portfolio level, to the Executive Council.

The Commission does not itself issue the statutory approvals, those remain with the responsible Ministries and agencies by law. But delivering the approvals for each qualifying project is the Commission's responsibility, and the Commission is accountable for the pipeline's throughput.

5. Touchpoint 4, Ongoing monitoring

The Commission's responsibility does not end at approval. Once construction or operation begins, the Commission continues to monitor the project against the commitments made in the submission. This protects the investment for both the investor (who wants confidence that its counter-party commitments, including local employment, environmental mitigation, and community engagement, are being tracked)

and for Tobago (which needs to know its development priorities are being delivered).

Monitoring is not audit. The Commission does not send inspectors. It maintains a dialogue with the investor and the assigned Relationship Manager, receives periodic status updates, and raises issues in the ordinary course of business. Where a project materially departs from its commitments, the Commission escalates to the Executive Council and to the responsible Ministries.

6. Boundaries, what falls to others

So there is no ambiguity in the division of labour:

- Statutory approvals, Foreign Investor Licences, planning permissions, environmental clearances, work permits, Fiscal Incentives Orders, are issued by the responsible Ministries and agencies. The Commission delivers a coordinated pipeline through them; it does not sit on top of them.
- Legal, tax and financial advice, investors engage their own qualified advisers. The Commission does not act as counsel to any party.
- Negotiation with third parties, the Commission does not represent an investor in commercial negotiations. It convenes; it does not advocate for one side.
- Application fees, the Commission does not charge investors for evaluation, facilitation or monitoring.

7. Requesting an engagement

The two front doors to the Commission:

- Access Request form on the public website, for investors, referring bodies, and service providers seeking secured portal access.
- Contact form, for general inquiries, media, and coordination requests.

Requests are triaged inside the Commission's secretariat and routed to the appropriate Commissioner or officer. Response is typically within five business days.

Sources

- Tobago FDIC Governance Charter (internal)
- Executive Council Minute constituting the Commission

This guide is an informational summary prepared by the Tobago Foreign Direct Investment Commission for the benefit of prospective investors. It does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice. Legislation and administrative practice change from time to time, always consult a qualified attorney-at-law admitted in Trinidad & Tobago before acting on any of this material. Where a discrepancy exists between this guide and the underlying statute, the statute prevails.