



Barbados e-Government Programme Status Update



Ministry of the Civil Service
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Introduction

On-demand access to information, services and social networks on the Internet is no longer considered cutting-edge in developed regions but a norm that many people take for granted.

It is a known fact that countries slow to embrace e-Government tend to remain mired in the typical institutional pathologies of supply-driven services and procedures, remoteness between government and citizen, and opaque decision-making processes.



The Barbados e-Government Programme will result in a totally new way of doing business for the Barbados Public Service. For e-Government to be successful, all of our ministries and agencies will need to introduce major changes in business processes and organisational structures and technology.

We will have to learn new skills and competencies and work assiduously to raise our service standards to new levels.

In 2003, the Ministry of the Civil Service was assigned the responsibility for e-Government. By 2006, the MCS had developed an E-government Strategy which outlined a number of goals/projects. All of the projects being carried out are linked directly to the present E-government Strategy.

The broad goals for the Government of Barbados' e-Government Programme are:

- a. Better delivery of services to citizens and businesses;**
- b. Greater productivity and efficiency in the operations of government agencies; and**
- c. Greater transparency and governance through broadening public participation in the governmental process.**

The objectives of the e-Government Programme are:

- a. To establish a structure for the management of the e-government programme;
- b. To put in place the technical infrastructure and architecture to support the various e-government initiatives;
- c. To ensure that adequate resources (physical, human and financial) are provided to ensure the successful implementation of the e-government programme;
- d. To review and enhance all government services utilising ICT; and
- e. To develop a communications/marketing strategy to ensure that people, both external and internal to the public service, understand the vision, the changes that will occur and the tangible benefits to be derived from e-government.

In essence, e-Government has the transformational ability of bringing government to the people - rather than having people coming to government. e-Government offers the promise of less bureaucracy, reduced levels of paperwork, no queues, and significantly enhanced levels of service.

Staffing

The e-Government Unit is headed by a Chief e-Government Development Officer who is supported by an e-Government Development Officer and a System Analyst.

Current Situation

Studies carried out by the e-Government Unit found the following concerns/issues that have an impact on e-Government implementation:

1. Ownership of and accessibility to information /data;
2. Interconnectivity and information sharing between the various ministries/departments;
3. Inadequate physical infrastructure to support the deployment of new information systems;
4. The need for a centralised unit, which would be responsible for all Information Systems/Information Technology issues. At present the responsibility for the provision of ICT services, policy formulation and programme development is shared by three government agencies: the e-Government Unit and Data Processing Department (Ministry of the Civil Service) and the Ministry of Commerce and Trade (e-Commerce and ICT Strategy);
5. The need for common standards, policies and procedures for the acquisition and deployment of



- both hardware and software;
6. The need for additional IT posts to support existing and proposed projects; and more importantly, how best human resources can be deployed to meet efficiently the IT needs of the public sector given the scarcity of skills in this area;
 7. The need to ensure that only licensed software is used by Government agencies.

Projects done by the e-Government Unit to date

1. **e-Government Strategy (2006)** - completed and approved by Cabinet in 2006.
2. **Institutional Framework for e-Government (2007)** – This framework established a structure for the management of the e-Government Programme. It involves the transformation of Data Processing Department into the Information Management Agency (IMA) which will play an integral role in the management and implementation of some aspect of the e-Government Programme. This institutional framework is yet to be implemented.
3. **Design of a Government Wide Area Network (2010)** - This network will provide the infrastructure for Government to implement e-Government programmes and creates an opportunity for the rationalisation of government's current data and voice networks. The network is not the end, but is the means to the end of accomplishing the goals as articulated in the e-Government Strategy.
4. **Implementation of Government Wide Area Network (TBD)** - This WAN was conceptualized to serve as a key infrastructural element and a catalyst for Government to aggressively implement its proposed e-Government programmes. Additionally, the WAN will enable the rationalisation of Government's current data and voice networks. The Government expects many benefits and services from the implementation of the high-speed WAN. These benefits are listed below:
 - Reduced operational cost through standardization, consolidation of hardware & human resources and economies of scale;
 - Government has significant buying power; hence aggregating the requirements across government should significantly reduce the costs of acquiring broadband/Internet access.
 - High-speed inter-agency connections for greater communication and service delivery efficiencies;
 - Internet gateway for Government which is secure and cost effective;

- Extensive utilisation of IP telephony with resultant cost savings;
- Provision of new secure modes of communication between government and citizens;
- Easier sharing and dissemination of information between all stakeholders;
- Facilitated deployment of enterprise-wide applications and services which enable improved and re-engineered government operations such as budgeting, financial management, human resource management, payroll and procurement, records management; and
- Meeting pent-up demand for connectivity across government and within ministries and agencies.

Grant funding for this project is expected to be obtained from the **European Union (EU)** through the **Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2011-2013**. The MIP intervention will support the achievement of the following broad-based results:

- Rationalisation of Knowledge management systems and information access
 - High speed wide-area-network linking all government departments developed as part of Barbados' e-government programme.

Once funding is secured a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be made available to suitable vendors to submit their proposal.

- 5. Draft e-Government Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) (2011)** -The e-Government Interoperability Framework (GIF) will govern the seamless flow of information across Government agencies to increase efficiency, transparency and accountability, ensure good governance, government continuity and contribute to a vibrant democracy.

To achieve interoperability, a process which includes a series of incremental steps is required over time. This Framework provides for the ongoing monitoring and reviews of international ICT trends and market demands for the development and ongoing review of relevant policies and practices to ensure that e-Government services are delivered to the highest standards possible. This e-GIF is ready for implementation once the institutional framework and infrastructure is completed.

6. Standards and Policy for the Government Wide Area Network (2011)

– These policies and standards were developed to compliment the GWAN.

Areas covered by these standards and policies include:

- Existing Network Migration;
- Hosting of Business Applications (Central or Ministry);
- Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Maintenance Contracts;
- Government Service Desk;
- Training;
- Voice over IP (VoIP), and IP Telephony;
- Intellectual Capital;
- Architectural Framework;
- Government WAN Usage (vs. Ministry alternative);
- Network Abuse;
- IP Address Schemes; and
- Standard Convention for Username/Password.

Presently, these draft standards and policies are being circulated for comments and feedback. These standards and policies will be ready for implementation once the institutional framework and technical infrastructure is completed.

7. Electronic Document & Record Management System (eCabinet System) (2010)

The use of an Electronic Document & Record Management System (EDRMS) within any organization can have considerable benefits. The core function of the Cabinet Office as well as the members of the Cabinet of Barbados is to utilize information for decision making. It creates, collects, processes, distributes, stores and retrieves information as an integral part of its business process and activities. Additionally, it has invested heavily in desktop technologies to provide access to applications and other productivity tools and unless the next stage is undertaken, which is the implementation of the EDRMS, Government will spend a considerable amount of time, money and effort each day manually processing or searching for information. In addition, the information base at the Cabinet Office and indeed Government on a whole is expanding at an incredible rate. Once this system is implemented successfully the benefits and payback would be achieved within a two (2) year period. Some of the expected benefits to be derived from the implementation include:-

- increased efficiency and effectiveness in the timeliness of the availability of information;
- improved knowledge sharing and retention of, and access to, corporate memory;
- improved capacity to explain, and provide evidence of, an organisation's actions and decisions;

- appropriate management of records consistent with their retention requirements; and
- decreased storage, material and labour costs.

It should be noted that this solution was chosen as the Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) for Government as a whole and the Cabinet Office is just the pilot agency before roll-out to the entire public service. Presently, the Cabinet Office is piloting the submission of Travel Papers to the system. It is expected that the submission of Cabinet Papers will commence shortly once resources are in place to deal with the transition.

Presently, the e-Government Unit has a number of requests for the implementation of the EDRMS from various Ministries and Department. For this to be done in a timely manner additional resources will be required.

8. Updating of e-Government Strategy (2014) - It has been six years since the e-Government Strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2006. This strategy now needs to be revised and updated to reflect the current state of ICT in the public sector and the changes in technology. The Ministry of the Civil Service is proposing to retain the services of a consultant to review the existing ICT environment in the Barbados Public Sector including the executing agencies, review the existing e-government strategy and develop an updated e-government master plan for the public service of Barbados.

The e-Government Master Plan will lead to the innovation of government work processes, better public service to both businesses and citizens, and promote citizen participation. The Barbados' e-Government, Service Transformation, Reform, Organisational & Network Governance (Be STRONG) should be the central theme for the e-Government Programme going forward. "Be STRONG" should figure prominently in the new e-Government Master Plan when completed.

It is expected that this new e-Government Master Plan will be completed by the second quarter of 2014 on expected funded is secured.

Way Forward

Barbados' e-Government, Service Transformation, Reform, Organisational & Network Governance (Be STRONG) Programme (TBD) – The MCS wants this to be the central theme for the e-Government Programme going forward. All of the projects mentioned before are captured in the “Be STRONG” programme. “Be STRONG” will figure prominently in the new e-Government Strategy when completed.

According to the UN e-Government Survey (2012), Barbados continues to lead the region thanks to its better telecommunication infrastructure and higher adult literacy and gross enrolment, followed by Antigua and Barbuda and the Bahamas. Barbados leads the Caribbean in both Internet users and broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants. This advantage allowed Barbados to maintain its e-government edge despite the fact that other countries scored more highly in **online services**. The MCS has taken note of these findings and is committed to maintaining Barbados' ranking by taking steps to implementing a new e-Government Strategy and identifying e-Service projects within the new strategy. However, the outstanding issues of the technical infrastructure (GWAN) and the institutional framework must be address as a matter of urgency for the e-Government programme to be successful.