



The Office of the Minister of Planning and Development

PL&D: 6/12/3 Vol. XII-Temp.

May 19, 2023

The Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Speaker of the House
Speaker's Chamber
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
The Red House
St Vincent Street
Port of Spain



Dear Madam Speaker,

Additional Information Received from the Ministry of Finance Re: Seventh Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on the examination into the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) for fiscal year 2021

Reference is made to my letter PL&D: 6/12/3 dated February 01, 2023 on the captioned subject.

The Ministry of Finance subsequently submitted information in response to the findings and recommendations of the Committee under "The Social and Economic Effects of COVID-19" on pages 13 and 14 of the report.

In this regard, please find attached this recent information from the Ministry of Finance which is in addition to the Ministerial response to the recommendations of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC) contained in the Seventh Report of the PAAC on the examination into the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) for fiscal year 2021. An electronic copy of the response will be e-mailed to the Parliament via coth@ttparliament.org.

Sincerely,

Penelope Beckles, MP
Minister of Planning and Development

Enc.

cc: Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel,
Clerk of the House

MEMORANDUM

To: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance
Attn. Ms. Suzette Taylor-Lee Chee

From: Commissioner of Inland Revenue and Chairman of the Board

Date: April 6, 2023

Subject: The Seventh Report of the PAAC on the examination into the Implementation of the PSIP for FY 2021

I refer to your memorandum dated March 06, 2023 on the above mentioned subject matter Ref: F: (SMEO): 3/33/11.

The PSIP Projects at the Inland Revenue Division during 2021 focused on the areas of Information Technology Infrastructure and Facilities Improvement.

Within the Inland Revenue Division there is no specialised Project Management Unit responsible for the management and implementation of PSIP Projects, however the responsibility for these projects falls under the remit of the staff of the ICT and the Facilities Management Units.

In response to the requested information, the following is submitted:

1. Resources for PSIP Implementation

i. Within Project Management Units or other Division/Units charged with the implementation of PSIP Projects, please provide the following staffing information:

a) A listing of the positions;

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- Network Operation Centre Manager
- ICT Security Specialist

- Senior Network Specialist
- Senior IT Infrastructure Specialist
- IT Infrastructure Specialist
- Data Operations Manager
- Senior Database Specialist
- Database Specialist
- Client Support Unit Manager
- Computer Technician

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- Facilities Manager
- Senior Facilities Officer
- Facilities Officers (2)

b) Those positions which are vacant and the approximate length of the vacancy;

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- Senior IT Infrastructure Specialist - one (1) position, Vacant 3 years
- IT Infrastructure Specialist -one (1) position, Vacant 7 years

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- Facilities Manager - one (1) position, Vacant 4 years & 8 Months
- Senior Facilities Officer - one (1) position, Vacant 3 years & 6 Months
- Facilities Officer - one (1) position, Vacant 4 years & 9 Months
- Facilities Officer one (1) position, Vacant 7 years

c) Those positions that are filled;

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- Network Operation Centre Manager
- ICT Security Specialist
- Senior Network Specialist
- Data Operations Manager
- Senior Database Specialist
- Database Specialist
- Client Support Unit Manager

- Computer Technician

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

All positions remain vacant, however a temporary contract position of Senior Building Officer was created to supplement critical facilities functions including project management.

d) Remarks on project management staff;

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- There is a high turnover of staff due to officers not receiving contracts and renewal of contract on a timely basis.

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- Limited project resources have created limited results.
- The Senior Building Officer is tasked with an overwhelming amount of project management and daily responsibilities.

ii. The Project Implementation challenges and other challenges experienced due to the frequent departure of project management/project implementation staff;

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- The departure of project implementation staff causes longer periods for implementation and additional workload for existing staff.

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- The Administrative Officer V lacks Project Management skills and knowledge and relies on the Senior Building Officer to pick up the slack. This slows the progress of any project implementation.
- Further delays are experienced due to:
 1. The frequent changes of senior officers within the Procurement Unit who are involved in the project approval process due to acting and retirement;
 2. Lack of knowledge transfer;
 3. Poor integration of processes;
 4. Poor communication;

5. Interpersonal conflicts;
6. Little or no buy-in/ support for project initiatives.

iii. *Details on specific plans and the constraints to implementation of these plans, aimed at retention of staff and standardizing remuneration for project management/project implementation staff;*

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- The process for the renewal of contracts and recruitment of new staff is a major issue to the implementation of projects.

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- There is little or experience in the area of project management and the methodologies by the officers involved and responsible for the approval process.
- The above causes longer periods for implementation and additional workload for existing staff in the approval process of projects.

2. COVID-19 and its impact on PSIP Implementation

i. *As a result of the Social and Economic effects of Covid-19, please state:*

a. *The challenges experienced in project implementation, with examples;*

➤ **Information & Communications Technology Unit**

- The Covid-19 Pandemic had no direct negative impact on the implementation of the PSIP Project.

➤ **Facilities Management Unit**

- Due to the closure of the construction industry, projects were deferred until the restrictions were lifted in July 2021. Therefore, there was insufficient time within the fiscal year to implement projects.

b. The measures that were used to overcome these challenges;

- No measures were applied. Projects were deferred.

c. The lessons learnt and the strategies to be adopted based on these challenges;

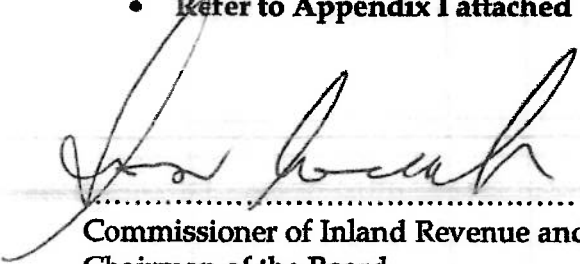
- Not applicable

d. Whether there were any effects on staff availability for project implementation.

- All efforts were focused on business continuity based on the high level of staff placed on quarantine. Project implementation was deferred.

ii. Please provide a listing of PSIP Projects whose implementation were affected by Covid-19 and please state how implementation was affected.

- Refer to Appendix I attached



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Commissioner of Inland Revenue and
Chairman of the Board

APPENDIX I

INLAND REVENUE DIVISION

LIST OF PSIP PROJECTS

2020/2021

> INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Upgrading of Information Technology	1,315,766.44	5,000,000.00	5,000,000.00	
Sub Projects:				
Infrastructure Upgrade - Virtualization Services Hardware Replacement				There is a risk that IRD's virtualization solution will be unavailable if the supporting hardware which will became end of life in April 2018

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Infrastructure Upgrade - Network Services Hardware Replacement				There is a risk that IRD's applications such as SCCM, SCOM and Antivirus will be unavailable if the supporting hardware which will become end of life in April 2018 is not replaced. Project is brought forward to 2022 due to insufficient funds.
Infrastructure Upgrade - Core ICT Services Hardware Replacement				There is a risk that ICT services will be unavailable if the Division's Data Centre network switches are not covered by an active warranty agreement and will become end-of-life by Sep 30th 2020 is not replaced. Insufficient funds to complete project. Brought forward to 2020/2021.

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Disaster Recovery - Endpoint security				As a result of the inability to manage and administer checkpoint endpoint security at IRD's DR site in the event of Head Office being unavailable, there is the risk that enterprise wide changes will not be possible at the DR site resulting unavailability of the services. Insufficient funds to complete project in fiscal 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. Brought forward to 2021/2022.

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Implementation of Service Desk Solution				At present IRD's Service Desk process is semi-automated with the support of an in-house developed application that has numerous limitations. The Service Desk function is hindered with limited workflow capability, and automation, and inadequate alerting mechanism to optimize operations. Insufficient funds to complete project in fiscal 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. Brought forward to 2021/2022.

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Development of a Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution				There is a risk that IRD has a weak audit trail infrastructure resulting in lack of visibility of the infrastructure resulting in restriction in the audit and forensic capabilities and non-compliance with exchange of information requirements. Insufficient funds to complete project in fiscal 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. Brought forward to 2021/2022.
IT Security / Threat Prevention				There is a risk that malicious files uploaded from taxpayers and third parties can affect IRD's systems resulting in the exposure, exfiltration/theft of sensitive information, data corruption, and ICT service outages.

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Disaster Recovery - SAN Management				The purpose of this project is to increase the enterprise storage capacity based on the Division's information needs
Disaster Recovery - Tape Library				There is a risk of mechanical failure of the Tape Library Drive caused by wear and tear resulting in loss of backup and recovery services. The project involves the expansion/replacement of the current tape library to accommodate multiple data sources.
ICT Communications Hardware Upgrade				As a result of the lack of proactive monitoring and alerting via a Fault, Configuration, Availability, Performance & Security (FCAPS) Single Pane of Glass Solution there is a risk of security compromise

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
				resulting in delayed response to ICT incidents thus negatively affecting availability of ICT services.
Standardization Project - User Machines				As a result of the use of obsolete computer devices/hardware and tools (projectors, smart boards) by IRD staff, there is a risk that IRD's users will be unable to access the tax application resulting in the loss of services to the IRD staff and taxpayers. Some equipment purchased in fiscal 2019. However replacement of equipment will become end-of-life in 2020 is required in this phase.

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Standardization Project - User Printers				As a result of the use of obsolete printers by IRD staff, there is a risk that IRD's users will be unable to print tax related documents resulting in the loss of services to the IRD staff and taxpayers
Upgrade of Data Centre top-of-the-rack switches (North and South)				There is a risk that ICT services will be unavailable if the Division's network switches are not covered by an active warranty agreement and will become end-of-life by October 2021 is not replaced.
Wireless solution for IRD conferencing rooms				This solution will be used to facilitate conferencing among IRD staff and external agencies
Purchase of hardware for Web Based Solution for Exchange of Tax Info				The solution for the exchange of information between IRD and treaty partners will be

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
				implemented in 2021. New servers will be required to support this solution.

➤ FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Project	2021 Actual Expenditure	2020/2021 Approved Estimates	2020/2021 Revised Estimates	Explanations
Upgrading of the Facilities of the Regional and District Revenue Offices	\$120,000.00	\$700,000.00	\$700,000.00	
Sub Projects:				
External Upgrade				
Roof & Fence	Couva, La Brea, Point Fortin District Revenue Offices	\$200,000.00		
Infrastructure Upgrade				
• Electrical Assessment/modification	IT Fail over site - South Regional Office	\$200,000.00		
• UPS systems phase 1 of 3 replacements				
• Generator maintenance and repairs				
• Air conditioning steel platform support				
Office Environment				
Kitchens/Counters/Painting	Couva, Siparia, La Brea DRS	\$100,000.00		
Air Conditioning Upgrades	Tunapuna DRS Trade Zone,	\$200,000.00		\$120,000 (Tunapuna air conditioning repair)

Given the absence of a central agency responsible for project implementation within the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry's PSIP portfolio is spread across numerous Divisions and Units. As such, the information tabulated below is reflective of same and captures each of the relevant Divisions' challenges and experiences.

Subject	Questions	Building Management Unit – Security	Building Management Unit – Facilities	Customs and Excise Division
Resources for PSIP Implementation	A listing of the positions	- Security Manager - Assistant Manager - CCTV Supervisor - CCTV Technical Operators		One (1) Project Operations Assistant (On short-term employment)
	Positions that are vacant and the approximate length of the vacancy	Assistant Manager since 2012	BOA II - 2 years	N/A
	Positions that are filled	- Security Manager - CCTV Supervisor - CCTV Technical Operators	Facilities Manager	N/A
	Remarks on Project Management staff turnover or lack of turnover	Project Management staff is needed. Three (3) positions were created: - Two (2) Shift Supervisors for the Security Surveillance Centre and; - One (1) Business Operations Assistant I	The Facilities Management Section is severely understaffed which hampers its capabilities to implement projects at the various Divisions. In this regard, Head Office was given priority. However, we have the following positions on short term: - One (1) Facilities Officer - Two (2) Facilities Technician	In the absence of a Project Management Unit, the limited technical and administrative staff employed in the CED are required to manage major projects such as the Construction of Customs Facilities at Hart's Cut; Development of a Website for CED; Upgrade of Jetty at the Port of Cedros by the installation of a Tidal Protection/Break Water System, etc.
	The Project Implementation challenges and other challenges experienced due to the frequent departure of the Project Management/ Project Implementation staff	- Delayed release of funds - Contractors are not fulfilling contractual time line - Overseas shipping problem - accessing components, equipment and materials	- Long Procurement Process - Delay in release of funds - Contractor Shipping delays - Small facilities management team	- Absence of a Project Management Unit. - Geographical demands of projects ranging from Chaguararnas to Cedros. - The wide diversity of the projects. - The degree of technical and professional knowledge required. - The demands of staff's substantive positions

Subject	Questions	Building Management Unit – Security	Building Management Unit – Facilities	Customs and Excise Division
	Details on specific plans and the constraints to implement them, aimed at retention of staff and standardizing remuneration for project management/ project implementation staff.	Plans to increase the staff at the Building Management Unit Security Department along with improvement and standardization of remuneration for personnel through the Chief Personnel Office (CPO)	Facilities Management positions are established contract positions by the CPO. We are currently proposing the expansion of the Facilities Management Unit by adding the aforementioned positions. By expanding the FMU we will be able to cover all our projects at Head Office and all the facilities of the various Divisions. The staff will be assigned to specific Divisions in which the various Budget estimates will be developed. Constraints are delaying the approval by Cabinet for the positions.	Not provided
COVID-19 and its impact on PSJP Implementation	The challenges experienced in project implementation, with examples	The Security Management Unit of the Ministry of Finance was also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which presented a number of challenges for project implementation. Supply chain disruptions were evidently the most impactful as the pandemic had disrupted global supply chains making it difficult for contractors to source, deliver and install materials and equipment needed for the timely and successful completion of projects. For instance, contractors who were awarded contracts for the supply, delivery and installation of IT equipment have not been able to complete projects to date as items that were on backorder since 2020/2021 and are estimated to be delivered in the second quarter of 2023. The economic downturn caused by the pandemic also led to budget and funding constraints for the Ministry of Finance. As such,	The Facilities Management Unit of the Ministry of Finance was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as most of its resources were redirected to preparing facilities to implement COVID-19 protocols such as screen protection, signage, hand sanitizer, training staff etc. However, the FMU was not able to sufficiently cover all Divisions due to its limited Human Resources. In addition, its suppliers and contractors were forced to stop working during this time due to lock downs. The Unit was considered an essential service and worked throughout COVID-19 period.	

Subject	Questions	Building Management Unit – Security	Building Management Unit – Facilities	Customs and Excise Division
		the Security Department had to prioritize projects that were deemed urgent or necessary for the continued operations of the unit. Health and safety concerns were at the forefront of all project planning and implementation stages as the pandemic presented new health and safety concerns.		
	The measures that were used to overcome these challenges	Although supply chain disruptions were the main reasons for delayed completion of projects, the Security Department developed contingency plans to address such disruptions. We were successful in making changes to project priorities by phasing projects by order of availability of materials and equipment and amending the project scope and/or timeline for projects where necessary.	During the lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FMU used that time to identify issues at various locations and establish maintenance plans for these locations. The time was also used to outfit various facilities with the necessary infrastructure for COVID-19 protocols. Facilities Staff were also trained to operate equipment and chemicals to conduct in-house sanitizing. This initiative assisted in reducing downtime and cost when there were COVID-19 cases at the facilities.	

Subject	Questions	Building Management Unit – Security	Building Management Unit – Facilities	Customs and Excise Division
	The lessons learnt and the strategies to be adopted based on these challenges	Health and safety were and will continue to be important factors as it relates to Project Management and project implementation. Measures were in place to protect the health and safety of our team and, by extension, members of staff for proper screening of persons entering the facility and added safety measures for contractors in the execution of projects especially in office workspace. The procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other security screening apparatus remain a part of the Security Department’s PSIP program since 2019 and it is envisioned to include in said program as part of the security system upgrade for fiscal year 2023/2024: The Implementation of Fever Detection Systems for the Ministry of Finance. The pandemic forced change in the way organizations conducted business and the security department had to adapt to new business realities. Regular and effective communication with contractors and suppliers played an important role in ensuring that all parties were informed of challenges or issues experienced in the execution/completion of projects in a timely manner.	Lesson learnt: COVID-19 is here to stay and, as a result, the Ministry will have to implement a business continuity plan to manage the possibility of potential lockdowns in the future. Establishing and filling the proposed additional positions mentioned above that will ensure an effective COVID-19 response for the entire Ministry is also paramount.	
	The effects on staff availability for project implementation	The Security Department is deemed an “essential service” and is required to report to duty as rostered. The only challenge experienced was staff’s contraction of and exposure to the	The effect on staff - 75% contracted the virus and, as a result, had to stay away from work for weeks at a time. This severely affected operations as there were already limited resources.	

Subject	Questions	Building Management Unit – Security	Building Management Unit – Facilities	Customs and Excise Division
	A listing of PSIP projects whose implementation were affected by COVID-19	COVID-19 virus and the mandatory quarantine period that followed.		
	- Treasury Division - Installation and configuration of Milestone Xprotect Expert 2022 R2 VMS package which include Milestone Care+ Premium 2 Year Support and Milestone Device License for 150 cameras – Awarded to PBS Technologies - Treasury Division - Installation of forty-five (45) AXIS IP Cameras and twelve (12) Panasonic IP Cameras throughout the Treasury building as part of the Treasury CCTV Upgrade Phase I – Awarded to Karik Systems Limited - Customs & Excise Division - Supply, installation and configuration of IP cameras and servers at the C&E TradeZone facility, El Socorro – Awarded to Karik Systems Limited. - Ministry of Finance - Supply and Delivery of Satellite Phones as part of the Ministry of Finance Emergency Response Plan – Caribel Limited. - Ministry of Finance - Supply and Delivery of Motorola WT's as part of the Ministry of Finance Emergency Response Plan	None provided		

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
Resources for PSIP Implementation	A listing of the positions	Within the FIUTT, the ICT Division of the FIUTT is charged with implementation of PSIP projects. The positions are as follows: • Information Systems Manager • Network Administrator • Database Administrator	In Fiscal Year 2021, the structure of the ICT Division comprised of the following twenty-nine (29) Cabinet-approved contract positions: • ICT Director • ICT Security Specialist • Business Operations Assistant II • Manager, Solutions Dev & Implementation • IS Support Specialist • IT Analyst/Programmer (5) • Database Specialist (2) • IS Specialist • Manager, Networks and Infrastructure • Network Specialist • IT Infrastructure Specialist (3) • Manager, Service Delivery & Support • IS Support Specialist • ICT Technical Officer (9)	Responses presented in a separate document.
	Those positions which are vacant and the approximate length of the vacancy	The position of Information Systems Manager was made vacant upon the resignation of the former Officer on October 28, 2013. The Database Administrator, FIUTT, has been acting as Information Systems Manager with effect from October 28, 2013.	There are thirteen (13) vacancies as follows: • Manager, Solutions Dev & Implementation • IT Analyst/Programmer (4) • Database Specialist (2) • IS Support Specialist • IT Infrastructure Specialist (1) • ICT Technical Officer (4)	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
	Those positions that are filled	• Database Administrator • Network Administrator	There are sixteen (16) positions filled as follows: • ICT Director • ICT Security Specialist • Business Operations Assistant II • IS Support Specialist • IT Analyst/Programmer (1) • Manager, Networks and Infrastructure • Network Specialist • IT Infrastructure Specialist (2) • Manager, Service Delivery & Support • IS Support Specialist • ICT Technical Officer (5)	Responses presented in a separate document
	Remarks on Project Management staff turnover or lack of turnover.	There was no Project Management staff turnover as the staffing arrangements at the FIUTT were in place and stable for Fiscal Year 2021.	The aforementioned twenty-nine (29) positions were approved by Cabinet in 2017. However, eleven (11) vacancies existed since 2017 and two (2) additional vacancies occurred in 2021 when two (2) staff members resigned to take positions outside of the Ministry. It is instructive to note that these two (2) staff members were major contributors to the Electronic Document Management Information System, which is a PSIP Project. Consequently, there was a significant impact on the project not only due to the loss of manpower but also to the loss of institutional knowledge and critical skillset.	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
	The Project Implementation challenges and other challenges experienced due to the frequent departure of project management/ project implementation staff	There were no challenges or hindrances to Project Implementation at the FIUTT due to departure of staff in the ICT Division of the FIUTT for FY 2021. It should be noted that the ICT staff have always gone beyond the call of duty to ensure projects are successfully implemented despite other hindrances such as lack of increased human resources, the Covid-19 pandemic and inability of service providers to source required equipment.	Project management/ project implementation staff attrition at the Ministry of Finance is considered to be the loss of employees through any natural process, such as retirement, resignation, elimination of a position, personal health, or other similar reasons. As mentioned above, in Fiscal Year 2021 the ICT Division lost two (2) IT Analyst Programmers, who were major contributors to two (2) PSIP projects, namely Electronic Document Management Information System and Development of the State Agencies Performance Management Information System. Consequently, there were significant effects on the functioning of the division in keeping with its goals. Some are identified below: a. Decreased Workforce Productivity. When these two (2) key personnel demitted office, the remaining staff were challenged to fill the void. This led to a decrease in productivity, which not only negatively impacted the delivery of project milestones but also the overall morale of the remaining two (2) members of the Solutions Development and Implementation Team. b. Loss of Expertise. When the Ministry lost these experienced and knowledgeable project staff, the Ministry lost not only institutional knowledge but also technical knowhow for many activities related to these projects. This was particularly	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
			damaging to these ongoing projects which were at crucial junctions. c. Increased Employee Stress Levels. To actively participate in the management or implementation of any project that initially were understaffed is a stressful experience. To have this situation further deteriorate when knowledgeable project management/ project implementation staff resigned, the remaining team members felt further overwhelmed as they took on additional responsibilities. This led to noticeable increases in stress levels of the remaining team members, which ultimately had a negative effect on the overall working environment and further contributed to delays in project goal accomplishments. d. Unhappy Stakeholders. When seasoned Project Management or Project staff left and the Ministry of Finance was unable to provide replacements in a timely manner, stakeholders' expectations were not met. Stakeholders became unhappy and dissatisfied with the levels of service they received. This resulted in reputational losses, which negatively impacted the division's ability to sustain user buy-in and to encourage user adoption of the solution. e. Financial Loss to the Ministry. Last and by no means least, there were cost	

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
			implications to staff attrition, which were often overlooked. There were costs associated with requisitioning (preparation of the Cabinet Note), advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and onboarding. Once the new staff is onboard, there would be costs associated with training and mentoring the new employees, until they reach a level whereby the Ministry can start getting a return on its investment.	
	Details on specific plans and the constraints to implement these plans, aimed at retention of staff and standardizing remuneration for project management/ project implementation staff.	The posts of the ICT Division in the FIUTT are established ones and specific plans for the retention of staff in this area have not been necessary for FY 2021. However, in order to enhance acceleration of the Governments thrust for a Digital Public Service, plans will be made to adequately retool the ICT staff to adequately provide and support new digital initiative.	All twenty-nine (29) positions in the ICT Division are standardized contract positions in keeping with the terms and conditions of employment determined by the Chief Personnel Officer as set out in Personnel Department Circular Memorandum PD (cm): 1/7/3 Vol. II dated October 16, 2015 on the subject “Changes in administrative arrangements in respect of contract employment in the Public Service (Information and Communications Technology)” and approved by the Minister of Finance. In its attempt to retain staff, the ICT Division’s key strategy is to make the ICT Division the preferred choice for employment. Some ways that this is achieved is by: • Ensuring that all resources that are required by staff to carry out their duties are provided in a timely manner. • Providing readily available opportunities for skill development in areas of IT. • Consistently demonstrating good HR Practices – make staff feel valued, mentor staff, provide	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
			- counsel, motivate them, and foster an environment of mutual respect. - Vigorously advocating that contracted employees who meet the performance standards are retained and ensuring that the Cabinet Note is submitted to Human Resources for consideration at least three (3) months before the end date of a performing officer's contract. - Strongly advocating that contracted officers who performed well are retained using short term contract arrangements until the long-term contract is processed, in the event that the Cabinet Note was not processed in a timely manner. Again, whilst the employee is on short term contract the Division advocates on behalf of the employee to ensure that loss of remuneration is kept at a minimum. - Ensuring employees are kept well informed at every juncture of their employment lifecycle, from onboarding to renewal of contract and gratuity processing. - Ensuring that at the end of a successful contract period, contract gratuity is processed in a timely manner. - Facilitating a work environment that is conducive to innovation, productivity and good mental health. Notwithstanding these efforts, there are some constraints to this strategy. These include:	

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
			- The Ministry takes too long to submit the Cabinet Note for the renewal of expired contract positions. This may result in employees being placed on short term contract arrangements with the resulting loss of earnings and benefits. - Cabinet Notes are required to be submitted to PMCD for comments before submission to Cabinet. The ICT Division sees this as an unnecessary step for renewal of contracts. - The ICT Division's organization structure has five (5) levels, namely technical, professional, senior professional, managerial and senior manager (Director). At present, there are no senior professional positions in the organization structure. Consequently, there are limited opportunities for upward job mobility within the ICT Division, beyond the professional level.	
COVID-19 and its impact on PSIP Implementation	The challenges experienced in project implementation, with examples	The Upgrade of FIUTT's secure reporting solution, called FIUConnect, to CaseKconnect was not feasible as the Service Provider is from Dominica and Trinidad's boarders were closed until July 2021. Subsequent to the reopening of our boarders, facilitating the Service Provider onsite (into the country) during the remainder of FY2021 would have meant additional cost for accommodation, particularly, as persons were required to be in quarantine upon arrival.	As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of staff throughout the Ministry were either placed on rotation or worked remotely. This was a safety precaution to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the office. This meant that the Ministry's staff were not readily available to make critical contributions to the advancement of projects. Services to the ICT division were also impacted due to vendors' inability to perform on site support/service due to their organization's	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
		There were also significant delays with the delivery of equipment procured given the disruptions in the supply chains. Delivery times were quite protracted during the pandemic.	COVID-19 policies regarding gathering in enclosed spaces. Disruption to the international supply chain affected procurement activities resulting in frequent delays in the delivery of components for projects.	
	The measures used to overcome these challenges	- The FIU/TT used the time of the boarder constraint to discuss/include additional requirements for CaseKonnnect Solution, given that the project deferred. - Extension was given to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the existing version of the secure reporting solution. - There was very little that could have been done for the protracted delivery times of equipment. Where applicable, an extension of SLAs for existing equipment was negotiated with the supplier.	The Ministry of Finance implemented its business continuity strategy which switched the ICT Division's focus from project execution to operational support. This saw activities related to implementing projects suspended and a shifting of priorities to supporting existing solutions and the Ministry's staff, who were working remotely for the first time.	Responses presented in a separate document
	The lessons learned and the strategies to be adopted based on these challenges	- More proactive planning re: timelines of deliverables. Longer delivery times were taken into consideration when planning projects. - Continue to maintain a good relationship with suppliers, inclusive of ensuring payment for goods and services on time. This strategy makes it more amenable for suppliers to grant extensions for SLAs or other workaround, once applicable.	The Ministry of Finance's business continuity strategy was successfully implemented and would guide the way the Ministry responds to future threats. Improvements would be made to cater for situations where general staff may be physically unavailable for extensive periods of time.	Responses presented in a separate document

Subject	Questions	Financial Intelligence Unit	ICT Unit	Inland Revenue Division
	Whether there were any effects on staff availability for project implementation	Staff availability was affected when they were required to isolate or quarantine.	Having remote work capabilities and proper risk planning meant no major effects on ICT staff availability were experienced, except in situations where staff had contracted COVID-19 and were unavailable due to illness or were placed under quarantine after possible exposure to the virus. ICT staff who did not experience any symptoms were able to still contribute to the division's activities. However, given that stakeholders were not available, no significant advancement concerning the project was possible.	Responses presented in a separate document
	Provide a listing of PSIP projects whose implementation was affected by COVID-19 and how implementation was affected	- The project for the upgrade of FIUConnect to caseKconnect was delayed. - Upgrade of FIUTT's firewall environment was delayed	The ICT Division is responsible for two (2) PSIP projects and both were impacted by the pandemic. They are: 18/09/005/06/A/048 - Electronic Document Management Information System, Head Office 18/09/005/06/A/050 - Upgrade of the Information Technology Infrastructure As stated previously, during Oct 2020 to Sept 2021, the Ministry shifted its priorities due to the pandemic. Such activities of the ICT Division focused on maintenance and support operations using remote services where possible, in keeping with the Ministry's business continuity/disaster recovery strategy. Therefore, activities related to the above projects were suspended until restrictions were lifted. The Ministry started to resume operations after the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2021.	

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
Resources for PSIP Implementation	A listing of the positions	The Public Financial Management Modernization Unit (PFMMU) is the Implementation Unit of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). The IFMIS is funded under the Development Programme Vote 18/09/005/ 06/A/017 – IFMIS. During the period October 1st 2020 – September 30th 2021 the PFMMU was staffed by contract Officers in the positions of: • Chief Technical Coordinator • Procurement Specialist • Finance Specialist		The Valuation Division is tasked with the responsibility for development of the first Valuation Roll for the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. A list of the Positions in the Valuation Division assigned/dedicated to the development of the Valuation Roll: • One (1) Senior Project Manager • One (1) Senior Legal Officer • One (1) Human Resource Specialist • Eight (8) Graduate Valuation Surveyors II • Fourteen (14) Graduate Valuation Surveyors I • Three (3) Geographic Information Systems Specialist Technician • Fifty-two (52) Field Assessor Supervisors • Two hundred and fifty-three (253) Field Assessors • One (1) Database Specialist • Five (5) Information and Communications Technology Technical Officers • Two (2) Information and Communications Technology Support Officers • Two (2) Business Operations coordinator • Seven (7) Business Operations Assistants II • Forty (40) Business Operations Assistants I

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
	Those positions which are vacant and the approximate length of the vacancy	All the positions listed above were filled. There were no vacancies during the period.		- One (1) Senior Legal Officer – Over three years - One (1) Human Resource Specialist – 2 years - One (1) Business Operations Coordinator – over 3 years - Five (5) Field Assessor Supervisors – 1 year - Twelve (12) Field Assessors – 8 months - Two (2) Graduate Valuation Surveyors II – 2-3 years - Fourteen (14) Graduate Valuation Surveyors I – 3 years - One (1) Information and Communication Technology Officer – 2 years - One (1) Information and Communication Support Officer – 3 years - Five (5) Business Operations Assistant II – 2 years - Fifteen (15) Business Operations Assistant I – 2 years
	The positions that are filled;	During October 1st 2020 – September 30th 2021 the PFMMU was staffed by contract Officers in the positions of: - Chief Technical Coordinator - Procurement Specialist - Finance Specialist		- One (1) Senior Project Manager - Six (6) Graduate Valuation Surveyors II - Three (3) GIS Technician - One (1) Database Specialist - Four (4) Information and Communications Technology Technical Officers - One (1) Information and Communications Technology Support Officer - Forty-seven (47) Field Assessor Supervisors

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
				• Two hundred and fifty-three (253) Field Assessors (up to April 2021, 132 Field Assessors employed after April 2021) • Two (2) Business Operations Assistant II • Twenty-five (25) Business Operations Assistant I
	Remarks on project management staff turnover or lack of turnover.	The positions were filled in keeping with IDB protocols. During the period, there were no turnover issues concerning project management/project implementation staff.		The resignation of officers employed on contract for the year 2021 was recorded by the Division in the following positions: One (1) Field Assessor Supervisor and Three (3) Field Assessors. A high turnover of staff in the Division has severely impacted the productivity and general output of the Division. In addition, due to attrition of staff, the Division would have lost a lot of institutional knowledge, and it would have to expend more time and resources to train new members of staff recruited to the Division. Also, the process for further employment of contract officers is lengthy and takes over a year at best. Short-term employment can be offered to those officers whose contract has expired, but this measure provides no security or guarantees for the affected officers. Therefore, many do not accept it.

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
	The Project Implementation challenges and other challenges experienced due to the frequent departure of project management/ project implementation staff;	There were no challenges due to staff turnover.		
	Details on specific plans and the constraints to implementation of these plans, aimed at retention of staff and standardizing remuneration for project management/ project implementation staff.	No constraints due to staffing.		
COVID-19 and its impact on PSIP Implementation	The challenges experienced in project implementation, with examples;	Pilot testing and training in the use of the software for relevant staff from Ministries/Departments were delayed.		- Members of the Public who dropped off returns in the Drop Box would have liked to obtain a receipt as proof of submission of documents. However, this was not possible since a receipt is only sent by mail to the property owner after the return is processed. - Limited face-to-face interaction with members of the public. Staff members were not able to give a thorough review of completed returns when dropped off by members of the public. This resulted in incomplete forms submitted by the property owners.

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
				3. Challenges were encountered with elderly persons who required special assistance in the completion of returns. The staff though willing to assist members of the public, were limited in scope. 4. Limited office space to facilitate the full complement of staff due to Covid-19 restrictions. Also, due to limited accommodation, tents had to be erected at both the Arouca and the San Fernando Regional offices to deal with an influx of returns from members of the public as the deadline date for submission approached. Hence, it was difficult for staff to maintain Covid-19 protocols in these circumstances, such as social distance. 5. A higher level of absenteeism at the workplace due to members of staff proceeding on leave due to a quarantine order.
	The measures that were used to overcome these challenges;	To mitigate the delays and challenges with face-to-face training as a result of the social distancing mandate of COVID-19, the virtual platform was engaged as an alternative option.		1. The Division was able to provide ready access to all of its employees to the following items; Temperature check station, Hand washing facilities, soap and alcohol based sanitizers. Also, mandatory wearing of masks was implemented at the work place for both staff members and visitors. 2. All Covid-19 protocols were clearly outlined and their implementation was emphasized in the Division. Frequent wipe downs were

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
				conducted every 4 hours on the door handles, counters, toilet areas and other frequently used areas to mitigate the transmission of the virus to members of staff. 3. Also, frequent sanitization was conducted at the Barataria office (twice a month). Sanitization of regional offices was done upon reportedly confirmed Covid-19 cases in those regions by sanitization companies/providers. 4. Establishing proper communication channels amongst the staff to ensure they are updated concerning the implementation of all the covid-19 protocols to be maintained at the workplace such as washing/sanitization of hands, social distancing, wearing of face masks, etc. By the use of emails, the internet, WhatsApp chat. 5. Implementation of a work from home system (remote work arrangements) whereby members of staff were given VPN access in instances where members of staff had to self-isolate or had to be quarantined.
	The lessons learned and the strategies to be adopted based on these challenges;	The lesson learnt was that benefits could be derived from the use of the virtual platform as a safe option for meetings to accommodate a larger number of persons. However, it is difficult where a practical, more “hands-on” approach is required in the teaching/training environment. Therefore, a mixed or blended approach is best.		1. Limiting the number of visitors in the workplace at any point in time as much as possible. 2. Erection of sneeze guards at front service desks/ security guards' desks. Also, distancing staff from their workstations. This was difficult to implement due to limited office space, especially in outer regional

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
				offices, and also since the workstations are very closely situated for example, at the Chaguanas office. 3. The Division was able to reach out to families who are financially distressed in the workplace by the onset of the Covid-19 virus by collecting groceries from members of staff for distribution to unfortunate persons who got unemployed or lost loved ones as a result of the pandemic. 4. Employees upon reporting suspected cases of Covid-19 by themselves or by members of their families, were instructed to take an antigen test OR to do a PCR test. However, they must be able to provide proof of testing from a bona fide health facility and submit the results to the Administration/HR Unit of the Division. 5. Members of staff were provided with support from the Division by being afforded the benefit of applying for leave from work based upon the submission of a quarantine order from a bona fide Health Facility without affecting their sick leave, casual leave, or vacation leave.
	Whether there were any effects on staff availability for project implementation.	Pilot testing and training in the use of the software for relevant staff from Ministries/Departments were delayed.		No information provided

Subject	Questions	Public Financial Management Modernisation Unit	Treasury Division	Valuations Division
	Provide a listing of PSIP projects whose implementation were affected by COVID-19 and state how implementation was affected.	18/09/005/ 06/A/017 – IFMIS.		18/09/005/06/059- Implementation of Property Tax Regime.